THE CAMBRIDGE

HISTORY OF

PHILOSOPHY

IN LATE

ANTIQUITY

EDITED BY
LLOYD GERSON

THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF
PHILOSOPHY IN LATE ANTIQUITY

The Cambridge History of Philosophy in Late Antiquity comprises over forty specially commissioned essays by experts on the philosophy of the period 200–800 CE. Designed as a successor to *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy* (ed. A. H. Armstrong), it takes into account some forty years of scholarship since the publication of that volume. The contributors examine philosophy as it entered literature, science and religion, and offer new and extensive assessments of philosophers who until recently have been mostly ignored. The volume also includes a complete digest of all philosophical works known to have been written during this period. It will be an invaluable resource for all those interested in this rich and still emerging field.

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The Cambridge History of
Philosophy in Late Antiquity

Volume I

EDITED BY

LLOYD P. GERSON

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MAPS

Sirmium○ ○Belgrade

Cherson○

Tomi○

Adrianople○

Thessalonica○ Constantinople○
Nicomedia○
Nicaea○

Trebizond○

Ankyra○ Sebasteia○ Theodosiopolis○

Sardis○ Caesarea○ Melitene○ Martyropolis○
Athens○ Philadelphia○ Amida○
Corinth○ Smyrna○ Germanikeia○ Samosata○ Dara○
Ephesus○ Anazarbos○ Edessa○ Nisibis○
Miletus○ Aphrodisias○ Tarsus○ Mopsuestia○ Carrhae○
Halicarnassus○ Seleucea○ Aleppo○
Anemurion○ Antioch○ Chalcis○
Latakia○ Apamea○
Constantia○ Emesa○
(Salamis)
Tripoli○
Beirut○
Ptolemais○ Tyre○ Damascus○
Scythopolis○
Caesarea Maritima○ Bostra○
Gerasa○
Jerusalem○
Alexandria○ Gaza○
Pelusium○
Petra○
Memphis○

Nile

0   100   200   300   400   500 km
0   100   200   300 miles
Oxyrhynchus○

Map 1 The Byzantine Empire, c. 500
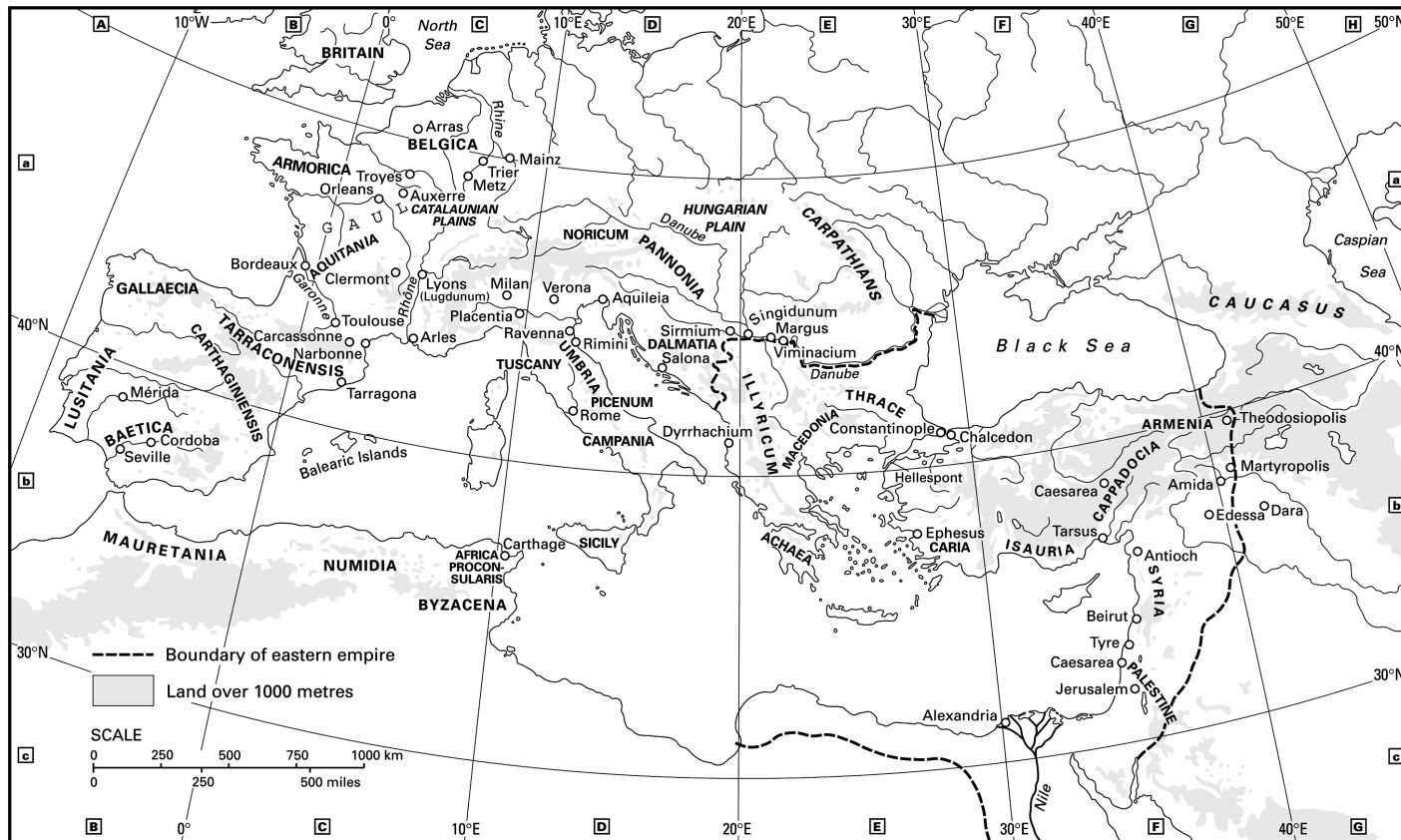
Map 2 The Roman world of the fifth and sixth centuries

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

LLOYD P. GERSON

I

The present work is a successor to *The Cambridge History of Late Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy* (*CHLGEMP*) which appeared in 1967 under the editorship of A. H. Armstrong. Since the publication of that work, an enormous amount of fundamental philological and historical scholarship pertaining to the philosophical works of late antiquity has appeared. New critical editions, commentaries and translations of important philosophical texts have made this vast complex of material more accessible to historians, who in turn have made considerable advances in the understanding of the last phase of ancient philosophy. Although this more than forty years of labour seems justification enough for a new survey of the period, it should not be supposed that all or even most of the assessments made in the earlier work have been summarily invalidated. Hence, the sense in which the present work is a 'successor' to the earlier work does not indicate that it is a replacement. Students of this period will no doubt continue to profit from consulting the earlier work, which deserves to be recognized as groundbreaking.

It will be useful to point out how *The Cambridge History of Philosophy in Late Antiquity* (*CHPLA*) differs in some obvious ways from its worthy predecessor. First, the reader will notice that the subtle change in title presumes that much of what was once labelled – no doubt with a certain amount of diffidence – 'early medieval' is now more properly brought within the ambit of ancient philosophy. The reasons for this will be discussed below in this introduction and in various places throughout the volume. Here, it may simply be noted that the new title indicates a vigorous recognition of the extension of the canon of ancient philosophy far beyond the all-too-narrow confines of the fourth century BCE. Whatever assessment one wishes to make of the value of ancient philosophy, there is today less justification than ever for the truncated view that ignores philosophical writing between Aristotle and Descartes or even between Aristotle and Aquinas. This extension was just beginning for Hellenistic

philosophy – especially Stoicism, Epicureanism and forms of Scepticism – at the time of the publication of *CHLGEMP*. The present volume aims to dispel the notion that the philosophy of late antiquity is little more than an appendix to the singularly enduring works of Plato and Aristotle.

Second, whereas the previous work devoted a substantial amount of space to tracing the sources of late Greek philosophy back to its beginnings in Plato's Academy and in Aristotle's Lyceum, the present volume does not focus on that material, which is in any case extensively treated in other histories. Rather, its treatment of the 'background' to the principal subject of the book is limited to what we might call 'the state-of-the-art' in philosophy around 200 CE. What, we may ask, would a student coming to philosophy at that time be presented with in a survey of the field? The date 200 CE is neither arbitrary nor precise. Since the dominant philosophical movement in late antiquity is Platonism, and since the leading figure of this movement is generally recognized to be Plotinus (204/5–270 CE), it seemed appropriate to make roughly 200 CE our *terminus a quo*. As for our *terminus ad quem*, it has actually been divided into three strands: (a) in the West, it is the Carolingian Renaissance and the philosopher John Scotus Eriugena; (b) in the Christian East, it is philosophy in Byzantium; and (c) in the Muslim East, it is the initial wave of the Islamic philosophical appropriation of Greek philosophy. A concluding chapter takes (a) into the treatment of ancient philosophical themes by philosophers of the Latin West who used to be known as Scholastics. In addition, we have, in comparison with the *CHLGEMP*, provided relatively concise treatments of the giants of our period – Plotinus and Augustine – mainly because there are many excellent full treatments available.

The earlier volume divided up its work among eight scholars; the present volume contains the work of some fifty. The dramatic shift signals only an acknowledgement of the complexities of our period and the varied specialized skills that its comprehension requires. It may be noted, however, that in the study of late antiquity, as indeed in the study of all early periods, philosophy follows philology and history. Whereas in Armstrong's volume only one of the authors was identified as a professor of philosophy, in the present volume many more trained philosophers with the requisite technical skills have been involved. This is I think an indication that ongoing groundwork studies have opened up our period more and more to the possibility of philosophical analysis. For example, an abundance of technical labour in the intervening years has allowed the scanty treatment of the major philosophical figure Damascius in the earlier volume to be superseded by a fuller philosophical discussion in the present volume. What is true for Damascius is to a lesser extent true for many others treated here including, for example, Hierocles of Alexandria, one of the

leading philosophers of the first half of the fifth century CE. Hierocles is hardly mentioned in the previous work, perhaps a function of the fact that the seminal editorial and historical work on Hierocles dates from the 1970s and 1980s.

The reader will also note that hitherto the standard way of referring to the philosophy of our period is to use the term 'Neoplatonism'. This is in fact an artefact of eighteenth-century German scholarship; no follower of Plato in our period would have embraced a label suggesting innovation. Unfortunately, in the eighteenth century the label was intended mostly as a pejorative and that situation has not changed much even today. It was assumed that 'Neoplatonism' represented a muddying of the purest Hellenic stream. This assumption probably tells us more about the romanticism in early Germanic classical scholarship and its political milieu than it does about early and late elements in ancient philosophy. On behalf of a more neutral or at least less tendentious stance, I have by editorial fiat abolished the pejorative label from this volume. We refer throughout to 'Platonism' or 'late Platonism' or 'Christian Platonism' when discussing Plotinus, his successors and those Christian thinkers who were in one way or another shaped by the dominant tradition in ancient philosophy. In doing so, however, we make no presumptions about fidelity or lack thereof to Plato's own philosophy. It is enough, at least initially, to recognize that there were varieties of Platonism, just as there were varieties of Christianity in our period and varieties of various philosophical movements in earlier centuries. Those eager to grade these according to their proximity to the intentions of their founders will no doubt suppose that they have discovered a means of ascertaining exactly what those original intentions were, independent of the traditions of thought they inspired. The decision regarding the term 'Neoplatonism' does not quite mandate a similar decision for the mostly empty term 'Middle' Platonism, which routinely indicates a wide variety of Platonist philosophy between the late first century BCE and the time of Plotinus. We use this term in a completely anodyne sense, indicating the varieties of Platonism between the early or old Academy of Plato and his immediate successors and the late Platonism found in Plotinus and afterward.

The parallelisms between Platonic and Christian thought alluded to here bring us to one of the most difficult aspects of a project such as this one. The rise and eventual dominance of Christianity in our period resulted in the intertwining of philosophy and the theology of a religion rooted in revelation and in a non-Hellenic tradition. 'Pagan' Greek thinkers encountered Christianity as the ideology of an increasingly hostile opponent; Christian thinkers encountered ancient Greek philosophy as the ideological core of those resistant to the Gospel. In fact, a good deal of the philosophy in our period was generated by those who either subordinated philosophical reflection to religious faith or by those who

found themselves cast in the role of apologists, not for the value of philosophy itself, like Socrates, but solely for the doctrinal content of Platonism. The resulting complexities are substantial and they set our period apart from an earlier period that was innocent of or indifferent to the claims of the Biblical religions and from a later period in which Christian assumptions were ubiquitous and so largely unquestioned. Thus, our work, like the previous one, treats a number of thinkers such as Origen, Augustine and Boethius, who might be regarded as equally philosophers and theologians, as well as a number of others such as Justin, Nemesius, Basil of Caesarea and Gregory of Nyssa in whom the proportion might well be thought to favour theology over philosophy. If I have erred in my selection, I hope it has been on the side of inclusiveness rather than exclusiveness. The Christian theologians who have been excluded from consideration, such as Irenaeus, Tertullian and Hippolytus, are those whose writings contain little or no philosophy; and even in those included, concentration has been on the philosophical side of their thought, leaving more strictly confessional issues aside. Perhaps some readers remain sceptical that the writings of someone like the unknown author whom we call Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite deserve to be considered in a history of philosophy. The increasingly lucid picture of our period that has emerged over the last two generations, owing in part to original philological and historical analysis, has in my view made this scepticism less and less justified. So, too, the 'religious side' of Platonism – the side that provoked the pejorative label 'Neoplatonism' – can now be seen not of course as unrelated to the philosophy, but as distinguishable from it.

The encounter between philosophy and religion – specifically, Platonism and Christianity – was, we know, situated amidst the political and social currents flowing back and forth between Rome and Constantinople, and to a lesser extent Athens and Alexandria. It seemed useful for the reader to have at hand at least the basic historical facts in order to provide some context for the philosophical discussions. To this end, each main section of this work is introduced with a short account of the world in late antiquity in which our philosophers were living and working. This is a self-conscious attempt to add to this history of philosophy something like a sketch of the continuous narrative that the intellectual history of the period aims to provide.

<div align="center">2</div>

It is not uncommon in philosophy departments to hear it proclaimed that the history of philosophy is to philosophy approximately what the history of medicine is to medicine; indiscriminate reading in the history of medicine is hardly necessary for medical practice and might at times even impede it. Yet even

among those who accept this analogy, there are probably few who would go on to argue that a philosopher ought actually to avoid reading at least certain works in the history of philosophy. To acknowledge the value of reading enduring works in the history of philosophy is, I would suggest, to allow the pertinence of asking about the purpose and value of *reading* a history of philosophy. And this question of course leads us to another: what is the purpose and value of *writing* a history of philosophy?

Since this work aims in a way to rewrite the history of philosophy in late antiquity, I have in my editorial capacity tried to rethink the very idea of what a history of philosophy is supposed to be. Aristotle argued, rightly in my view, that history was not a science because a science aims at knowledge of universal and necessary truth whereas history is by definition composed of particular, contingent events. The non-scientific nature of history does not, however, prevent Aristotle from applying his scientific explanatory framework to historical events. Thus, he can inquire into (and he thinks it worthwhile to inquire into) the explanation for a revolution or constitutional change or into the reason for a particular historical figure engaging in a particular action. He is ready to explore the material conditions for happiness or political stability or the nature of social artefacts. We might suppose that the applicability of Aristotle's fourfold schema of explanation – formal, material, moving and final cause – could be similarly deployed in writing a history of philosophy. Unfortunately, however, although the history of philosophy is full of 'events', it is not these which attract the primary attention of scholars. That attention is rather focused on arguments, claims, doctrines and so on. How events are related to these is an extremely difficult question to answer, whether these events occur so to speak internally in a philosopher's life or whether they are external. Two hoary quasi-Aristotelian explanatory concepts are 'influence' and 'development'. To speak about the 'development' of, say, Plato's thought as if it were something like the development of a organism in the direction of its natural mature state is a kind of travesty of the category of final causal explanation. To speak about Plotinus' influence on Augustine as if the thought of the former were a real moving cause of the thought of the latter is not only patently false on Aristotle's account of the nature of moving causes but also of minimal explanatory value for a historian of philosophy, even if it were true. In ancient philosophy especially, where we are often lacking more of a philosopher's works than we possess, it is not surprising that we sometimes grasp at straws; if, say, we cannot reconstruct Porphyry's thought from Porphyry's extant writings, perhaps we can do so with the help of Plotinus' writings which, so the story goes, surely *influenced* Porphyry. Or to take another sort of example, to say something like 'conditions were ripe for the appearance of a particular philosophical view' when one is supposedly referring

to an Aristotelian material cause is, on reflection, and unlike real material causes, quite empty of explanatory content. What, then, ought a history of philosophy in late antiquity aim to do?

In my view, such a history ought to be oriented first and foremost towards the positions or doctrines held by the leading philosophers of late antiquity and it ought further to contain elements of an account of ancient Greek philosophy's encounter with Christianity (and to a much lesser extent with Judaism and with Islam). The disparagement of histories oriented towards the positions held by philosophers is unreasonable – indeed, it is sometimes stigmatized as mere 'doxography' in some circles. This disparagement seems to me to arise from a failure to distinguish clearly the history of philosophy from philosophy itself. Those immersed in the history of ancient philosophy are I suspect much less inclined to fail to make this distinction than are those who reflect on philosophical matters from a contemporary perspective. I mean that the effort to represent accurately the views of those who wrote a generation or two ago is usually attempted within an explicitly non-historical, philosophical context which emphasizes the reasoning which may have led to the holding of those views and an analysis of why they are wrong (or why they are still correct, in the rare case where the writer still accepts the views of his or her predecessors). Such representations are usually undertaken within the typical dialectical framework for addressing one's contemporaries or intellectual competitors on particular philosophical problems. Although the representation of ancient philosophical views is sometimes undertaken with the same intent, it is in these cases rarely achieved without falling prey to one of the horns of the following dilemma: either the representation is defective because it is not properly contextualized or else the representation is contextualized but it then fails to achieve the sought for commensuration of ancient and contemporary positions. I am far from suggesting that contextualization and commensuration are unattainable goals; I am urging only that they are different activities and that they are not usefully attempted simultaneously when the views represented are far removed from us in time or cultural distance.

Good history of ancient philosophy is harder to accomplish than it might seem. But despite its formidable problems of contextualization – the difficulty of the ancient languages used, missing or defective texts, and distorting or plainly inaccurate reports given by our ancient sources – it is an advantage for the historian of ancient philosophy that he or she is not obliged to strive unduly for commensuration with contemporary thought (though many scholars do so, to the detriment of their strictly historical work). The first requirement, in my opinion, is to achieve successful contextualization for one's account of the views held by the ancients. On this basis, the reader of works in the history of philosophy then has a better chance at genuine commensuration.

To claim that the central mission of a history of philosophy is to establish, descriptively in an appropriate context, the views held is at the same time to take a negative view of the Hegelian identification of philosophy with its history. But this negative view hardly precludes the relevance of the history of philosophy to philosophy itself; nor does it free the historian from the obligation to employ careful philosophical analysis. Indeed, one who rigidly separates philosophy and its history will either have to accept the mantle of the antiquarian or else acknowledge the fact that in time she, too, will only be antiquarian fodder.

A useful history of the kind aimed at in this volume, then, aims to see historical filiations as the philosophers themselves saw them. Proclus, for instance, thought that Plotinus was a great exegete of the 'Platonic revelation', reaffirming what Plotinus himself thought he was doing. The great historian of medieval philosophy, Etienne Gilson, thought that Proclean metaphysics was the self-evidently absurd conclusion reached by consistently adhering to that 'revelation'. Thus in a way, and apart from judgements about philosophical truth, Gilson indirectly confirms Proclus' point. Proclus certainly believed that the most authentic systematic expression of the wisdom contained in Plato's dialogues would be found in his own personal writings. Unlike Hegel, however, he was not making a historical claim. The present volume of the history of philosophy in late antiquity aims to provide a contextualized account of philosophers and their 'schools', philosophers who for the most part did not see themselves as being in need of historical contextualization. I would suggest that while we can and should distinguish philosophy itself from its earlier history, thinking through that history becomes a philosophical enterprise when we inquire into, for example, what grounds Proclus has for his belief regarding the connection between Plato, Plotinus and his own work. A similar claim can be made about the inquiry into the opposing arguments made by pagan and Christian philosophers of our period: who was and who was not an authentic inheritor of the ancient philosophical tradition? It seems to me hard to maintain, for example, that reflecting on the debates between Simplicius and John Philoponus on whether or not the universe had a temporal beginning is not a work of philosophy. Such work could not be undertaken effectively without the sort of sober, contextualized account of views held that this volume aims to provide. Thus, the defence of the value of the history of philosophy is substantially the same as the defence of the value of philosophy itself.

3

The present volume is divided into eight parts. The first part includes chapters providing a broad survey of the philosophical 'scene' around 200 CE. The reader will notice that 'philosophy' is here understood to include the scientific, literary

and religious appropriation of the ancient philosophical tradition. Throughout the subsequent sections, it will be evident that the entire intellectual world of late antiquity is constantly engaged with ancient philosophy – above all the philosophy of Plato. One facet of this engagement consists in addressing some of the perennial philosophical problems that arose within Plato's Academy itself and later became the common ground of the ancient philosophical 'schools'. Another consists in the employment and refinement of a philosophical vocabulary appropriate for the treatment of contemporary issues. The refinement is variously evident: in 'pagan' philosophers themselves who aimed to assess the conflicts among the schools and to advance one philosophical position or another; among the early Christian thinkers who searched for a technical philosophical vocabulary to express a systematic representation of Scriptural texts; and among the burgeoning scientific enterprises, especially astronomy, medicine and mathematics, all of which needed an exact philosophically refined vocabulary for expressing the principles of these sciences. In all of these cases, an additional level of complexity is evident in the translation of the Greek philosophical vocabulary into Latin.

In parts II, V and VII will be found an account of the Christian and Jewish philosophical thought in our period. Each part represents an 'encounter' with ancient Greek philosophy. The use of this term is meant to indicate the more or less self-consciously critical engagement with philosophical material that both in its particulars and in the very principles that animate its production provides an implicit challenge to Christianity and to Judaism. Much later, a similar encounter will be found in the earliest phase of Islamic theology. The growing confidence of Christian theologians, owing in part to the gradual dominance of Christianity in the political realm, can be seen in a sort of evolution of theology from a direct encounter with ancient Greek philosophical thought to a rather more internal debate regarding specific issues.

In parts III, IV and VI are treated the philosophers of late antiquity who all explicitly or implicitly rejected the Christian message. For the earliest among these, Christianity was indistinguishable from other 'mystery' religions of the Greek and non-Greek world. Gradually, it became clear that Christianity was *the* threat to the preservation of the ancient tradition. Some of the more creative work among these philosophers is no doubt inspired by an ardent desire to respond critically to the Christian message, to demonstrate that the legacy of Plato's philosophy, itself nourished by even older philosophers, was in no way inferior to that singular alternative increasingly dominant in every centre of learning. Part VIII offers a map of the main intellectual roads leading from our period into what is chronologically the medieval period, but which is in the Greek East and in the world of Islam something quite different from what it

became in the Latin West. This last part might serve as an introduction to the history of philosophy subsequent to that found here.

One of the most difficult problems faced by scholars of our period is that a significant portion of the material or 'data' necessary for accurate analysis is missing. It is all the more frustrating that we sometimes know of the existence of works with titles that at least make them sound extremely important, though the works themselves are completely lost. This, of course, leads us to consider that there may be works completely unknown to us, even by title or fragmentary content. In an Appendix, we have tried to provide a compendium of all the works of the philosophers and of the philosophically engaged theologians of our period whether these are fully extant, or extant only in part or in fragmentary form, or known only by their titles or by references to their content. At least, this should convince the reader that the historian of the philosophy of this period is at times doing something analogous to the archaeologist who is engaged in a theoretical reconstruction of remains based on shards or ruins or the outlines of foundations.

In my editorial capacity, I have tried to limit the use of footnotes in this work, particularly in order to enhance something like a narrative unity in the overall work. Footnotes are generally employed for the elucidation of technical points and for the indication of controversial issues. Full bibliographies are provided at the end of this work for further investigation of the details of each chapter.

A note on style and format: Although I have as editor striven for a measure of consistency in style and format across the chapters in this volume, the imposition of total uniformity seemed neither desirable nor necessary. Differences in capitalization (e.g., Demiurge vs demiurge or Platonic Forms vs Platonic forms, *Logos* vs *logos*, World Soul vs world soul or soul of the universe) sometimes reflect substantive though subtle differences in interpretation. I have tried not to occlude these differences.

PART I

PHILOSOPHY IN THE LATER ROMAN EMPIRE

INTRODUCTION TO PART I

In this section, we aim to provide a survey of philosophy as it was generally understood and practised around 200 CE. One may imagine the array of material confronting an advanced student of philosophy in, say, Rome or Alexandria at this time. We assume that the student would already be acquainted with what were then thought to be the major works of the founders of the great philosophical schools of antiquity – Plato, Aristotle, Epicurus and Zeno. In any case, he or she would have available various doxographical accounts of the ancient practitioners of philosophy. With this acquaintance must have come a considerable degree of perplexity, not the least owing to the apparent conflicts among the conclusions of these giants and the obscurity of many of their writings. Our student, however, would soon discover that these conflicts and obscurities had in fact been the subject of intense philosophical reflection and commentary for the intervening 500 years since the early days of the philosophical schools. Depending on the master whom the student chose to follow, he or she would encounter a complex tradition of defensive explication of one school's positions against those of opponents. The student would also encounter various philosophical strategies employed to demonstrate that philosophical positions that seemed to be at odds were in fact in harmony. This approach, which certainly antedates our starting point by at least 300 years, will eventually take on an increasing urgency in the minds of Greek philosophers when faced with the growing dominance of Christianity. As we shall see, one of the arguments that Christian polemicists used against their pagan opponents that was thought to be especially effective was based on their evident internal discord. Whereas Christians had or appeared to have a consistent message, Greek philosophers disagreed extensively among themselves, undermining their credibility. So, facing an external enemy, philosophers wedded to traditional Hellenic views about religion tried to discover an underlying common and venerable wisdom, one that manifested itself within non-Greek traditions. Egyptians, Indians and Jews,

for example, could be seen to know what the ancient Greeks knew. There was no need to adopt an alien 'mystery' religion to access this wisdom.

In the period treated in this section, however, Christianity is only on the periphery of the consciousness of those engaged in elaborating and defending the ancient Greek philosophical tradition. Nevertheless, religion as a source of wisdom apart from or even in opposition to philosophy was an integral part of the intellectual milieu into which our student would have entered. The practice of philosophy had long since moved far beyond its original home in Asia Minor and in Athens. That India and Egypt had long traditions of wisdom literature was already well known. The rise of philosophy in Alexandria and the coastal towns of Palestine opened up new opportunities for encounters with non-Greek religion. We should also recall that especially in Alexandria natural and mathematical sciences were flourishing. Just as ancient Greek philosophy going back to its origin had to consider the meaning of a religious approach to wisdom, so it had to consider the deliverances of science. Ancient Greek philosophy never stood apart from religion and science; it moved, sometimes uneasily or even incoherently, between them. This was increasingly the case at the beginning of the third century of our era.

Finally, for our imagined student, especially if he or she is living in Rome, was the presence of ancient Greek philosophy within the Latin literary and rhetorical traditions. A clear picture of philosophy in our period will need to include an account of those ideas that infuse the various genres of Latin arts. The later episodes of conflict between philosophy and religion are enacted before an educated public accustomed to the literary representation of philosophical ideas.

THE LATE ROMAN EMPIRE FROM THE ANTONINES TO CONSTANTINE

ELIZABETH DEPALMA DIGESER

I PERIODIZATION, 'LATE ANTIQUITY' AND THE HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY

From the second until the eighth century CE, people living around the Mediter-ranean Sea experienced an unprecedented intermingling of cultures and ideas which would not be repeated until our own era. Roman conquest made possible this cultural fusion, which coalesced during the Augustan *pax Romana* extend-ing into the late second century and continued to flourish under the Germanic successor kingdoms and the Umayyad Empire. This is the dynamic, creative, intellectually flexible period with which this book is concerned. Understand-ing and valuing this period as deserving of study on its own terms, however, is a relatively new development. The utility of this volume's previous edition notwithstanding, the title of the *Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy* shows that A. H. Armstrong did not conceptualize this era as a coherent historical period. Rather his goal was to compile a resource for those who had read W. K. C. Guthrie's *History of Greek Philosophy* and now wondered how and why 'Greek philosophy took the form in which it was known to and influenced the Jews, the Christians of East and West, and the Moslems, and what these inheritors of Greek thought did with their heritage'.[1] Armstrong's perspective also minimizes the contribution of Latin philosoph-ical texts except as initiating a break with the classical paradigm. In other words, Armstrong intended to bridge classical and medieval thought. Such is not the vision of *The Cambridge History of Philosophy in Late Antiquity*. Heir to four decades of scholarship, this volume presents the ideas between its cov-ers not as merely useful for connecting ancient and medieval philosophical traditions, but as elements of a coherent vision that reflected the culturally var-iegated and politically dynamic period in which they arose. Specifically, the present volume sees the ideas of its subject as worth studying on their own

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[1] Armstrong 1967: xiv; Guthrie (1962–).

terms and as also reflecting the trends and overall significance of late antique society.

Armstrong's approach, however, derived from the Enlightenment and nationalist paradigms that shaped the study of history during the recent past. From the nineteenth century, Europeans and North Americans started to view history as a social scientific discipline and a tool for uncovering their 'roots'.[2] For example, from Mason Weems' biography of George Washington as an American Cincinnatus at the beginning of the nineteenth century, to Gilbert Murray's declaration that England played the part of 'liberal and democratic Athens' in World War II, classical Athens and republican Rome were especially singled out in the Anglophone world as not only embodying the quintessential elements of Greek and Roman civilization, but also as the remote ancestors (and justifications) respectively for Britain's increasingly democratic maritime empire and the new expansionist republic of the United States. Moreover, historians tended to view any outside influences on these ancient classical cultures as aspects of 'decline'; following Edward Gibbon, the twin culprits for the decline of Rome, for example, were Christianity and barbarism, a gloss for the Germanic invasions. These perspectives became reified in disciplinary boundaries – dramatically illustrated in the Bodleian's decision to house texts from the third century CE and earlier (i.e., 'Classics') in a different part of the library from medieval works (i.e., anything written after c. 300). Applying these perspectives to the study of philosophy prioritized the study of the 'classical' period, i.e., Athens in the fifth through to the mid fourth century, since the Roman republic at its 'height' was rather infertile ground for philosophical pursuits, given several efforts to expel philosophers from Rome during the mid second century BCE (Plu. *Cato* 22; Gell. 15.11).

In this paradigm, accordingly, the philosophy of Plato and Aristotle reflected the 'golden age', whereas that of Zeno of Citium and Epicurus was decidedly 'silver'. Whether deliberately or not, the definition of what was worth studying in philosophy was conflated with what made classical Athens interesting to modern historians. When philosophy was no longer a pursuit of men living in an independent democratic *polis*, it was thought to have 'declined'. Accordingly, for historians writing early in the twentieth century, philosophical pursuits in cities such as Egyptian Alexandria, capital of the Ptolemaic monarchy and locus for 'contact with oriental views', were not seen as wholly Greek and so not philosophically interesting.[3] This was even more the case once Roman emperors ruled the Mediterranean.

What made the Hellenistic world and the later Roman Empire suspect in the view of historians of philosophy was precisely those elements that set it off from

[2] Brown 2007: 5 and Gillett 2007. Lyon 1972: 28–31.   [3] Zeller 1905: 305.

the classical period. Whereas the civilizations of classical Rome and Athens could be seen as the pure embodiment of Greek or Roman culture, these eras were marked by the presence of 'alien' East or 'oriental' culture alongside those that were thought to be the ancestors of the modern western world. For the Hellenistic period, the era when Stoicism and Epicureanism were at their apex, such cultural blending was to some extent kept in check by the reluctance of most Hellenistic monarchs to appropriate indigenous culture within their capital cities. Alexandria, despite being in Egypt, was still a predominantly Greek city. By the time of the Roman emperors, however, the culture of Rome's ancient eastern provinces had long been circling back to affect the attitudes and values of even its capital city. In the first century CE, Juvenal satirized the orientalization of Rome (*Sat.* 3.62), but such attitudes did not stop eastern provincials from bringing themselves and their gods into the capital. Evidence for the vitality of philosophy in this period is its profession by non-Greek provincials from Philo of Alexandria to Iamblichus of Apamea in whose hands the Greek discipline responded to new cultures, both their own (in this case, Jewish and Syrian) and those they encountered around them. And yet for most of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, these new approaches to philosophy were not seen as indicating philosophy's vigour, but rather its decline, an attitude this volume seeks to correct.

Inspired by Henri Pirenne's vision of Mediterranean cultural and economic unity even after the fifth-century Germanic invasions,[4] historians of late antiquity see the period as defined by the process of transformation from an ancient to a medieval system. Historians following this perspective focus their inquiry on the Mediterranean world broadly conceived – whatever came under the sphere of Roman power and influence.[5] This point of view recognizes that symptoms of this transformation appear in the late second century CE, and continued to mark the culture of this region even several centuries later – through to the end of the Islamic Umayyad dynasty in 750. Although this perspective is not entirely uncontested nor do all those writing within it agree on every detail, historians of late antiquity argue that, despite marked regional differences, the people of the Mediterranean inhabited 'the same world'. This was not simply a 'common thought world', as Pirenne might have seen it. People of late antiquity lived in states where 'monotheistic beliefs, rooted in Judeo-Hellenistic culture, dominated public life and articulated regional practices into a "global" cultural bloc dominated by imperial superpowers'.[6] The period witnessed rising

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[4] Pirenne 1939: 234–5.
[5] This vision also embraces Rome's borderland regions, especially the Germanic Rhine and Danube frontiers, and Persian eastern front. Brown 2007: 2–3, 9, 11.
[6] Gillett 2007.

monotheism within a region marked deeply by Roman structures of admin-
istration and communication regardless of whether these were in the hands of
later Roman emperors, Ostrogothic kings, Byzantine emperors or Umayyad
caliphs. Advocates of this perspective also tend to value the historical study of
religion and philosophy (and are sensitive to the potential intersection of these
pursuits),[7] incorporate sources in Mediterranean languages other than Greek
and Latin, integrate the contribution of scholarship from around the globe,[8]
and are open to the cross-pollination of methodologies and theories of history.[9]

2 LATE-ANTIQUE PHILOSOPHY TAKES FORM UNDER THE ANTONINES

Late antique philosophy grew out of the mélange of cultures and traditions
flourishing during the Augustan *pax Romana*. It took its quintessential attributes
in the pressures besetting the late Roman Empire, and it quietly came to an end
when the Mediterranean no longer linked but divided the shores it washed,
becoming a barrier separating the Islamic Abbasids, the Byzantines and the
Frankish empire. According to the church historian Eusebius of Caesarea, when
the long period of republican civil strife found its resolution in the principate of
Augustus, 'old dissensions' and 'national' boundaries disappeared, and ideas then
spread easily throughout an empire at peace (*DE* 9.17).[10] Eusebius was referring
to Christianity, of course. But Augustan rule had the same effect on the practice
and teaching of philosophy for several reasons. First, people could now travel
freely and safely to cities such as Alexandria and Athens where philosophical
traditions had deep and vital roots. The system of rule adopted by the Principate
also promoted the incorporation of these elites – both philosophers and their
students – into civic and imperial positions of prominence, thus adding value to
such educational traditions. Philosophers themselves, in addition, could easily
travel to and interact with imperial and provincial centres of power in an effort
to influence public attitudes or policy, an activity facilitated by the respect and
status accorded them. Moreover, peace and, consequently, flourishing trade

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[7] Brown 2007: 7–8, 11. For himself Brown credits the deep influence of mid twentieth-century
Marxist historians who were among the first after Pirenne to study the period deeply in their
search for the factors that transformed the Mediterranean economy from a slave-owning to a feudal
society. They were among the first historians, besides those who studied the ancient church, who
also took Christian sources seriously, both as evidence for the effects of an ideology and as sources
in their own right.

[8] Ibid., 5, 10–11; Gillett 2007.

[9] Brown 2007: 8–9, 11. According to him, the study of late antiquity was born when the tools and
techniques of ancient and medieval historians merged.

[10] Eusebius of Caesarea, *The Proof of the Gospel, being the Demonstratio evangelica of Eusebius of Caesarea.*

facilitated the movement of eastern religious ideas – from Babylonian wisdom to Christianity – along the sea and land routes linking the far-flung regions of Roman dominion. And, finally, the relationships between diverse regions, cultures and ideas not only encouraged the formation of multiple identities (provincial, Roman and Greek), but also stimulated the philosophers writing during the *pax Romana* to actively draw on, theorize and systematize the Roman, Greek and Near-Eastern influences to which they were now exposed.

Writing under the emperor Antoninus Pius (138–61), 'a beneficent spider at the centre of his web, power radiating steadily from him to the farthest bounds of the empire and as steadily returning to him again',[11] Aelius Aristides testifies vividly to the negotiation of multiple identities and the continued flourishing of provincial culture during his reign and that of his adopted son, the Stoic philosopher Marcus Aurelius (121–80). His oration *To Rome*, in praising the distinctiveness of the city and its empire, expressed the elements of life under the Principate that gave this era – also called the 'Second Sophistic' – its unique character. The Mediterranean Sea, he observes, 'like a girdle lies extended, at once in the middle of the civilized world and of your hegemony. Around it lie the great continents greatly sloping, ever offering to you in full measure something of their own . . . Whatever is grown and made among each people cannot fail to be here at all times', making the city 'a kind of common emporium of the world . . . But that which deserves as much wonder and admiration as all the rest together', Aristides claims, 'and constant expression of gratitude both in word and action, shall now be mentioned . . . you alone rule over men who are free'. And he concludes, 'you have everywhere appointed to your citizenship . . . the better part of the world's talent, courage and leadership', so that 'all the other rivalries have left the cities, and this one contention holds them all, how each city may appear most beautiful and attractive'.[12] Testimony to the strength of the Principate's imperial achievement, provincial culture also sustained the pursuit of philosophy which gained as well from new imperial chairs of rhetoric and philosophy at Athens endowed by Antoninus Pius and Marcus Aurelius (Lucian *Eun.* 3–4).

Platonism came to be the dominant paradigm after several centuries of competition with Stoics, Epicureans and Peripatetics. In turning away from Scepticism, Platonists – often as they applied their perspective to new questions and new stimuli – increasingly claimed that they were returning to the origins of their school, whether these were the teachings of Plato himself or their master's forebears (such as Pythagoras) whose teaching, they thought, he had excelled in disseminating. Open to the idea that the dialogues and letters retained only a portion of Plato's teachings, Platonists of this era studiously mined not only

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[11] Weber 1936: 333–4.   [12] Aelius Aristides, *To Rome*, chs. 10–11, 34, 36, 59, 97.

Stoic and Aristotelian doctrine for echoes of their master's thought, texts that seemed to express what 'Plato had meant to say',[13] but also texts attributed to ancient religious sages – from Hermes to Orpheus – upon whose tenets, they believed, Plato had drawn. Another consequence of Platonism's turn away from Scepticism was that its profession as a way of life came again to draw inspiration from its metaphysics. As these metaphysical doctrines, in turn, came increasingly to be part of the repertoire of the educated Roman, certain Jews and then Christians came to see their own teachings mirrored in them. For example, in *De opificio mundi* the Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria taught that the accounts of creation in Genesis and Plato's *Timaeus* expressed the same metaphysics,[14] while the Christian author Justin equated his god with Plato's *huperouranios topos* (*Phaedrus* 247e).[15] Accordingly, late antique philosophy came to be as much a religious as a philosophical system – to such an extent that explaining and validating the efficacy of rituals became more than a passing concern. The moral and religious implications of the pursuit of wisdom in late antiquity meant also that philosophy became more relevant to the political life of the empire than it had been under the Republic or the Hellenistic monarchies. To some extent this outcome was simply a product of the late antique educational system, since philosophy was part of the curriculum for many Roman elites whose training came to frame their later service as bureaucrats or administrators. But philosophers themselves sometimes moved within certain court circles and so had opportunities to reflect on and formulate what made for a good policy, concerns that also had deep roots in the classical tradition.

    Where Plutarch, earlier in the century, had reflected on the cults of Isis and Osiris in response to the emperor Trajan's endowment of a new Isaeum in Philae, Platonist philosophers under the Antonines showed ever more heightened interest in the traditions, beliefs and practices of eastern cults along with a monotheistic metaphysics. Apuleius is a prime example of these multiple identities. An African philosopher and sophist, trained in Athens and fluent in Greek, he not only wrote a *bios* of Plato, but also a novel, *Metamorphoses*, in which his hero, Lucius, finds salvation in the cult of Isis – which the author not only understood as the 'unique divinity (*numen unicum*) . . . venerated by the entire world under many forms', but also saw in strongly Platonist terms (*Flor.* 20.4; *Met.* 11.5). Numenius, Apuleius' contemporary, even more vividly represents philosophical trends under the Antonines. Strongly believing that there had been a rupture in the teaching of pure Platonism on the part of Plato's sceptical followers in the Academy (fr. 24 Des Places), a position that he defended in his book *On the Dissension between the Academics and Plato*, Numenius taught that

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[13] Dillon 1996: xiv.   [14] Niehoff 2006.   [15] Moreschini 1990.

Plato himself had unified the teaching of Pythagoras and Socrates, constructing a doctrine that embraced the teachings of all nations and sages. Numenius strove to develop and communicate a systematic dogma, one that would restore 'Plato's doctrine to its pristine integrity', which also meant that Plato, thus refined, was heavily dependent on Pythagoras (fr. 24, 70). Moreover, Numenius' belief that the ancient doctrines of the Egyptians, Persian magi, Indians and Jews corroborated Pythagoras[16] opened up a wide variety of Scriptures to potential Platonist exegesis. Among such texts were the Hermetic corpus and the *Chaldaean Oracles*. The latter agree so closely with Numenius' doctrines that it is impossible to tell in which direction the influence ran, especially given the murky chronology for both the philosopher and the diviners who produced these texts.

Addressing his *First Apology* to Antoninus Pius, the Christian author Justin Martyr shows a different application of Platonism to ancient eastern wisdom, Jewish in this case. A native of Flavia Neapolis (Nablus), Palestine, Justin's quest for a credible philosophical school brought him to Ephesus and on to Rome, where he worked as a teacher (*1Apol.* 1.1; *Dial.* 2–7; Eus. *HE* 4.11.16). Like Plutarch before him (Plu. *Ad principum ineruditum* (*Moralia* 10.53) 780d–e; *On Monarchy, Democracy and Oligarchy* (*Moralia* 10.56) 827b), he was 'especially attracted to Platonic doctrine', but also integrated important aspects of Stoicism into his metaphysics (*Dial.* 2; *2Apol.* 10.1–2; 13.2–5). Like Philo, Justin applied his philosophical training to help him articulate religious texts, including Jewish Scripture, explaining, for example, the inspiration of Elijah through the Stoic doctrine of the *logos spermatikos* (*1Apol.* 46.2–3; *2Apol.* 13). And yet, Justin's efforts to persuade the emperor and his sons, Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus, were directed at refuting charges of atheism, immoral behaviour and disloyalty that had recently been brought against certain Christians (*1Apol.* 29).[17] In deploying his philosophy in service to his faith, Justin sponsored a new development with profound implications both for ancient Mediterranean thought and for Christianity. The emperors of the Principate had, of course, already come into contact with Christians. In these earlier encounters, imperial policy came to treat Christians as subject to capital punishment for obstinacy – i.e., failure to uphold the norms of civic cult and citizenship – but neither as irredeemable (if they recanted) nor worth hunting down.[18] Yet, unlike the

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[16] O'Meara 1989: 12–13.

[17] Rokéah 2002: x, 1–2, 10–11. Grant 1988: 53–4 argues that Justin wrote this defence of Christianity in response to the martyrdom of bishop Polycarp of Smyrna.

[18] These norms were most famously articulated in the correspondence between the emperor Trajan and Pliny the Younger when the latter was serving as governor in the province of Bithynia. Pliny, *Ep.* 10.96–7.

Bithynian Christians whom Pliny the Younger describes for Trajan, as people who appear to be simple, ordinary provincials, Justin used the most sophisticated philosophical language and concepts of his day to defend his new faith. Moreover, unlike his contemporaries, the Christian Gnostics, Valentinus and Basilides, Justin's Christianity was more strongly Pauline and so, at least outside of Alexandria,[19] much more mainstream. With his *First* and *Second Apology*, then, Justin brought Christianity into the philosophical *agon*, and from then on, its adherents sparred with and borrowed from their contemporaries in the Platonist schools – and vice versa.

Justin's apologies may have attracted the attention of the philosopher Celsus, whose *True Word* not only addresses many of the Christian's arguments, but also shows that he was interested enough in eastern religious traditions to respond to them. Nevertheless, Justin's appeals to the Antonine rulers did not alter the situation for Christians in the Empire's cities. Justin himself, at least according to Eusebius' *Church History*, was martyred under Marcus Aurelius, apparently for refusing to sacrifice to the gods (Eus. *HE* 4.11; 16). Indeed, according to Eusebius, not only Justin in Rome, but a number of Gallic Christians in Lugdunum (Lyons) were executed for their Christian beliefs during the reign of this Stoic emperor (*HE* 5.1). Marcus' own view of Christian martyrs, not as respectable individuals choosing freely to die for their beliefs (in the tradition, say, of Seneca), but as fanatics 'trained to die', resembled those of the Stoic Epictetus, whose *Discourses* the emperor knew.

The executions of Christians in Gaul, however, had less to do with the emperor's prejudices than the new pressures besetting the Empire, pressures that would demand the rise of tough, military leaders and which in turn would lead to the end of the polite partnership between emperor and Senate that had characterized the first form of imperial rule. As soon as Marcus ascended the throne after the death of Antoninus Pius in 161, the Parthians forcibly replaced the Roman client king in Armenia and beat back the Roman armies sent to defend him. In response, Marcus sent Lucius Verus, his brother and co-ruler. Like Marcus, Verus had little military experience, but with the help of several superb generals (*Prosopographia Imperii Romani*[2] A1402), the Romans ultimately restored their client to the Armenian throne. The soldiers returning to Rome, however, brought back with them an epidemic disease – probably smallpox, typhus or measles – which swept through many of the provinces to cause not only widespread mortality, but also the famines and economic shortfalls that always follow pandemics. In 169, three years after the end of the Parthian War and the outbreak of disease, two confederations of Germanic peoples, the

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[19] For the thinness of Pauline Christianity in second-century Alexandria, see Pearson 1986: 174.

Marcomanni and the Quadi, crossed the Danube and invaded Italy – the first invasion of Italian soil since the late second century BCE. The epidemic had so depleted Rome's military resources that Marcus and Lucius were reduced to drafting slaves; they also enlisted the physician-philosopher Galen to join them on campaign (Dio Cassius 71–2). Fighting in the north with his brother, Lucius died, leaving Marcus the sole management of the war and the Empire. Marcus spent most of his remaining years engaged with the restive Germanic tribes along the Danubian lines, leaving only to respond to the usurpation of Avidius Cassius, governor of Syria and formerly one of his most trusted generals. Marcus died at the frontier, leaving the throne to his son, Commodus.

3 THE LEAVEN OF THE THIRD-CENTURY CRISIS

Given the upheavals of Marcus Aurelius' reign, the citizens of Lugdunum in 177 may well have believed that the failure of local Christians to uphold their civic responsibilities to the local and imperial gods had lost Rome the blessings of the *pax deorum*. The specific local tensions that led to the Gallic martyrdoms are unknown, but the events of Marcus' reign illustrate the trends defining the ensuing century. One predominant trend was the cycle of invasion and usurpation during the reigns of the 'barracks emperors', men raised to the purple for their military prowess because of these circumstances but whose legitimacy thus was no longer grounded in their partnership with the Senate. When Septimius Severus (193–211) on his deathbed advised his son Caracalla to be good to the army and forget about everything else (Cassius Dio 77.15.2), he was both expressing Rome's need for military emperors and the reason for their instability. In 161, Lucius Verus had fought the Parthians, but in 224, the Sassanids, a new aggressive dynasty, took the Persian throne. From then until 298, they were a constant menace on the eastern frontier, drawing out the armies of Alexander Severus, Gordian II and Valerian (whom they captured). Likewise, almost every emperor between Caracalla and Diocletian (284–305) had to contend with Germanic disturbances along the Rhine and Danube frontiers. The frequent military flare-ups, often simultaneously in far flung regions of the Empire motivated a series of usurpations, not only in reaction to the local emergencies (as troops facing invaders often elevated their generals to the throne), but also in response to a perceived weakness of the emperor under whose watch the incursion had happened.[20] Often two or three men, perhaps only one of whom had some semblance of legitimacy, claimed the

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[20] Good examples are the usurpations of Maximinus Thrax (Herodian 6.7.9–10) and Decius (Zos. 1.21.2; *CIL* 3.4558).

purple at the same time. The emperor Gallienus (253–68), at least, recognized
the utility of this situation and conceded the rule of Gaul and Palmrya to others,
much to the chagrin of some of his military commanders – including Claudius
II who may have been involved in the emperor's assassination and hence his
own accession to the throne (Zos. 1.40; Aur. Vict. 33). Moreover, outbreaks
of widespread disease continued, bringing famine and economic decline along
with widespread mortality (e.g., Eus. *HE* 7.22; Cyp. *De mort.* 15–16). The
reign of Marcus Aurelius also presaged the continued sporadic outbreak of
state-sponsored hostilities against Christians. During the reign of Septimius
Severus, Christians protesting an edict forbidding proselytism were executed in
the city of Alexandria.[21] But the two most significant third-century imperial
efforts to target Christians occurred during the reigns of Decius (249–51) and
Valerian (253–60). These two attempts to force Christians to participate in
traditional civic cult were no doubt helped by Caracalla's edict of citizenship
(212) which enfranchised virtually all provincials, a benefit which carried with
it a responsibility to cultivate the Roman gods. And they are evidence for the
continuing sense that Christian civic impiety had brought on the wrath of the
gods, so apparently evident in the widespread upheavals (Cypr. *Ad Demetr.* 2).
Once Gallienus achieved sole power after the Sassanid capture of his father
Valerian, however, he must have recognized Christianity as a legitimate form
of association.[22] Forty-three years of peace ensued, interrupted for the last time
by the edicts of persecution that Diocletian issued in 303 (Lact. *Mort.* 12–15).

Drawing deeply from their immediate forebears of the Principate, late antique
philosophers active during the era of the Severan emperors through to the reign
of Diocletian shaped this heritage within the political, religious and cultural
crucible of their own day. This era was defined less by peace than by endemic
civil war and frontier incursion, preoccupied less with promoting traditional
polytheistic cults than grappling with the problem of religious diversity in an
increasingly monotheistic society. Platonists working after Numenius contin-
ued for the most part to avoid Scepticism. They were interested in 'going back
to' the real Plato, whose philosophy they viewed as strongly Pythagorean in
character, but also illuminated in important ways by Aristotle. Plotinus, who
set up his school at Rome, was, like Numenius, as much a Pythagorean as a
Platonist, but he was also influenced by the Peripatetic Alexander of Aphrodisias.

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[21] The edict forbade Jewish proselytism as well. SHA *Sev.* 17; Eus. *HE* 6.1.
[22] The clear implication of his edict returning burial grounds to churches after Valerian's persecution
(Eus. *HE* 7.13), an action that Eusebius interprets as giving Christians freedom of worship (see
also *HE* 8.1). Corroborating evidence is Aurelian's intercession in Antioch, restoring the church
to the 'orthodox' community after the excommunication of Paul of Samosata (Eus. *HE* 7.30). It is
unlikely that an emperor would return property to an association that he did not recognize as legal.

After Plotinus, Platonism began to assume as much a religious as a philosophical character, first by envisioning the philosopher as a spiritual guide. For example, Porphyry's biography of his mentor Plotinus described him as a 'god-like man . . . who often raised himself in thought, according to the ways Plato teaches in the *Symposium*, to the First and Transcendent God'. In return, 'that God appeared' to Plotinus, Porphyry says, 'who has neither shape nor any intelligible form, but is throned above intellect and all the intelligible' (*VPlot.* 23). Porphyry, who trained both with Longinus in Athens and Plotinus in Rome, found corroboration for Plotinus' own divinity in an oracle of Apollo, pronounced after the philosopher's death (*VPlot.* 22). Here and elsewhere with his *Philosophy from Oracles*, Porphyry continued a trend in late Platonism, often practised by Christians such as Origen, namely, using philosophical principles and techniques of hermeneutics to elucidate meaning in sacred texts, in this case prophetic messages from oracular sites, predominantly Claros, Didyma and Dodona. As with the Hermetic corpus and the *Chaldaean Oracles* (which Proclus would later analyse), these oracular texts preserved by Porphyry are evidence, not only for the penetration of Platonism into the thought world of the oracular prophets and priests (a trend neatly satirized by Lucian (*Alex.* 43)), but also for the assumption among philosophers that philosophy, properly applied, could find corroboration in ancient wisdom, whether Egyptian, Assyrian/Chaldaean or Greek.

Such trends were prominent among Christians as well, who began mingling freely with Platonists in the great philosophical circles of Alexandria, in particular. As a result, the dialogue between Christians and other Platonists in the third century generated a strong, overarching consensus, despite very different views regarding how to understand the salvific function of Jesus Christ. Taking off from the foundation that Justin had built, Clement and Origen, both residents of Alexandria, both associated with the city's catechetical school with the latter succeeding the former (Eus. *HE* 5.11–6), applied Platonist philosophy to interpret not only the texts that would comprise the New Testament, but also the ancient wisdom of Hebrew Scripture. Believing that the Incarnation allowed him to join 'cosmic and noetic in one meaning', Clement used 'theological analogies' to disclose Platonist 'noetic realities' in Scriptural narratives; he also used Plato to solve *aporemata* that he found in Scripture.[23] Born in Athens, Clement had, like Justin, travelled widely to perfect his education, having studied in southern Italy and in Egypt with teachers who hailed from across the Mediterranean.[24] Familiar with the literature of Alexandrian Judaism

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[23] Osborn 2005: 78–9 and ch. 5.
[24] His teachers came from Ionia, Coele-Syria, Egypt, Assyria and Palestine: Clem. *Strom.* 1.1.11. See Catherine Osborne, 'Clement of Alexandria' (chapter 15 of this volume).

as part of this education, Clement was convinced to take up Christianity by his teacher Pantaenus, a Stoic philosopher. Origen, Clement's successor, was even more deeply immersed in Greek philosophy, having studied with Ammonius Saccas, Plotinus' shadowy mentor (Eus. *HE* 6.19). Plotinus, for his part, had Gnostic auditors who probably included some Christians (Porph. *VPlot.* 16), and Porphyry had not only studied with Origen in his youth (Eus. *HE* 6.19), but had also, it seems, appropriated his daemonology and his view that philosophers should avoid blood sacrifice since it attracted evil daemons (*Abst.* 2.38–46). Perhaps the most interesting example of these mutually enriching exchanges between Christians and other Platonists is the career of Iamblichus of Chalcis. One of Iamblichus' early teachers was Anatolius, very likely the bishop of Laodicaea. He next styled himself as a more perceptive interpreter of Plotinus than Porphyry, whom the elder philosopher had made his editor (Porph. *VPlot.* 24). Nevertheless, Iamblichus proved that he was willing, if not to be influenced by, at least to travel similar paths as, his Christian contemporaries in articulating a theology that considered the salvation of ordinary people (e.g., *Myst.* 5.14–26) and that considered matter, not as something base to transcend, but as the substance through which humanity came in contact with the divine (*Myst.* 5.14–15).

By the end of the third century, then, most people engaged in the study of philosophy – whether Christian or not – both venerated and sought to conceptualize an utterly transcendent supreme divinity who was accessible to humanity through some form of intelligible principle – whether *nous*, for Plotinus or Christ, for Origen. Most people comprising the empire's philosophical circles believed that true sources of ancient or revealed wisdom – whether the Hermetic or Chaldaean corpus, contemporary oracles or Jewish Scripture, were coherent with the true philosophy of Plato when properly interpreted. Such a consensus occurred not only because philosophers were reading the same foundational texts and applying the same exegetical tools, but also because Christians and other philosophers were mingling in the same schools. Much of the population in the philosophical schools also believed that blood sacrifice was harmful for those striving to become ever closer to the transcendent God. That not all philosophers agreed on this point was responsible, in part, for the last Great Persecution (303–11). The failure of this persecution to turn Romans against Christianity shifted power away from the group favouring sacrifice, and provided favourable conditions, not only for the rise of Constantine, but for the empire's acceptance of Christian rule.

THE TRANSMISSION OF ANCIENT WISDOM: TEXTS, DOXOGRAPHIES, LIBRARIES

GÁBOR BETEGH

1 TEXTS

Among the authors writing in Greek between the archaic period and the end of Hellenistic times, there is only one philosopher whose oeuvre reached us in its entirety: Plato.[1] Although our corpus of Aristotle's work is far from complete, we have about thirty treatises generally accepted as authentic, and these works contain a significant part of Aristotle's philosophical output. With the founding fathers of the Hellenistic schools and their immediate followers, we are much worse off. Diogenes Laertius lists forty-one treatises as Epicurus' 'best books', out of which *On Nature* by itself was apparently almost double the size of the entire Platonic corpus. Of this monumental oeuvre only Epicurus' brief summaries of his central doctrines have reached us as quoted by Diogenes Laertius. From the early Stoics the only work that survives is Cleanthes' *Hymn to Zeus*, transmitted by Stobaeus. Short fragments and quotations remain of the more than 700 treatises of Chrysippus. No complete work of any of the Presocratics is preserved. The situation is considerably better with Latin texts written around the end of the Hellenistic period with the aim of transmitting Greek wisdom to the educated Roman audience: we have a number of Cicero's philosophical works as well as Lucretius' poem that closely follows Epicurus' *On Nature*.[2] For the vast majority of thinkers up to the end of the first century BCE

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[1] From the later period, we have Plotinus' works, due to Porphyry's editorial activity, and perhaps Marcus Aurelius'.

[2] In addition to these texts transmitted through medieval copies, we have a growing number of fragments discovered on papyri. Most momentous of these are Aristotle's *Athenaion politeia*, found in Egypt in 1890, a fairly long section of Empedocles' philosophical poem (Martin and Primavesi 1999); and the Epicurean texts found in the library of the Villa of the Papyri in Herculaneum, including fragments of at least six of the original thirty-seven books of Epicurus' monumental *On Nature*, treatises by the late second-century BCE Demetrius of Laconia and the first-century BCE Philodemus, as well as some fragments of Chrysippus (for a recent overview see Sider 2005). Further important papyri are the second-century CE Stoic Hierocles' *Elements of Ethics*, found in Egypt, and the anonymous commentaries on Plato's *Theaetetus* and *Parmenides*.

we are entirely dependent on the indirect evidence of quotations, paraphrases and summaries.

What we have today, both in terms of primary texts and ancient secondary sources, corresponds to a considerable extent to what was available in the best libraries at the end of antiquity. Between the end of the first century BCE and the third century CE, the situation was significantly different – never after and, more remarkably, never before, was the earlier philosophical literature so widely available. The books of most of the Presocratics could be consulted, the works of Hellenistic authors were still copied and taught, new editions of Plato were produced and Aristotle's treatises had become more easily accessible. This state of affairs was the result of the fact that from the first century BCE onwards, philosophers showed an unprecedented interest in the texts of authoritative figures of the past. This resulted in a sustained effort to organize the oeuvres and to produce canonical editions and commentaries. This activity centred around the works of Plato and Aristotle, but extended also to Presocratic and early Hellenistic authors.

This surge of interest in texts was the outcome of an interplay of complex intellectual and institutional developments. One important factor was the demise of the historical schools in Athens, precipitated by the sack of the city by Sulla in 86 BCE, and the ensuing decentralization of philosophical life. Although philosophers could organize satellite institutions away from Athens at earlier times as well – as for example Aristotle's disciple Eudemus did in his native Rhodes – the Athenian schools with their uninterrupted successions of scholarchs functioned as the depositories of tradition and the guarantors of school orthodoxy. Once this institutional setting became defunct, the more or less independent groups and teachers of philosophy around the Mediterranean came to view the texts of the founding fathers of their respective philosophical persuasions (*haireseis*) as the primary ties to school tradition. The teaching of philosophy was built around the study of authoritative texts and creative philosophical activity started to take the form of exegesis. This stance had important precedents in the Stoics' attitude towards Zeno, and especially in the way Epicureans treated Epicurus' writings, but from that time onwards it became ever more prominent among Aristotelians and Platonists. The attitude towards authoritative texts, especially in the Platonic tradition, gradually gained a spiritual dimension: centrally important texts were considered sacred, and their study a religious act. Moreover, there was a growing sense that the classical texts contained the fullest expression of a wisdom that their authors inherited from an even more ancient past.

A connected further element was provided by the changing attitude among the Stoics, Platonists and Aristotelians towards the authoritative figures of rival

schools. On the part of the Stoics there is evidence for a growing acceptance of the authority of Plato and Aristotle, which in some cases resulted in the modification of the orthodox Stoic doctrines. The process seems to have started in the late second century BCE with Panaetius, whom Philodemus calls both 'philoplaton' and 'philoaristoteles' (*Stoic. Hist.* col. 61.2–3; cf. Cic. *Fin.* 4.79; *Tusc.* 1.79). What is remarkable in the present context is that Panaetius' admiration for Plato apparently also took the form of a thorough philological study of his texts. Several aspects of this work were known earlier – that Panaetius found different alternative versions of the beginning of the *Republic* (D.L. 3.37), that he allegedly athetized the *Phaedo* (Asclepius, *In metaph.* p. 90 Hayduck; *Anth. pal.* 9.358; Elias, *In cat.* p. 133 Busse), and that he discussed the particularities of Plato's orthography (Eustathius, *Ad Od.* 23.220). Yet a recently rediscovered text of Galen strongly suggests that these were not sporadic remarks, but that Panaetius prepared a critical edition of Plato and treated these, and surely other related questions, in conjunction with this edition. Galen's text also implies that Panaetius' edition was still available and appreciated for its accuracy in the second century CE.[3]

In the Platonist tradition the important shift came with the break with the sceptical Academy, and the corresponding desire to present Plato's philosophy as a closed set of doctrines, on a par with the highly systematized teaching of the Stoics. The justification of this thesis, which soon became the dominant view, created immediate interpretative problems first, because one had to identify Plato's doctrines in the dialogues and, second, because different Platonic texts seem to present incompatible views on a wide range of crucially important subjects. Both the determination of the true Platonic doctrines, and the resolution of such apparent inconsistencies required close attention to the relevant passages, including the discussion of the grammatical constructions of sentences and the possible meanings of individual words. In many cases slight textual variations could make a considerable difference. To quote just one example: whether in the sentence at *Timaeus* 27c4–5 one reads a pair of epsilons or a pair of etas, and if the latter, how those etas are accented, has important consequences for the hotly debated question of whether Plato thought that the cosmos has a temporal beginning.[4] In such cases the champions of rival interpretations could defend alternative texts, and thus the identification of Plato's doctrine became

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[3] Galen, *Peri alupias* 13, with Gourinat 2008. The early Hellenistic history of Plato's texts is debated. See, e.g., Mansfeld 1994: 198–9. A remark by Antigonus of Carystus shows that around 270 BCE the complete oeuvre of Plato was not easily available outside the Academy (D.L. 3.66). It is also worth mentioning that at the time Arcesilaus possessed a copy of Plato's books (D.L. 4.32; Philod. *Acad. hist.* col. 19.14–16).

[4] Cf. Proclus, *In Tim.* 1.218.28–219.30 with Dillon 1989.

inseparable from philological questions. In commenting on *Timaeus* 77b–c, Galen compares different editions of Plato, and singles out the reading of the 'Atticiana' – an edition by Atticus, perhaps identical with Cicero's friend and renowned bibliophile – against the unanimous reading of other editions. What lends special interest to this reference is that the manuscript tradition of Plato's text known to us has the solitary reading of the 'Atticiana'.[5]

People were well aware of the existence of forgeries. Philoponus (*In an. pr.* 6, 8–10, *CAG* XIII, 2), for example, reports that '[t]hey say that forty books of the *Analytica* were to be found in the ancient libraries, and only four of them were judged to be by Aristotle'. In establishing the true doctrines of the master, it was thus essential to separate authentic and spurious texts. In some cases, this resulted in the athetization of passages or entire works that we would consider authentic: Panaetius regarded the *Phaedo* spurious, Andronicus the *De interpretatione*, and possibly the last chapters of the *Categories*, while the Stoic Athenodorus of Tarsus, head librarian in Pergamum in the first century BCE, expurgated doctrinally problematic passages from the oeuvre of Zeno (D.L. 7.34). We also hear about Epicureans doubting the authenticity of works attributed to the founding fathers of the school (Zeno of Sidon, fr. 25 Angeli-Colaizzo). On the other hand, later Platonists accepted the Platonic corpus established by Thrasyllus, consisting of 35 dialogues and 13 epistles, arranged in 9 groups of tetralogies (counting the *Epistles* as one work) – yet the authenticity of a few works included in this canon would be questioned by modern scholars.[6]

We also occasionally hear about tampering with authoritative texts. Hierocles of Alexandria reports that those Platonists and Aristotelians who objected to the growing tendency to emphasize the doctrinal continuity between Plato and Aristotle had no qualms about tampering with the texts of the founders of their own schools in order to prove more effectively the disagreements (apud Photius, *Bibl.* cod. 214, 173a; cod. 251, 461a).[7] The practice of Athenodorus of Tarsus mentioned above is another case in point.

This focus on classical texts also resulted in editions in which a complex system of critical signs flagged textual corrections, suggested transpositions, repetitions, spurious passages and stylistic features, as well as doctrinally important parts and doctrinal agreements (D.L. 3.66; *P.Florentina*).

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[5] Galen, *In Platonis Timaeum commentarii fragmenta*, 3, 2, p. 13, 3–4; with Irigoin 2003: 152. For a detailed, but at places dated, discussion of the transmission of Plato's text, see Pasquali 1952; on the role of the Atticiana, see 278–9.

[6] The extent and impact of Thrasyllus' activity is debated; cf. Tarrant 1993. It is notable that Thrasyllus arranged Democritus' oeuvre as well.

[7] Dillon 1989.

These changes in the philosophical landscape also provide the background against which we should appreciate the ancient reports about the fate of Aristotle's and Theophrastus' texts.[8] According to the famous story related by Strabo (13.1.54), Aristotle's school treatises, together with works by Theophrastus, were hidden in Asia Minor and were not available even to Peripatetic philosophers from Theophrastus' death until around the beginning of the first century BCE, when Apellicon, a wealthy Athenian bibliophile dabbling in Aristotelian philosophy, brought the whole lot back to Athens. We are told that Apellicon recopied and edited the texts, but apparently did a poor job. The collection then became part of Sulla's war-booty and was transferred to Rome.[9] Sometime later Tyrannio, the renowned scholar who also helped Cicero rearrange his library, took interest in the contents of the collection – yet it is unclear exactly what he did with it. Plutarch (*Sulla* 26) adds that Andronicus of Rhodes obtained the material from Tyrannio, and drew up a catalogue of it.

Before we come back to Andronicus, let us note that the main upshot of the story for both Strabo and Plutarch is that the eclipse of Aristotelianism in the Hellenistic period is to be explained by the unavailability of fundamental Aristotelian texts. Strabo even adds that those who had access to these texts again for the first time were 'better philosophers and better Aristotelians', yet they still could not attain precision in philosophy because their text of Aristotle was defective – no adequate philosophy without adequate texts. It is however notable that Panaetius probably died shortly before the collection reappeared in Athens, so Aristotle could reach the status of authority even outside the Peripatos without the material once hidden in Scepsis; it is probably this shift which raised interest in Aristotelian texts in the first place. Yet, neither Panaetius' enthusiasm, nor Apellicon, nor the arrival of the collection in Rome, nor even Tyrannio, made Aristotle's school treatises widely known. As Cicero remarks, few were the philosophers who actually read Aristotle (*Top.* 1.3). Cicero himself is aware of the school treatises and claims to have consulted them (*Fin.* 3.3.10), but this – with the probable exception of the *Nicomachean Ethics*[10] – leaves no discernible mark on his presentation of Peripatetic philosophy.

The definitive change in this respect was inaugurated when still in the first century BCE, the *Categories* started to be discussed across school boundaries.

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[8] Almost all the details are controversial. For a thorough re-examination of the evidence, with mainly negative conclusions, see Barnes 1999.

[9] Sulla's booty may have contained other libraries as well, of course. We know that his assault of Athens in 86 BCE caused some destruction in the Academy, but the school library may well have survived if it had not already been moved to Rome by Philo of Larissa.

[10] In the wake of Kenny 1978 there has been a controversy whether the *Eudemian* or the *Nicomachean Ethics* was treated as canonical. It seems certain that at least from the time of Aspasius (early second century CE) the *Nicomachean* (including the common books) was prioritized.

Among the earliest interpreters of the *Categories* Simplicius (*In cat.* 159.32–3) mentions the Peripatetics Andronicus and Boethus, the Stoic Athenodorus, the Platonist Eudorus, and Ariston of Alexandria, who was a disciple of Antiochus, but then became an Aristotelian (*Acad. Hist.* col. 35.10–16). From that time onwards the *Categories* remained at the centre of exegetical literature for centuries, primarily owing to the prominent place it acquired in the Platonist school curriculum. A further sign of the early recognition of the importance of the *Categories* is that someone in the second half of the first century BCE forged a version of it in Doric dialect, and circulated it under the name of the pre-Aristotelian Pythagorean Archytas, clearly with the intent to reclaim its doctrinal content for the Pythagorean tradition. The authenticity of this treatise was accepted by all later authorities, except Themistius – authoritative texts could be produced not only rediscovered. But the interest soon extended to Aristotle's other school treatises – especially in logic, physics and metaphysics – which then soon eclipsed Aristotle's 'exoteric' writings. However, first-hand knowledge of Aristotle remained much less common in later times as well. It is debated, for example, whether Origen had direct knowledge of Aristotle's texts, and if so how much.[11]

According to the formerly standard scholarly opinion, the breakthrough of interest in the Aristotelian school treatises in the first century BCE was due to Andronicus. He was customarily credited not only with producing the first proper edition of the collection acquired by Apellicon, but also with arranging books into treatises, rearranging passages, and adding bridge sentences and cross-references. Important works – most notably the *Metaphysics* – were supposed to have received their final form due to Andronicus' editorial activity, which – it was held – resulted in *the* authoritative text of Aristotle, standardly used by later philosophers, and forming the direct origin of our *corpus Aristotelicum*. Crucial elements of this view have been questioned recently.[12] Apart from the fact that the relative chronology between the first signs of interest in the *Categories* and Andronicus' work is controversial, we have no clear information about either the extent or the exact nature of Andronicus' activity. What remains certain is that he produced a *Pinakes* in five books, containing a biography of Aristotle and an annotated catalogue of the oeuvre, which provided a systematic arrangement of the treatises, discussed questions of authenticity, and gave information about their contents. At any rate, Porphyry took Andronicus as one of his models in thematically arranging Plotinus' treatises in the *Enneads* (*VPlot.* 24). Many of the details will remain controversial, but it seems safe to say that later editions of Aristotle's school treatises were produced on the basis of the material brought

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[11] Carriker 2003: 85–6.   [12] Barnes 1999; Gottschalk 1987.

to Rome by Sulla,[13] and that some treatises completely ignored before – most notably the *Categories* – started to be discussed with the arrival of this material.

On the whole, it appears that there was no single authoritative edition of any of the classical or early Hellenistic philosophers that would have completely supplanted rival editions. Commentators of Plato and Aristotle could compare and discuss the textual variants of different editions, older and newer. This situation can be contrasted with the way in which the Alexandrian editions of poets had rapidly become standard in the third century BCE, driving out alternative versions from circulation. Philosophers apparently continued to prepare their own working editions. Galen speaks about the care with which he prepared his own texts of Aristotle, Theophrastus, Eudemus, and other early Peripatetics, and his formulation suggests that this practice was not specific to him (*Peri alupias* 13, cf. Gourinat 2008). Insofar as teaching involved not merely the use of primary texts, but reliance also on the commentary literature (cf. e.g. Porphyry, *Plot.* 14; Alexander, *In an. pr.* 1.8–9), philosophers and schools needed to build up their own libraries, preferably with multiple editions of the most important works. Personal channels could be used to track down good copies for recopying. Cicero's correspondence gives extensive early evidence for this practice, and Julian would also later write to Priscus to seek out all of Iamblichus' works, knowing that Priscus' sister-in-law had a well-corrected copy (*Ep.* 2, 12.3–5).

We have little specific information about the philosophy holdings of the great public libraries in Rome and around the Empire.[14] Estimations can be based on the quotations of authors working in specific libraries. Thus, sifting Origen's and Eusebius' references may give us an idea of what was available in the library of Caesarea, which Pamphilus built around Origen's private collection. Such a study can reveal that most of the philosophy books (original works as well as manuals) were from the Roman period, whereas from the earlier literature the library had a fairly good collection of Plato's dialogues, probably Xenophon's *Memorabilia*, possibly some works by Chrysippus, but no Aristotle.[15]

After the third century, the texts of Presocratic and Hellenistic authors gradually went out of circulation. The same period was pivotal in the later transmission of Greek literature in general, which was determined, once again, by the interplay of intellectual, institutional and material factors. In this process the change of educational curricula in the fourth century, the philological activity in the cultural centres of late antiquity – above all in Athens, Antioch, Alexandria,

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[13] As Primavesi 2007 argues, the use of letters for the ordering of books – a peculiarity of the Aristotelian corpus – may provide further support for this point.
[14] For a conspectus of libraries, see Casson 2001 and Blanck 1992: chs. 8–10.
[15] Carriker 2003: ch. 3.

Gaza and Constantinople – the not infrequent destruction of libraries in acci-
dental fires and wars – such as the Herulian invasion in 267 CE – imperial cultural
politics, the decline of knowledge of Greek in Italy, and the highly complex and
fluid Christian attitude towards classical learning were among the determining
factors.

With respect to the last point, it is worth noting that the views and arguments
that Christian authors formulated about the use of pagan literature were mostly
at a theoretical level, and had no immediate practical consequences resulting in
the loss of particular works of individual authors. What mattered most was that
little-read books were not recopied in sufficient numbers and had decreasing
chances of survival. From the material side, the change from roll to codex –
which became popular among Christians as early as the first century, but became
generally adopted by pagan authors only during the third and fourth centuries –
meant that texts gradually had to be transferred from one medium to another.
Ultimately only those texts survived which were recopied in codex format, but
it is hard to assess the specific impact of this process on the loss of Greek texts.[16]
In the case of philosophical texts the activity of philosophical institutions, the
status of an author in the Platonist tradition, and the use of a text in producing
commentaries on Plato and Aristotle, appear to be the crucial factors.

In the text referred to earlier, Galen says that he also carefully copied 'most
of the works of Chrysippus' (*Peri alupias* 13), whereas there is evidence that
the Stoic Cornutus about a century earlier inherited the complete oeuvre of
Chrysippus from the poet Persius (*Vita Persi* 5). But with the disappearance
of active Stoic philosophers the situation drastically changed.[17] As we can see
from Epictetus' remarks, Stoic teaching practice was also organized around
the exegesis of the founders of the school (*Diss.* 3.21.6–7), even though this
apparently did not lead to the writing of commentaries.[18] The teaching of
Stoicism declined by the middle of the third century and we do not hear about
practising Stoic philosophers after that time. A century later Themistius informs
us that the last available but already damaged books of Zeno, Cleanthes and
Chrysippus were recopied in the impressive rescue operation of books initiated
by Constantius II in the library of Constantinople (*Orat.* 4, 59d–60c). But 200
years later, Simplicius can only report that most of the books of the Stoics
have already disappeared (*Cat.* 334.1–3), and what remained surely consisted
mainly of the works of the Roman Stoics. Platonism incorporated important
elements from Stoicism, but once that was done, it was in no need of early Stoic
texts. Epicurean books apparently went out of circulation as early as the fourth
century (Julian, *Ep.* 89b354–5).

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[16] On the change from roll to codex, see, e.g., Reynolds and Wilson 1968; Gamble 1995: ch. 2.
[17] Gourinat 2005.   [18] Donini 1994: 5090–1.

Simplicius is also our last important informant about the books of the Pre-socratics. In commenting on Aristotle, Simplicius affixes long quotations to his explanations and shows an unparalleled concern to quote first-hand. This prac-tice makes him our only source for numerous centrally important fragments of Parmenides, Empedocles, Anaxagoras and Diogenes of Apollonia. In order to explain a reference at Aristotle's *Physics* 1.4, 187a12–16, and to decide in that context whether Theophrastus or Nicolaus of Damascus and Porphyry are right in the identification of the material principle of Diogenes of Apollonia, Sim-plicius quotes extensively from Diogenes' *On Nature*, providing in the process seven of the twelve known fragments of this author. He notes at the same time, that although he knows of other treatises of Diogenes, this is the only one that he had access to (*In phys.* 151.20–153.22). A few pages earlier Simplicius quoted more than fifty verses of Parmenides because of the 'rarity of the work' (*In phys.* 144.28). No doubt, such books were extremely scarce. However, with-out Simplicius' scrupulosity, we probably would not have guessed that even a single copy of Diogenes or Anaxagoras could still be in existence in the sixth century.

As the use of citations and the comparison of different editions by Proclus and Damascius also indicates, the Platonist school in Athens had an impressive collection.[19] Yet, the question of Simplicius' access to rare books is complicated by the fact that he probably wrote the majority of his works, including the *Physics* commentary, after the Persian exile of the Platonist philosophers. It is unclear where he settled, whether he could still rely on the school's collection and what other library was available to him.

2 SECONDARY SOURCES

Simplicius' extensive use of original texts is truly exceptional. In the vast majority of cases authors relied on and quoted from secondary sources. These sources, self-standing works or sections in works, may be very different in nature: manuals, anthologies, florilegia of quotations, dialectical presentations and various inventories of philosophical views, that we may collectively call 'doxographical'.[20]

Several practical and material factors made the use of such texts highly advan-tageous, if not inevitable. Finding specific passages or topics in ancient works, especially when they were written on papyrus rolls, was cumbersome. There was no indexing, and references were made only by rough approximations, most

[19] On Proclus' home library, see e.g., Philostratus, *Vitae sophistarum* 2.21.
[20] The Latin equivalent of the term 'doxographer' was coined by Hermann Diels more strictly for the authors in the tradition stemming from Theophrastus' collection of physical opinions.

commonly by pointing to a specific book, or books, of a work. Moreover, as the works of an increasing number of authors became more and more difficult to find, these compilations had an ever growing role as the main repositories of information. But the converse is also true: the extensive use of secondary sources must have precipitated the loss of original works. It is always important to keep in mind in assessing sources that different compilations contained shorter or longer citations from original works, so when an author provides a quotation, there is no guarantee that he consulted the original work.[21]

Of works that could be consulted for information on philosophical views, the most sophisticated ones offered detailed presentations of doctrines together with the arguments supporting them, as well as the historical and dialectical context in which they were formulated. Cicero's expositions of the ethical (*Fin.*), epistemological (*Acad.*), and theological and physical (*ND*) views of the Hellenistic schools offer a prime example. As we can see from the fragments preserved by Stobaeus, Arius Didymus[22] also presented fairly extensive reviews of Stoic, Peripatetic and Academic ethical doctrines, but showed more interest in definitions than in arguments. The presentation of the views of different schools was a popular genre (*Peri haireseōn*) in Hellenistic times, practised also by authors like Eratosthenes, Hippobotus, Philodemus and Panaetius.

Diogenes Laertius (early third century CE?) occasionally also offers relatively detailed summaries of the doctrines of individual philosophers and schools. His work in ten books is a good example of the variety and fluidity of genres and of the way in which information coming from different sources could be combined. Apart from the doxographical sections, the principal stratum of Diogenes' work is constituted by the biographical tradition. Works in this tradition offered some factual information about a philosopher (provenance, dates, teacher(s), major biographical events etc.), but focused primarily on personal details, anecdotes and memorable sayings that reveal the philosopher's character, and hence – it was generally assumed – can be just as crucial as his doctrines in evaluating his philosophy. Dates were often based on speculations and the anecdotes made up from the philosopher's writings. In Diogenes, the proportion of doxographical and biographical material is very uneven in the presentation of individual philosophers. In many cases, he appends further documents, some of which are of prime importance for us: catalogues of the works, letters, wills, poems. And, for a personal touch, Diogenes includes fifty-two epigrams he composed on different philosophers. The work as a whole is structured according to the *Successions* (*Diadochai*) type.

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[21] For the example of Aristotelian quotations in Hippolytus, see Mansfeld 1992a: 134–52.
[22] He may be identical with Arius, Augustus' Stoic court philosopher; but his date and identity remain controversial. Cf. Hahm 1990 and Göransson 1995.

Works in this genre – probably starting with the *Successions of Philosophers* of the early second century BCE Sotion – construed the entire history of philosophy on the model of Hellenistic schools. They presented successive generations of philosophers as heads of schools, and then connected the schools in two (or sometimes more) long uninterrupted chains. In the arrangement used by Diogenes, the Ionian line starts with Thales, and the Seven Wise Men, continues with the Milesians, then, through Anaxagoras and Archelaus it reaches Socrates, where it forks into a line linking the Cynics and the Stoics, and another which starts with Plato and then splits into an Academic and a Peripatetic branch. The Italian line begins with Pherecydes, the teacher of Pythagoras, then through Xenophanes, the Eleatics and the Atomists it ends with the Epicureans. Heraclitus was presented as an isolated figure. In general, the establishment of philosophical genealogy emphasizes the importance of tradition. Yet, a lineage in which historical, speculative and interpretative elements are mixed can reveal more substantive assumptions. That the Academy and the Peripatos are 'siblings', and the Stoics are their 'cousins', whereas the Epicureans are not part of the family at all, could be widely agreed. On the other hand, the placement of Plato and his successors in one line, and Pythagoras and Parmenides in a separate tradition, evinces a particular stance on Plato that could hardly be accepted by later Platonists.

Diogenes does not seem to have a particular agenda apart from presenting everything he can about philosophers. His contemporary, the Christian Hippolytus of Rome, by contrast, provides extensive accounts of philosophers within a highly charged polemical context in his *Refutation of All Heresies*. Hippolytus' objective is to prove that the heretics are only echoing the absurd views of the pagan philosophers and, as he explains in the *Prologue* (1.1.5), he is therefore obliged to expound their doctrines in sufficiently great detail. This rationale makes Hippolytus a valuable source, especially for Empedocles and Heraclitus – yet the wish to emphasize the parallels can distort his presentation in important ways.

The texts considered thus far present the material around individuals or schools. An alternative organizing principle is thematic. The compilation of thematically arranged collections of philosophically relevant views had a long history that can be traced back to the fourth-century BCE sophist Hippias, whose work Plato and Aristotle also used. Aristotle elaborated the methodology of the creation of such compilations for dialectical purposes (*Top.* 1.14) and effectively used surveys of available views in his systematic works. Much of the later doxographical material ultimately goes back to Aristotle's surveys, and to the works composed by his disciples, some of which were specifically aimed at a methodical presentation of earlier views in various fields. Theophrastus' *Peri phusikōn doxōn* (it is debated whether it should be translated as *The Opinions of*

Natural Philosophers or *Opinions in Natural Philosophy*) had a major, although not exclusive, role in the subsequent tradition.

The most extensive extant instances of this tradition are the *Placita* (*Tenets*) of the second-century Ps.–Plutarch, long excerpts in the *Anthology* of the fifth-century Stobaeus, and the shorter passages in the *Therapy for Diseases of the Greeks* of Theodoret, Bishop of Cyrrhus. On the basis of the close parallels among these texts, Hermann Diels has shown in an epoch-making work that they go back to a common source, a work probably written by a certain Aëtius, who in turn was drawing on the anterior tradition, going back to the Peripatetic material.[23]

The temporal coverage of the *Placita* literature, just as the *Successions*, extends back to archaic times – Homer or Thales – and ends, for the most part, with the first half of the first century BCE.[24] Although there is some evidence for an analogous treatment of logical and ethical topics (e.g., Ps.–Galen chs. 9–15), the lists in the *Placita* tradition deal in a systematic manner with topics that belong to the physical part of philosophy. Ps.–Plutarch, who seems to follow the general structure of his source, covers the following in 133 chapters divided into five books: metaphysical principles, theology, fundamental physical concepts (time, place, motion, necessity and fate etc.), cosmology (shape, generation, destruction, declination of the world), astronomy (e.g., substance, figure, distances, light of the heavenly bodies), meteorological phenomena, geology, psychology (perception, memory, dreams, etc.), physiology, embryology, and some non-human biology.

Some of the inventories of views visibly aim at comprehensiveness (for example, the list of material principles in Ps.–Galen ch. 18 has twenty-three items), whereas in other cases it is hard to see why exactly only two or three views are mentioned or recopied. Some of the positions are written out in some detail, but most items are stripped down to skeletal formulations. The views can be arranged systematically or in antithetical pairs (e.g., those who held that the soul is corporeal are opposed to those who held it to be incorporeal), to which compromise or unclassifiable views can be appended. These ordering principles may be combined in the compilation of more complex lists.

Those who made use of such collections always did so in composing a work that had its own message, structure and argument. These factors affected in various ways the choice, scope and arrangement of the texts taken over. Authors

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[23] Diels 1879. Mansfeld and Runia 1997 and 2008 undertake a major re-examination of the evidence. They confirm the fundamentals of Diels' reconstruction, but provide amendments in important details, such as Diels' attempt to identify in Theophrastus' *Peri phusikōn doxōn* a unique ultimate source of the *Placita* literature.

[24] Sedley 2003: 28; Mansfeld and Runia 1997: 320. The last philosopher mentioned by Aëtius is Posidonius. The same is true for Arius Didymus.

may copy out just one citation or view that they find particularly apt for their purposes. Or they can copy out longer, uninterrupted stretches, for example a complete survey of the material principles: Sextus Empiricus e.g., reproduces the complete list that we also find in Ps.-Galen at both *PH* 3.32 and *M* 9.360–4. Or they can excerpt a whole range of such chapters. Thus Eusebius in books 14 and 15 of his *Praeparatio Evangelica* takes over a series of lists from Ps.-Plutarch. If an author found anything to add or update he might introduce excerpts from other texts, either from original sources or, more often, from other handbooks. Stobaeus, for instance, had a tendency to add quotations from Plato, whereas the *Philosophical History* of Ps.-Galen is nothing but an epitome of epitomes, partly of Ps.-Plutarch and partly of a different tradition or traditions. Moreover, once someone composed a work in such a way, by drawing on one or more such sources, modifying his source material in whatever way, this newly composed work could now become a source for others. It can also be shown that authors simultaneously used fuller and more abridged versions of the same material: Theodoret relied on both Aëtius and the abridged version of Ps.-Plutarch, and Diogenes Laertius used Hermippus both directly and through Sosicrates.[25] In this way, a living tissue of texts was constituted, the elements of which were constantly objects of amplification, abridgement, rearrangement and application for a wide range of purposes.

On the whole the context-free data of these lists hardly made them apt for a constructive philosophical use. One could certainly quote them as a general display of knowledge or for educational purposes, as Stobaeus excerpts large parts of the *Placita*, quotes long sections of Arius Didymus, along with selections from poets, historians and orators, to advance the development of his intellectually unpromising son (Photius, *Bibl.* 112a14–24). Or one could sketch the prehistory of a favoured view: Augustine draws on his doxographical source about the theological doctrines of philosophers in the Ionian tradition (the *Successions* scheme is at work) saying in conclusion that 'it is in order to lead up to Plato that I have summarized these facts' (*De civ. Dei* 8.3, trans. Dyson). The arrays of divergent and incompatible views were, however, particularly apposite to advocating the suspension of judgement by the construction of *diaphonia* arguments. This is Eusebius' explicit motivation for copying out extensively from Ps.-Plutarch (15.32.9), and in the example mentioned earlier, this is of course Sextus' reason for presenting the long inventory of material principles – the more formidable the list, the more effective the *diaphonia*.

A final example will bring various topics touched upon in this chapter together. In the *De principiis* Damascius presents his highly complex metaphysical

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[25] The methodological problems following from this fact are emphasized in Frede 1999b.

system and discusses the highest levels of reality down to the third member of
the intelligible triad. Yet before he continues with the lower levels in his *Com-
mentary on Plato's Parmenides*, he turns to showing that there is nothing new in
the doctrine he has expounded. Not only can one find the expression of the
same system in the authoritative texts of the *Chaldaean Oracles* and the *Orphic
Rhapsodies*, provided one reads them correctly – a topic on which Syrianus
had also written – but actually all the ancient 'theologians', Greek and barbar-
ian alike, professed this very same doctrine. In order to demonstrate the point,
Damascius avails himself of various sources, but most of his evidence comes from
the material that Aristotle's disciple, Eudemus compiled more than eight hun-
dred years earlier – which in turn relied on the earlier collection of Hippias –
about the theogonies of Orpheus, Homer, Hesiod, Acusilaus, Epimenides,
Pherecydes, the Babylonians, the Magi and the Sidonians.[26] Philodemus used
the same material, directly or indirectly, in the first century BCE in composing
his *On Piety*, and Cicero again used Philodemus (or Philodemus' source) for his
On the Nature of Gods (1.25–41; cf. Philod. *De piet.* 3–17). For Philodemus, the
Eudemian material ultimately serves the demonstration of Epicurus' theology.
By contrast, in Damascius' interpretation – which is a late expression of an atti-
tude that can be traced back to Numenius – Eudemus' collection is evidence for
the agreement of archaic sages and thus transmits elements of the same ancient
wisdom that can be recovered by an inspired but also philologically attentive
reading of Plato's authoritative text.

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[26] *De principiis* 3:162.19ff. Combès and Westerink = 1:319. Ruelle; Betegh 2002.

CICERO AND THE NEW ACADEMY

CARLOS LÉVY

In order to understand the relation between Cicero and the Academy we must start by giving up a number of interpretative schemes that we might be tempted to apply. For example, it is best to avoid as much as possible the use of the concept of Scepticism. Not only did it not exist linguistically in Latin, but Cicero himself did not regard Pyrrho as a Sceptic and seems not to have known about the renewal of Pyrrhonism by Aenesidemus, even though he and Aenesidemus were contemporaries.[1] Thinking about Scepticism without its Pyrrhonian component is, for us, if not impossible at least very difficult. But for Cicero it was only the New Academy which gave definite form to the idea of doubt, something that was admittedly already present in other philosophers, but was still undeveloped. Further, for us Scepticism is a self-sufficient philosophical orientation, whereas the New Academy's account of doubt poses for Cicero the problem of both institutional and philosophical continuity with Plato, whom he never presents as exclusively a philosopher of doubt. In addition, our conception of what it is to adhere to a certain philosophical orientation is derived from the Greek model. However, Cicero was not a professional philosopher, and the social location of philosophy was in any case different in Rome. By his own efforts the *homo nouus* had become consul, and then *consularis*. This meant that because of his origins he was located rather at the margins of the *nobilitas*, and yet he could not ignore the political and social codes that were associated with his rank. In *De finibus* he writes that certain things are permissible to the Greeks, which are not to Romans (*Fin.* 2.68). He is referring to Epicureanism here, but the same thing is equally true for other doctrines. One further point to note is the importance of tradition as an internal part of philosophy itself. What might seem to us to be a purely individual choice on the part of Cicero has a precedent in the satirical poet Lucilius, who already exhibits some of the

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[1] The only passage in Cicero that could have suggested that he knew Aenesidemus is *Luc.* 32. See the contradictory views on this text in Glucker 1978: 116 n. 64, Ioppolo 1986: 65–70, Lévy 1992: 24, Striker 1980: 64.

principal constituents of what came to be the Ciceronian attitude: admiration for Plato and a rather detailed acquaintance with his work, a close relation to the New Academy – Lucilius, after all, was the dedicatee of one of the works of Clitomachus (*Luc.* 102) – and at the same time the use of Stoic ethics as a means of reinforcing the values of the *mos maiorum* that had been severely shaken by the upheavals of the era of Roman expansion.[2]

1 CICERO: WITNESS AND ACTOR IN THE ACADEMY'S HISTORY

1.1 The period of initial formation

The first philosophical doctrine in which Cicero was trained was, oddly enough, Epicureanism, which he came to know through the instruction of Phaedrus (*Fam.* 13.1.2). It was, however, an Academic, Philo of Larissa, who provoked in him a sudden love for philosophy. Philo had arrived in Rome in 88 BCE, escaping from Athens, which was besieged by Mithridates. This decision had important consequences for the history of Platonism. The three-centuries-old Platonic institution was thus cut off from its home base and its practices; this ultimately caused its demise, because Philo did not have a successor.[3] In the *Brutus* (306) Cicero relates his encounter with Philo in these terms:

After Philo, the head of the Academy, was exiled together with Athens' principal citizens during the war against Mithridates, and took refuge in Rome, I devoted myself to him, inflamed by some sort of incredible passion for philosophy, to which I applied myself with such sustained attention that, independently of the great appeal of the questions themselves, whose variety and extreme importance captivated me, the juridical modes of reasoning seemed to me forever superseded.

Notice that nothing precise is said about Philo's philosophical orientation; rather he appears in the text more as a representative of philosophy itself than as the spokesman of a particular doctrine. He is not presented as a theoretician of doubt, but rather as someone who has mastered a wide variety of different kinds of knowledge. Oddly enough, Cicero mentions the name of this, the last scholarch of the Academy, only very rarely before his second period of philosophical writing (*De or.* 3.110; *Fam.* 13.1.2 from June or July 51), which followed the civil war, which, by making Cicero's political isolation complete, caused him to return to the pre-political period of his life, the years of formation partly devoted to philosophy. Philo's death left the Academy without an official

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[2] See Görler 1984.

[3] For the history of the Academy see Glucker 1978, *passim*, Görler 1994: 776–85 and *passim*. On the end of the Academy, see Sedley 1981. On Philo of Larissa, see Brittain 2001.

representative (*Luc.* 17), since Antiochus of Ascalon, although he claimed to be its legitimate philosophical heir,[4] had by seceding from it destroyed the institutional link even before the scholarch left for Rome. Consequently, when Cicero in the last part of his life sets out to defend the philosophy of the New Academy, which he claims has been completely forgotten (*ND* 1.6), he could think of himself as the sole successor of Plato's last successor. If his consular *dignitas* forbade him to assume this role formally, the *Tusculanes* (2.9) show, with explicit reference to Philo, that the temptation was there. Cicero appears there as a teacher discoursing to a disciple to whom a minimal role is assigned. None of Cicero's friends could have been represented like this as a mere passive disciple.

When in 79 BCE Cicero went to Greece and Asia, for a trip which was dictated by political prudence, but which was also motivated by a desire for self-improvement, he heard the lectures of Antiochus of Ascalon, of whom he speaks in *Brutus* (315), in an emotionally rather detached way, but with much admiration as a great authority, an impressive scholar, a well-known and very wise philosopher. One should note that whereas Philo is designated simply as the *princeps Academiae*, 'head of the Academy', an expression which corresponds exactly to his institutional position as scholarch, Antiochus is presented as a 'very great philosopher of the Old Academy'. The genitive '*veteris Academiae*' cannot refer to an actual institution because the Old Academy had ceased to exist several centuries before, but rather it signifies that in Antiochus the philosophical orientation of the Old Academy had come to life again. Antiochus claimed a direct line to the dogmatic Academy of the immediate successors of Plato, cancelling out the intervening period which in his eyes was a mere parenthesis dominated by the disastrous philosophy of doubt which Arcesilaus had introduced. Although it is generally agreed that Antiochus was a true dogmatic, the exact nature of his dogmatism is a matter of controversy. Cicero called him a '*germanissimus Stoicus*' (*Luc.* 132), which means roughly speaking an authentic Stoic with a Platonist veneer. It must not be forgotten that this assertion is found in a strongly polemic context, in fact in a *disputatio*, in which one does not necessarily really accept the arguments one defends. A reading of the *De finibus*, where Antiochus criticizes Stoic ethics almost as vigorously as he had attacked the Academic suspension of judgement, encourages a more nuanced interpretation of this philosopher, who seems to have had the strategy of reaffirming the primacy of a dogmatic version of Platonism into which he integrated Stoic and Peripatetic elements, claiming that these were in fact already present in Plato and his immediate successors.

[4] See Glucker 1978, *passim* and Barnes 1989.

1.2 The New Academy's perception of the history of the Academy

Cicero knew Plato's works at first-hand, and translated many of them.[5] His admiration for the founder of the Academy was directed as much at the writer as at the philosopher, so that in the *Tusculanes* (1.39) he did not hesitate to state that he preferred to be mistaken with Plato than to be right with philosophers like the Epicureans. Yet through his two Academic teachers Cicero received two radically different versions of the history of the Academy, a situation further complicated by the fact that Philo of Larissa himself, as we will soon see, distanced himself from the New Academic orthodoxy when he arrived in Rome. That orthodoxy had been expounded in the works of Clitomachus, a disciple of Carneades, who remained faithful to the doctrine of the general suspension of belief (*epochē*) and who wrote, as Cicero tells us, a large number of works (*Luc.* 16). If we follow the presentation that Cicero gives in *Lucullus*, which expresses the view of the New Academy, although it is not always possible for us to trace which exact sources Cicero is using with the requisite precision, the history of the Academy can be summarized as follows.

The Platonic school is considered to embody the most complete expression of a tendency toward doubt which is present in many philosophers, especially the Presocratics; in the work of these philosophers the members of the New Academy underlined the elements of uncertainty, thus making them retrospectively part of a genealogy of Scepticism.[6] Thus they sought to deflect the criticism that had been made of them to the effect that they had brought about a revolution in the Academy. Cicero, in any case very disinclined to associate himself with radical reversals, looks for *auctores* who would enable him to construct a sort of philosophical *mos maiorum* that would vindicate this New Academic view. Among these *auctores* the only significant Presocratic who is missing is Heraclitus, and the reason for that is probably because he was a major point of reference for the Stoics. Similar considerations do not prevent Cicero, who here is obviously being provocative, from including Chrysippus among the later philosophers who used arguments against the reliability of knowledge based on the senses.

In this perspective, Socrates is the one who did not content himself merely with making scattered remarks about the uncertainties of knowledge, but marked a new stage by admitting only one type of knowledge, that of universal ignorance (*Luc.* 74; *Lib. Ac.* 1.45–6). Regarding Plato things are definitely

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[5] See Görler 1994: 1052–3, Lambardi 1982, Powell 1995.

[6] For convenience we will use the term 'New Academy' to refer to the period from Arcesilaus to Philo of Larissa. Sextus Empiricus (*HP* 1.220) gives a more complex classification in which Arcesilaus had established the Middle Academy and Carneades the New Academy. He notes that certain other writers added a fourth Academy, that of Philo and Charmadas, and a fifth, that of Antiochus. Cicero recognizes only an Old and a New Academy.

less clear. Indeed, in two different places (ibid.) Cicero presents Plato as a philosopher who, contrary to what Antiochus asserts, cannot be considered a dogmatic. However, he also, in §162 of the *Lucullus*, includes Plato in the doxography of views about the nature of truth and attributes to Plato the view that the criterion of truth is intellect. This contradiction might suggest that we look for a resolution in terms of the different sources Cicero is using; in particular one might think that one could detect here a trace of the innovations of Philo of Larissa. One cannot, however, completely exclude the possibility that this is an indication of the difficulty the New Academy had in claiming Plato as an ancestor of the doctrine of the universal suspension of judgement.

The legitimizing historical account just sketched aimed at establishing a *continuum* between Socrates and Arcesilaus. On this account, one needed only to suppress the final element of knowledge that Socrates had allowed to remain and that would have led naturally to Arcesilaus' own philosophy of generalized doubt. The idea of absolute doubt would then be nothing but Socratic philosophy pushed to its ultimate consequences. Obviously for us there is a real distinction between an approach which declares that awareness of our own ignorance is a form of knowledge and an approach that claims that we cannot even have certain knowledge of our ignorance, but Arcesilaus' way of presenting this makes it possible to claim that the New Academy was being at least partially faithful to a Socratic inspiration.

At the very end of the passage just cited from the first book of *Libri Academici* Cicero writes that Arcesilaus' radicalized doubt was the accepted doctrine in the Academy until the time of Carneades. In reality, however in *Lucullus*, he also notes the divergences between Carneades' disciples who clashed over the correct interpretation of his teachings. Clitomachus, who considered his teacher to be a hero, a kind of Hercules in the domain of philosophy, also thought that while the thought of Carneades could never be totally fathomed, Carneades himself had never deviated from the rule of universal *epochē* (*Luc.* 108). According to him, Carneades had never dogmatically held that the sage would give his assent to opinion (*Luc.* 78). In his view this was nothing but a proposition entertained dialectically, which could be understood only in the context of its use as part of a refutation of Stoicism. Carneades, therefore, should never be thought to have gone beyond the *pithanon*, which Cicero translates as *probabile*,[7] that is, beyond plausible representations which, he recognized, could be used as guides to action and inquiry, but to which he refused to give the status of being 'evidently true'; this status the Stoics attributed only to *phantasia katalēptikē*,

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[7] Glucker 1995. On the controversial interpretations of the *eulogon* and *pithanon* in the thought of the New Academy, see Couissin 1929 and Ioppolo 1986.

that is to a representation which, by virtue of the rational order inherent in nature, gave an exact image of the object. Metrodorus of Stratonice, on the other hand, who claimed to be the only one who understood the thought of Carneades and Philo of Larissa, asserted probably in his Roman books that the sage might give his assent to opinion (*Luc.* 78). Carneades thus could be said to have left behind the negative perfection of the kind of sage who did not give his assent to any representation; such a sage, who never gave his assent to any representation, was the perfect negative image of the absolute knowledge of the Stoic sage. Rather Carneades had passed beyond all that to a fallibilist conception of wisdom, according to which the sage could run the risk of error.[8] Cicero also mentions other members of the New Academy, such as Charmadas, who studied for seven years in Athens under the direction of Carneades before then moving to Asia, from whence he returned to found his own school, the Ptolemaeum. We know that Charmadas, who was endowed with a prodigious memory, great eloquence and an interest in the problems posed by rhetoric, made Crassus work on the *Gorgias* (*De or.* 1.47). Another interlocutor in the dialogue, Anthony, says that Charmadas refuted everyone (*De or.* 1.84), which was perfectly in conformity with the practice instituted by Arcesilaus and consolidated by Carneades. According to Cicero (*Orator* 51), Carneades used to say that Clitomachus said the same things he did, but that Charmadas, in addition, also formulated them identically. So nothing in Cicero seems to corroborate Sextus' contention that Charmadas, together with Philo of Larissa, was the founder of the fourth Academy. As far as Lacydes, Arcesilaus' disciple, who preceded Carneades as head of the Academy, is concerned, Cicero describes him as simply continuing the orientation first set out by his teacher, although the *Index Academicorum* gives a much more complex picture of him.[9]

One might have expected the *Academica* to be a kind of homage paid by Cicero to the memory of Philo of Larissa, and in fact in one of his letters to Varro, composed after completing the work, he writes to him (*Fam.* 9.8.1): 'I have given you the role of Antiochus, while myself taking that of Philo,' which might suggest a complete identification of the disciple with his master. The reality is certainly less simple because Cicero, at least in the *Lucullus*, clearly condemns the innovations of Philo's Roman books (*Luc.* 77). Without entering into the details, one can assert that Philo's great originality consisted in shifting the status of the *epochē*: instead of an attitude which admitted of no exceptions, it became a weapon directed against Stoicism. By affirming that things were

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[8] On the controversial matter of Philo of Larissa's innovations, see Brittain 2001, Görler 1994: 932–4, Lévy 1992: 48–51, Tarrant 1985.
[9] See Lévy 2005 on this issue.

knowable by nature, but not through reference to the Stoic criterion (Sextus *HP* 1.235), Philo ran the risk of alienating both his friends in the New Academy, who would be furious at seeing him give up the generalized *epochē*, and his former student, who had now become his opponent, Antiochus of Ascalon. In fact this development made it impossible for Antiochus to deploy one of his favourite lines of argument: that by adopting generalized doubt Arcesilaus and his successors were cutting themselves off from the genuine Platonic tradition. Conversely, this made it all the easier for Philo to argue for the historical unity of Academic tradition through its multiple representatives (*Lib. Ac.* 1.13).

1.3 The history of the Academy according to Antiochus

The version of this history which Cicero derived from Antiochus of Ascalon was completely different. Antiochus did not deny that Socrates had systematically refuted all those who thought that they had knowledge, and that he claimed to possess no other knowledge than that of his own ignorance (*Lib. ac.* 1.15–16). However, contrary to the members of the New Academy he did not stop at attributing this characteristic to Socrates, but rather insisted on the importance of Socratic ethics, claiming that although Socrates had practised a dialectic which did not lead him to any form of certainty, he did have positive beliefs about virtue (*Lib. ac.* 1.17: *philosophiae forma*). On the other hand, although he recognized that there were at least stylistically diverse aspects of Plato's philosophy, he did attribute a genuine doctrine to him, and claimed that this doctrine, with some change in terminology, had been taken over by the Old Academy and by the Lyceum. He felt able to assert this because he claimed, at least at the beginning of his career, that Aristotle's creation of his own school, the Lyceum, could not have been the expression of profound philosophical disagreements between him and the followers of Plato. To construct his view of the history of the Academy, Antiochus did not hesitate to admit that there had been at least a partial break between Socrates, on the one hand, and Plato and his successors, on the other, because he claimed that the Old Academy had developed something of which Socrates would have disapproved, namely a philosophical system (*ars quaedam philosophiae*) consisting of parts that were arranged in a determinate order. He attributes the tripartite division of philosophy into ethics, physics and dialectics to Plato. As far as the content of the doctrine is concerned, things are less clear, because Antiochus attributes the elaboration of it to the successors of Plato and to the Peripatetics. Within each of the three parts, Antiochus retrospectively amalgamated elements from the Peripatetics and from Stoics. It is possible to give a variety of different interpretations of this procedure. One might deny, as David Sedley does, that Antiochus was trying fraudulently to

produce an artificially unified history of the Academy, and contend that, at least in the domain of physics, he was merely trying to trace the actual historical development. Nevertheless one can state with some confidence that Antiochus himself was aware that his approach contained some very surprising elements, in that after 'unifying' the Old Academy and the Lyceum in the way just described, he went on to make it clear that Aristotle and his successors had introduced various modifications of Plato's doctrine, such as, most notably, a renunciation of any transcendence (*Lib. Ac.* 1.33). In the same way, while claiming that Zeno had done nothing but introduce some merely formal modifications to the ethics of the Old Academy, he also gave a very precise account of Stoic gnoseology, which brought out clearly the profound differences that existed between the views of the Stoics and the intellectualism of Plato, which, as described in §30, rested on a distrust of the senses. The conception of the history of philosophy developed by Antiochus is both unified and internally differentiated. Everything has its origin in Plato, who is the inspiration of the Old Academy, and everything eventually returns to him, but this process brings into the Academic mainstream a large number of genuine innovations developed by philosophers who were inspired by Plato or at any rate were thought to have been inspired by him.

The radical difference between these two versions of the Platonic tradition have led many scholars to wonder about Cicero's own attitude to the Academy and its history. Two opposing theses have been suggested: one that Cicero remained constantly faithful to the teaching of Philo of Larissa, and the other that at least during a short period of time he preferred the views of Antiochus. It remains clearly the case, though, that no solution can be found to a question which does not arise. The fact that we can recognize differences between the respective conceptions of Cicero's two teachers does not necessarily mean that at all periods of his life he saw himself as having to choose between the two of them as if they constituted two terms of a strict alternative. Just because this choice might have imposed itself in a later philosophical period, we need not necessarily project it back into the past.

2 A PROBLEMATIC LOYALTY?

2.1 *From* De inventione *to* De oratore

Since we have seen how Cicero in the *Brutus* presents his first encounter with Philo as a case of philosophical love at first sight and also describes the profound impression made on him by Antiochus of Ascalon, it is surprising how little space is devoted to the Academy in his work, at least explicitly. The two prefaces of *De inventione*, written between 88 and 83 BCE, after, that is, Philo of Larissa had

begun to teach in Rome, contain some elements which seem to derive from his teaching, such as the association of rhetoric with wisdom as being at the origin of civilization or the discussion of the way by which one can ascend from sensible reality toward the ideal, as illustrated in the story about Zeuxis and the citizens of Croton.[10] If Philo had taught nothing but philosophy, the absence of any mention of him would have been perfectly normal in a work on rhetoric, but we know he also gave courses specifically devoted to rhetoric. However, only forty years after Philo's arrival in Rome does Cicero record this information. This gives us some idea of the complexity of the psychological mechanisms involved in memory, but it also points to the coexistence in Cicero, who was both an orator and a philosopher, of two worlds that were less compatible than they are sometimes taken to have been. If we now move about twenty years later to the *Pro Murena*, we can see how Cicero – in the context of an attack on the rigorism of Cato's version of Stoicism – took the opportunity to evoke his own teachers, who in contrast to Cato remained strongly attached to Plato and Aristotle.[11] The evocation of the philosophical studies he had pursued during his youth might incline us to see in this allusion to Plato and Aristotle a reference to the courses he had himself attended; however, since Cicero's Cato explicitly mentions only Zeno, the founder of Stoicism, the expression *a Platone et Aristotele* could also simply designate the whole tradition having its origin in Plato and Aristotle, as opposed to the Stoa. In that case the association of the two schools could derive from the teaching of Antiochus of Ascalon and one could infer from this that Cicero identifies himself with Antiochus' reading of the history. In reality things are less simple. First of all the claim that the sage has opinions about that of which he has no certain knowledge and that he can change his opinions could also be seen as agreeing with what was known to be one of the innovations which Philo of Larissa introduced with respect to the Carneadean orthodoxy. In addition, we are not dealing here with a philosophical tract, but with a speech in which the use of motifs that were more or less directly Aristotelian would be more effective against Cato than citations of the Sceptical doctrine of suspension of belief. This does not mean that the double appeal to Plato and Aristotle is purely tactical.[12] Cicero registered this in the poem he wrote on his own consulship, when alluding to the topography of his Tusculanum estate; he called the Lyceum and the Academy his two gymnasiums (see *De divinatione* 1.21–2). These two philosophers are his points of reference and the source of his inspiration. He knows the debates about the history of the schools they created,

[10] See Lévy 1995.
[11] *Mur.* 63: *nostri, inquam, illi a Platone et Aristotele, moderati homines et temperati . . .*
[12] In *Tusc.* 1.22 he affirms that these two philosophers remain his favourites, but that he always preferred Plato.

but since he is not writing a philosophical treatise, he does not, at that moment in his life, think it necessary to enter into details of this question. One finds another instance of this general stance in the letter to Cato (*Fam.* 15.4.16), where he invokes their common passion for 'that true and ancient philosophy' which they alone were able to introduce into military and political life. This expression, particularly its use of the word 'ancient', echoes the teaching of Antiochus of Ascalon, who held that the Stoics owed the essentials of their moral doctrine to the Old Academy. Cicero in this letter is asking for a favour, trying to obtain Cato's support for a *supplicatio* to honour his military achievements in Cilicia. He transforms the charge of plagiarism, which he raises against the Stoics in book 4 of *De finibus* – where he states that the Stoic doctrine is 'the same' as that of the followers of Aristotle – into an argument of the natural kinship of the two positions. Thus, he creates a philosophical solidarity between the Stoic Cato and himself, the admirer of Aristotle, which he hopes will be the prelude to a distinctly less philosophical solidarity.

Up to this point in Cicero's career we have not encountered the New Academy. It appears clearly for the first time in *De oratore*, written in 55 BCE. It becomes visible, as we have seen, through the accounts which Cicero attributes to the orators Antony and Crassus (*De or.* 1.45). In a more specifically philosophical way the great excursus of book 3 of *De oratore* (3.54–143) provides some interesting indications of the way in which Cicero saw the Academy, although the fictional form does not allow us to draw any direct conclusions about his own position. We will simply note the following two elements:

- a very strong tendency to make the Academy the source of all philosophy, because all philosophical schools are supposed to have descended from Socrates and Plato. It is thus surprising to see that even the Pyrrhonians are presented as appealing to Socrates, a view which seems incompatible with what one finds in the fragments of Timon, the disciple of Pyrrho, where, on the contrary, Socrates is very badly treated.
- As far as the Academy is concerned, Cicero, in §67 of *De oratore* begins by again taking up Antiochus of Ascalon's position, and claiming a doctrinal unity between the immediate successors of Plato, on the one hand, and Aristotle, on the other. However, instead of considering, as Antiochus had done, that the New Academy represented a rupture with the tradition stemming from Plato, Cicero presents it as a resurgence of an aporetic tendency already found in Socrates and Plato. Arcesilaus thus appears as a disciple of Polemon, who among the rich variety of positions available in the Platonic tradition, chose an orientation different from that of his master (*De or.* 3.3.67). In this skilful articulation of the different views about the history of the Academy we see that Cicero, at this point in his life, preferred to connect the teachings of his two Academic teachers systematically with each other, rather than to underline their differences.

2.2 De re publica *and* De legibus

A short time after *De oratore*, the question of the history of the Academy arises again in the *De re publica*. In addition to a discussion at the beginning of the work between Tubero and Scipio about how to understand the thought of Socrates, a discussion in which physics and Pythagoreanism are asserted to have exerted no influence on Socrates, Carneades occupies an important place in book 3, which is organized around the famous occasion during the great embassy of philosophers in 155 on which he argued first in favour of, then against, justice. One might be tempted to think that Cicero is trying to distance himself from the New Academy when he criticizes Carneades for 'often making the best causes ridiculous because of the ingenious quibbles to which he has recourse' (*Rep.* 3.9). In reality, this is less an attempt to distance himself and more the deployment of a philosophical orientation in the service of a particular political project. The goal of *De re publica* is in effect to give back to Rome by means of philosophical reflection a structure and a vitality which she is no longer capable of finding in mere appeals to *mos maiorum*. In this context Academic doubt could have a place only as a methodological instrument used as part of an attempt to determine how to reinforce the existing institutions and the law against increasing violence. Lactantius states that Carneades did not have an aversion to justice, but merely wished to shed some light on the weaknesses of the arguments used by its defenders (Lact. *Epit.* 50.5 = *Rep.* 3.10). It is very possible that this was the interpretation Cicero himself gave of the debate he stages in the dialogue, and therefore that it does not imply any radical rejection of Carneades' dialectic. An approach outlined in a passage of *De legibus* (*Leg.* 1.39) which seems similar to that of the New Academy has particularly caught the attention of specialists on Cicero, even though this is nothing but a single component of Cicero's view, which can be understood correctly only if it is placed in the totality of his comments on this question. One must both examine it in detail and set it in its context. The goal of his investigation which Cicero proclaims in §37 is 'to strengthen the state and consolidate the morality and well-being of peoples'. As in *De re publica* the primary orientation is practical, more precisely political, in the most general sense of this term. It is in this perspective that Cicero analyses the different schools of philosophical ethics, examining each of them for its compatibility with his project. This is what he says about the New Academy:

But as far as that school which stirs up trouble in all these questions, the Academy, I mean that new one of Arcesilaus and Carneades, we ask them to remain silent. Because if it pounces on these topics which seem to us to be already sufficiently well established and adequately treated, it will provoke a great many disasters. I hope to calm them down, even if I do not dare to bar their entry into the discussion.

It will be noticed that there is no explicit sign here that Cicero considered himself as belonging to the New Academy. The demonstrative 'that new [Academy]' (*hanc*) indicates temporal proximity rather than being a possessive. The school of Arcesilaus and Carneades appears to be both a turbulent adolescent, capable of vandalizing the markers that give orientation and structure to an already clearly delineated domain, and a reality which has sufficient prestige to make it impossible simply to dismiss it, as Cicero does the Epicurean school, without giving it special treatment. The text does not give any precise indication of Cicero's own philosophical affiliation. It expresses his admiration for the Platonic school and his awareness that it was possible to subject the constructions he was elaborating to systematic doubt. In the final analysis, Cicero does not reject this critical approach, but he considers it inappropriate vis-à-vis the task he is attempting to accomplish and the situation in which the *res publica* finds itself.

2.3 *The period after the civil war*

Although it is risky to speculate, it is likely that if the civil war had not taken place, Cicero would have felt no need to enter into a detailed investigation of the problematic history of the Academy. Even before the outbreak of hostilities, his letters show to what extent the fact that he himself had to make difficult choices in emergency situations had rendered him especially sensitive to the question of the mechanism and the justification of assent. A letter dated 12 March 49 (*Att.* 9.4.3) shows clearly how he uses a *disputatio in utramque partem* of the kind familiar both to rhetoricians and philosophers in order to deal with an immediate real difficulty by setting up and investigating contradictory theses. Putting the different camps in direct opposition to one another was in itself a kind of preparation for dealing with the problem of *dissensus* which was shortly thereafter to occupy the centre of his philosophical reflection. The withdrawal from public life forcibly imposed on him by Caesar's victory created the proper conditions for him to undertake a series of major works: instead of playing a major political role he would become the cultural and intellectual guide of the Roman people, and literary success would give him back the prestige which he no longer had in politics. The very vivid account of Platonic idealism which is to be found in *Orator* (*Orat.* 9–11), a work which immediately precedes the major philosophical writings, in no way suggests that Cicero was about to come out in support of the philosophical orientation of the New Academy with as much vigour as he then did. We know the reasons Cicero gives to explain his decision to come to the aid of a philosophical position which, by his own admission, had not had a defender in all the forty years which had elapsed since the death of Philo of Larissa. The harmony which he detects between this philosophy and

rhetoric cannot be the only explanation, because in *De oratore* he advises anyone who wishes to go beyond merely technical excellence in rhetoric to turn either to the disciples of Aristotle or to those of Carneades, apparently making no distinction between them (*De or.* 3.71). For him, as he explains in the prologues to his philosophical works,[13] to attach oneself to the New Academy was a way of putting a protective distance between himself and the *temeritas* which characterized the other philosophical schools; these other schools inculcated in each of their adherents the illusion that he was the possessor of a truth that could be acquired with little exertion. The New Academic philosopher, by contrast, as he is envisaged by Cicero, is like a judge who evaluates the different arguments and points out clearly the defects in the case presented by each side. This critical function, which requires complete intellectual and moral freedom, is consequently in harmony with the function of educating the Roman people which Cicero ascribes to himself, because in order to judge the different philosophical systems one must first know them intimately. Let us add then the political function which the suspension of judgement plays in the context of Caesar's dictatorship. Faced with an all-powerful figure who is as sure of himself in the domain of politics as ever the Stoic sage was in the realm of philosophy, Cicero needs to develop a completely different conception of perfection, one more suited to his own case, that of a lucid awareness of the fallibility of a small man, a *homuncio* (*Luc.* 134). This is a form of fallibility, to be sure, which does not prevent the small man from following Plato's lead in holding that 'one must not give way to fatigue'(*Rep.* 4.445b) in the tireless quest for truth; quite the reverse, in fact.

The beginning of the second version of the *Academica* contains Cicero's first explicit statement of his attitude to the New Academy. It should be noted that this is the statement of a man aged sixty! Varro, Cicero's interlocutor, asks him if what he has heard about him is true (*Lib. Ac.* 1.13):

'(It is said that) you have abandoned the Old Academy and are concerning yourself with the New.'

'What do you mean?' I asked. 'Our friend Antiochus was allowed to return from the new residence to the old, but I am not to be permitted to pass from the old to the new? Even though the most recent things are the most correct and the most improved.'

We should note a semantic shift in this exchange. When Varro uses the verb '*tractare*' here, which, as Görler has shown, means simply 'deal with',[14] he simply means that in his recent work Cicero has changed the subject and is discussing different topics. After having treated Platonic and Aristotelean political theory in

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[13] See Ruch 1956.   [14] Görler 1995: 108, as opposed to Glucker 1988: 44.

the *De legibus* and the *De re publica*, he now turns to expounding the philosophy of the New Academy. The compositional method here is self-referential in that the work by Cicero which is being discussed in the dialogue is the very one the reader is holding in his hands. Cicero, however, could not resist making a joke here and beginning the dialogue with a polemical swipe at Antiochus, and so he does not respond to Varro's question in the sense in which it was intended by saying something about the plan and structure of the work he is preparing, but rather comments on his own philosophical affiliation. By identifying himself as someone whose philosophical position and development can be compared to that of Antiochus, Cicero ceases, at least for a few moments, to be the Roman who wishes merely to instruct his compatriots, and he treats the problem of the adherence to a particular philosophical doctrine as one which concerns him personally.

3. THE *ACADEMICA*

Few works have as many different titles as this one does, and this can understandably baffle non-specialists.[15] There is *Catulus* (a lost dialogue) or *Academica Priora I* and *Lucullus* or *Academica Priora II* for the first version; *Libri Academici I*, *Academica Posteriora I*, or *Varro* for the second version. This diversity is due to the complexity of the changing circumstances under which Cicero had to work and the speed with which he composed the text,[16] but the effect of these factors is also exacerbated by the fact that the work has reached us only in a very mutilated state: we have only one of the dialogues of the first version and only a part of the first of the four books that comprised the second version. The difficulties this text presents are thus enormous. Here we will address only three of these: the circumstances of composition, the role of the characters and the theses presented in the text, the relation between gnoseology and doxography.

3.1 The circumstances of composition

In a letter sent from Astura on 7 March 45 (*Att.* 12.13.1) Cicero writes to Atticus that he is living in solitude but is engaged in some literary work which he says he is finding as easy to do as if he were at Rome. This is possibly the first trace of the composition of *Academica*. There is a clearer reference to this work in a letter of 19 May (*Att.* 12.23.2), where he asks Atticus for certain details about Carneades' visit to Rome, which is discussed both in *Lucullus* (137) and in *De finibus* (2.59). In this period of intense activity the work is quickly

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[15] On the question of the different titles, see Hunt 1998: 13–16.
[16] See Griffin 1997 and Lévy 1992: 129–40.

finished, because on 13 May Cicero announces to his friend that he has just completed '*duo magna* συντάγματα' (*Att.* 12.44.4), which is generally held to be a reference to *Catulus* and *Lucullus*, which are the two constituents of the first version of the *Academica*. On 29 May (*Att.* 13.32.3) Cicero sends the two books to Atticus, after he has added a new prologue to each.

Cicero could have stopped there, and if he had, he would have spared us many headaches. However, he then realized that in trying to render homage to his departed friends, who were in addition representatives of that *nobilitas* that Caesar detested, he had ascribed to them philosophical arguments of a highly technical kind, which were in fact very far from anything that men of their cultural milieu would have presented. He therefore thought of replacing the two main characters in the first version with Brutus and Cato, both of whom actually did have a solid philosophical education. If this intermediary project had panned out, all Cicero would have needed to do was to substitute the names and make some minor revisions of presentation. He then, however, received a letter from Atticus suggesting that he give Varro a role in the dialogues. Cicero immediately adopted this suggestion. He increased the number of books from two to four, suppressed certain elements in the original composition, and in a letter to Atticus of 26 June 45 declared himself very satisfied with the result.[17] The expression Cicero uses in this letter – 'I shifted the whole Academy from these very prestigious men to our friend' – is problematic, however.[18] It seems to indicate that he gave to Varro the roles which had previously been played, partly or totally, by Catulus, Lucullus and Hortensius, but he cannot mean the Academy as a whole because Cicero reserves for himself the defence of the New Academy. The statement does, however, mean that these *nobilissimi homines* represented all the aspects of the thought of Antiochus of Ascalon, as is confirmed in another letter (*Fam.* 9.8.1):[19] 'I gave you the role of Antiochus, and I have taken over that of Philo.' This would be perfectly clear, as we will see, were it not for the fact that each of these two roles contains some contradictory aspects. The first version was not intended to survive, but Cicero had failed to reckon with Atticus, who effectively ensured that it was circulated despite Cicero's intentions.

3.2 The characters and the theses compared and contrasted

The point of departure of the work is the surprise occasioned both to the friends and the enemies of Philo of Larissa by his Roman books, which put an end to the whole period during which the universal suspension of judgement was

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[17] *Att.* 13.13.1: *grandiores sunt omnino quam erant illi, sed tamen multa detracta.*
[18] Ibid: *Totam Academiam ab hominibus nobilissimis abstuli, transtuli ad nostrum sodalem.*
[19] *tibi dedi partis Antiochinas quas a te probari intellexisse mihi videbar, mihi sumpsi Philonis.*

the key slogan of the thought of the Academy. At the beginning of the *Lucullus* Cicero describes a scene which is supposed to have taken place in Alexandria, when Lucullus was there accompanied by Antiochus of Ascalon (*Luc.* 11–12). When Antiochus first received copies of the books by Philo, he was greatly angered and asked Heraclitus of Tyre, a philosopher who had remained faithful to the New Academy doctrine of radical doubt, whether he had ever heard theses like those of Philo being defended in the Academy before. Heraclitus agreed that he never had. Antiochus then wrote a tract against these innovations of Philo to which he gave the title *Sosus*, a title taken from the name of one of his compatriots from Ascalon who was a Stoic. Lucullus also says that in order to understand the basic features of this debate he had organized a *disputatio in utramque partem* in which he set Antiochus against Heraclitus of Tyre, but he also adds that in his discourse he will leave aside the question of the innovations of Philo. In the whole of the *Academica* one finds the following positions on the theory of knowledge:

(1) the Stoic position which is implicitly founded on the idea that reason-providence which has made the world a 'common city of gods and men' guarantees that the senses yield true information about reality. The *phantasia katalēptikē* which gives us an exact image of reality is distinguished by its particular quality of inherent evidentness. It is the basis of the edifice of knowledge;

(2) the suspension of judgement without any exception of the kind advocated by Arcesilaus and further pursued by Carneades, at any rate as interpreted by Clitomachus. The New Academy inherited the Platonist suspicion of the senses and was unwilling to accept the idea that the criterion of truth could be found in the most common representations;

(3) the position of Philo of Larissa, which had already been enunciated by Metrodorus of Stratonice, which relativized the *epochē* and insisted on the unity of the history of the Academy. This position is treated in *Catulus* but only very marginally in *Lucullus*;[20]

(4) the position of the Old Academy, described by Antiochus of Ascalon as resting on the devaluation of the senses, which are presented as being crude and lethargic, while the intellect is regarded as the unique criterion of truth.

In the *Libri Academici* Varro is made responsible for the presentation of (1) and (4), while Cicero takes charge of (2) and (3). The main problem is the relation between (1) and (4). It seems highly improbable that Varro could have been made to defend in his own voice with equal conviction two contradictory theories of knowledge, the one asserting the quasi-infallibility of the senses, the other their incapacity to discern the reality of objects. If we take what is left of Varro's discourse in the first book, Zeno is presented as a disciple of Polemon,

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[20] On the reduced role of these innovations in *Academica* see Griffin 1997: 11–12.

in a state of rivalry with Arcesilaus, and he is asserted to have 'corrected' the doctrine of the Old Academy (*Lib. Ac.* 1.35). We should note, however, that Antiochus is never said to have subscribed to the 'correction', only that he expounded it.[21] As far as that part of the '*correctio*' which dealt with ethics is concerned, we know from books 4 and 5 of *De finibus* that Antiochus criticized it severely and demonstrated that it was incoherent. This shows at least that he did not approve of all aspects of the project of reforming Academic philosophy which he attributed to Zeno. One should also note that in §8 of book 4 of *De finibus*, a book which is clearly inspired by theories of Antiochus, Cicero states that there was nothing Zeno would absolutely have had to change in his theory of knowledge to make it consistent with the common older tradition of philosophy stemming from Plato and Aristotle. This, too, suggests that Antiochus did not adhere fully to Stoic doctrine. It is true that in that same passage one finds an epistemological position which is more conciliatory than that expounded by Varro, because in this passage Cicero envisages a collaboration between sense and reason in knowledge on terms of equality. All these texts have been the objects of divergent interpretations. However it seems likely that although Antiochus did not necessarily approve of the modifications to which Zeno subjected the Platonic theory of knowledge, which he attributed to Zeno's general project of giving a '*correctio*' of Platonism, nevertheless Antiochus thought that these modifications were less dramatic than the Sceptical orientation which he imposed on the Platonic school. This sceptical reorientation is presented by its spokesman Lucullus not actually as a *correctio* but rather as an attempt to destroy the philosophical system developed by Plato and his successors root and branch (*Luc.* 15).[22] If this is the case, the defence of the Old Academy's intellectualist theory can be taken to have had an absolute value for Antiochus, whereas the appeal to Stoic gnoseology had only a relative value in the context of the struggle against a common enemy: the radical doubt of the New Academy.[23] Let us not forget that the context is one of *disputationes* in which the defence of a certain one of these does not mean that one necessarily would finally endorse it. In a letter to Atticus dated 30 June 45 Cicero refers to the arguments

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[21] The view that he did subscribe to it has been defended notably by Barnes 1989.

[22] If one compares *Luc.* 16 on Arcesilaus: *conatus est clarissimis rebus tenebras obducere* and *Lib. ac.* 135: *corrigere conatus est disciplinam* one will notice the repetition of the verb meaning 'try very hard'. This suggests that Antiochus did not necessarily think Zeno had successfully reached his ultimate goal. For a different interpretation see Görler 1990, who attributes no importance to the use of '*conatus*'.

[23] It seems excessive to say the least to claim, as Brittain does (2006: xxxiii): 'Antiochus clearly rejected "Platonic" rationalism and anti-empiricism in favour of a more or less Stoic epistemology.' A rejection of Platonist rationalism is nowhere expressed. The defence of Platonist intellectualism was, for Antiochus, tied to his identity as a philosopher of the Old Academy. His plea for Stoic gnoseology, on the other hand, was part of his struggle against the New Academy's Scepticism.

'against *akatalēpsia*' so strikingly collected by Antiochus. This very formulation shows that Antiochus' intention was in the first instance to attack the New Academy, as if it were a school of professional and philosophical rivals. In this perspective Stoicism could well have been for him a means of conducting his struggle against the New Academy, rather than a doctrine to which he truly adhered. It is also not impossible that Antiochus modified his position to fit the specific circumstances and that the passage in *De fin.* just mentioned describes what was for him merely a way of harmonizing the Stoic, Aristotelian and Platonic positions, in accordance with his own tenaciously held view that there was a traditional consensus in philosophy which rested on an acceptance of the hegemony of the Academy. In the intermediate version which never saw the light of day, Cicero intended to give the two roles of Catulus and Lucullus to Brutus and Cato (*Att.* 13.16.1; 26 June). Given the sharp differences in the respective philosophical identities of the latter two figures, Cato, who could not possibly have defended anything but the Stoic gnoseology, would surely have had attributed to him the speech which Lucullus gave in the first version of the dialogue.[24] It remains then to determine who would have taken the roles of Catulus and Hortensius, but this is not at all easy. Since Cicero in his discourse made a point of defending the traditional thesis of the New Academy, that is, general *akatalēpsia* and the suspension of assent without any exception, we must assume that Philo's innovations would have figured in the *Catulus*, as is confirmed by §11 which mentions 'those two books of which Catulus spoke yesterday'. This, however, does not yet tell us what exact position he took on Philo. Certainly, his treatment was critical, as is shown by §12:

So Antiochus says, according to the account of Catulus, everything that the latter's father had said to Philo, and even more;

and again in §18:

Philo blatantly lies, as the older Catulus had reproached him for doing, and, as Antiochus demonstrated, he throws himself into those difficulties which he dreaded.

These lines seem to suggest that Catulus, and before him his father, at least in Cicero's fictive account, defended Antiochus' vision of the history of the Academy. The problem is that the older Catulus is cited in the last paragraph as the interpreter of a position that Carneades was said to have held on the question of what kind of assent the sage might give to opinion. He is said to have admitted that the sage might in fact give his assent, while being fully

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[24] For a different view see Griffin 1997: 23 who thinks that Cato was to replace Catulus. This, however, is not compatible with the fact that Cicero always most strongly emphasizes the Stoic identity of Cato.

aware that what he was assenting to was a mere opinion. It is difficult to know whether this conciliatory formula actually corresponded to something found in an Academic source or whether for Cicero it is a clever way of closing the debate by affirming that in a sense everyone is right, so that what one would have here would be a conclusion a bit like that which Cicero gives to *De natura deorum*. Be that as it may, it is tempting to think that if Catulus did give an interpretation of Antiochus' position, it would have been in the course of expounding his point of view on the whole history of the Academy. It is even possible that he put forward the thesis that there was a convergence between the views of the orthodox members of the New Academy and those of Antiochus in that both condemned the innovations of Philo. As far as the other spokesman of Antiochus, Hortensius, is concerned, to judge by what is said in §10 of *Lucullus* he limited himself to making some rather superficial comments about epistemology, and to saying that he would await further illumination about the nature of knowledge from Lucullus.

3.3 The doxography

One of the large questions posed by *Academica* is whether the work is to be considered closed or open with respect to Cicero's later works. When Cicero sets out to expound philosophy in Latin, he aspires to be exhaustive, but according to what plan?[25] The fact that he first wrote a protreptic treatise, the *Hortensius*, suggests a systematic construction, the different elements of which one would have to reconstruct. At the end of §115 of *Lucullus* Cicero announces that he will now turn his attention to the sage, but will not try to justify the mechanisms of the suspension of judgement; rather he will ask what choices the sage could concretely make in each of the three branches of philosophy. The aim here is obviously to show that the disagreement between philosophers on every point of doctrine is so great that any definitive choice would be impossible. The recourse to doxography, and, in the first instance, the doxography of physics (*Luc.* 116–28), becomes an indispensable means for illustrating *dissensus*. The great questions, such as those concerning the *archai*, the nature of the world, the earth, the body, the soul, the nature of divinity, are posed with great care so as to demonstrate the extreme variety of opinions on each of these subjects. The conclusion of this first part of philosophy is that inquiry into these subjects should be continued, because it constitutes as it were the nourishment of the soul. As far as ethics is concerned, the disagreement between moral philosophers

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[25] See Grilli 1971. For Cicero's own exposition of different aspects of his philosophical work, see *Div* 2.1–3.

is structured by two large-scale doxographic schemata (*Luc.* 128–41).[26] The first of these is a variant of the *carneadia diuisio*, which classified the different formulae for the highest good by reference to what the various different philosophers held to be the primary objects sought after by living beings from birth on. The second was the *diuisio* of Chrysippus, which was very much less based on description, but was rather normative in character. Chrysippus recognized only three possible formulae: pleasure, the supreme good, or the association of these two in such a way as to facilitate the pursuit of virtue. He was able to effect the reduction of all positions to one or another of these three by identifying less radical formulae, notably Aristotelian ethics, with non-standard forms of the pursuit of pleasure. Doxography is also used in the treatment of epistemology, in order to show the impossibility of choosing with complete certainty any criterion of knowing. In this discussion Plato is simply enumerated as giving one solution among others, apparently on the same level as the Cyrenaics or Epicurus (*Luc.* 142–6). The conclusion of the dialogue, if one puts aside the inevitable concluding exchange of pleasantries and word-plays, is that one must assiduously investigate *dissensus*, rather than continuing to struggle against the dialectical artifices invented by the Stoics. The question that remains is whether Cicero intends to structure this investigation in a methodically progressive way and, if that is so, what he takes the result to be.

4 ACADEMIC DOUBT AND PLATONIC DIALECTIC, FROM *DE FINIBUS* TO THE *TUSCULANES*, AND FROM *DE NATURA DEORUM* TO THE *TIMAEUS*

4.1 Ethics

The question of ends is broached by the *Lucullus*. Starting from the two 'divisions' mentioned above, Cicero ends up by concluding that even if one uses Chrysippus' reduction of the possibilities to one or another of his three formulae, one still could not attain certainty in committing oneself to any one position. *De finibus* continues the programme of research initiated by *Lucullus*, restricting itself, however, almost exclusively to Hellenistic philosophies. To be sure, the Old Academy together with the Lyceum is at the heart of the discussion in book 5, but what is really at issue is the reconstruction of these older positions by Antiochus. If one studies the references to Plato in this treatise, one will observe that they are rather rare and that they mostly consist of anecdotes or individual affirmations that stand outside any doctrinal context. Plato, and,

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[26] On these schemata see Algra 1997, Leonhardt 1999: 135–212.

to a lesser extent, Aristotle, exist only as sources of inspiration for the moral philosophy of the Antiochian Old Academy. How does Cicero situate himself in this context? His position is that of a dialectician in the tradition of Socrates, who is portrayed very clearly as the source of inspiration of the method of Arcesilaus (*Fin.* 2–3). As such, Cicero takes as his point of departure the positions of dogmatists in order to point out all their weaknesses. This is his general orientation. As far as his method is concerned, it is also inspired by the Academy because it employs as its basic structural framework the *carneadia diuisio*, which is founded on the idea that the highest good corresponds to that which the living being naturally pursues from the very beginning of its life. What complicates matters is that this *diuisio* was reworked by Antiochus of Ascalon (*Fin.* 5.16) in the course of his criticism of Stoic ethics and *De finibus* presents several stages of the dialectical discussion in the Academy, which it is not always easy to distinguish. Nevertheless one can discern the general outlines of the approach. In effect, it draws attention to a convergence in the responses proposed by both Stoics and Epicureans in that both have admitted that the object first pursued by living things is also the highest good. Once this is granted, the trap snaps shut, because one can demonstrate that neither of the two schools will then be able to maintain the principle on which it tries to construct its characteristic doctrine. The Epicureans claim that every living thing from birth pursues pleasure and avoids pain, but they also define the end as the absence of pain, which in the Platonic perspective, is not a supreme pleasure (*Rep.* 9.584b–585a; 586a). The Stoics, in their turn, hold that the first impulse of a living thing pushes it to seek the *prima naturae*, that is, that which will permit it to survive and remain in existence, but they have chosen as the supreme good moral beauty, which they define relative to the true nature of man, his reason, which they think does not manifest itself until around the age of seven. Having constructed this dichotomy, Cicero the dialectician confronts both of the Schools with an alternative concerning the supreme good. Epicureans must choose between pleasure in the most common sense as the highest good and the absence of pain. Stoics must choose a position which gives priority to the goods of life and the body or a form of indifferentism like that of Ariston, who denied any value at all to anything except moral beauty. Having thus destroyed the pretensions of each of the two rival systems to possess a unique truth, Cicero would seem to have every right to claim that the most satisfactory formulation of the *telos* is to be found in the Old Academy. Only this formulation actually observes the original terms and conditions set down for the discussion, for it affirms that man seeks from birth to preserve two goods of unequal value, soul and body, and it defines a supreme good which, by associating the goods of the soul to those of the body, is identical with the supreme good posited at the beginning. In any case,

at the end of book 5, Cicero, who might have thought that his task was finished, will continue the dialectic by changing the criterion and attempting to analyse the relation of this supreme good to happiness. At this point Cicero concludes that although the doctrine of the Old Academy showed itself to be satisfactory from the point of view of its proposed definition of the supreme good, it has a less satisfactory treatment of happiness. The reason for this deficiency is that taking into account the goods of the body implies recognizing a certain power which Fortune exercises over us in that it can prevent us from being happy by depriving us of the goods of the body. While the *Lucullus* tries in its final lines to find a conciliatory formula which would bring together those who held that the sage gives his assent to opinion and those who denied this, the *De finibus* explicitly refrains from choosing between the Stoa and the Old Academy, although it recognizes that the former has the capacity to guarantee autarchy of happiness by identifying it with virtue, and the latter has a more realistic vision of the possibilities of human nature. Up to this point Cicero has followed the lead of the New Academy in devoting himself to bringing out with as much care as possible the reasons for which it would be imprudent to give his firm assent to one or the other of the two positions, Stoa or Old Academy. The situation might have remained aporetic, with Cicero simply encouraging Piso to continue to pursue the inquiry into the question of whether or not his thesis was convincing.

However, the discussion takes a surprising turn in the *Tusculanes*, whose connection with *De finibus* Cicero himself explicitly mentions (see 4.82, 5.32–3).[27] Plato is a massive and continuous presence in the *Tusculanes*, as a source of inspiration, for instance, for the dualism of the soul (*Tusc.* 4.11) or for the anthropology, which is very close to that in the *First Alcibiades*, a dialogue which informs the structure and content of the whole first book of Cicero's work. There are numerous, sometimes lengthy quotations.[28] In this context Stoicism appears in the first instance as a new language, able to give a better formulation to the demand for perfection which was already present in Plato and expressing itself in the idea that there is no other good than virtue (*Tusc.* 1.34). The final book presents all the philosophical doctrines, even those of the Epicureans, as being in agreement on the dogma that the sage is the possessor of perfect happiness, an ideal which can be traced back to Socrates and Plato. This presentation gives a new meaning to the *dissensus* of the philosophers: it is taken to concern now only the means to be used to attain an objective which is in principle recognized by all. We are not far from the characteristic topic of

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[27] For the relation between the two works see Michel 1961.
[28] Thus *Phaedrus* 245c–246c, quoted in *Tusc.* 1.53, and already present in *Rep.* 6.27–8.

Philo, the natural perceptibility of things, although this is not considered to be reducible to the Stoic criterion. Thus the problem of the connection between the highest good and happiness ceases to be aporetic from the moment at which one exits from a strictly naturalist scheme and moves in the direction of Platonic transcendence.

4.2 Physics

We find a similar approach in physics. The *De natura deorum* and the *De divinatione* are fundamentally New Academic critiques of Hellenistic positions. The first work treats both Epicurean and Stoic views; the second Stoic views exclusively. The final sentence of *De natura deorum*, to be sure, seems to contradict this orientation (*ND* 3.95): 'at these words we went our separate ways: Velleius thought that the refutation of Cotta was truer; I thought that the exposition of Balbus was closer to verisimilitude'. It is surprising to see Cicero, the follower of the Academy, expressing greater agreement with the Stoic Balbus than with Cotta, the spokesman of the New Academy. There could be two possible explanations. The first appeals to the conventions of the Ciceronean dialogue, which prescribe that the parties leave without there being obvious winners and losers, so that no one loses face. Even in *De divinatione* where the main speaker is none other than Cicero's own brother Quintus, Cicero makes a point of emphasizing that the auditors must be free to prefer either one of the two theses which confront each other. But from a philosophical point of view, the conclusion of *De natura deorum*, far from contradicting the New Academic identity of Cicero, seems intended rather to reinforce it. Not only does Cicero in that dialogue remain within the realm of the *probabile*, but he also shows that the critical vocation of philosophy which he advocates is not limited by any solidarity with a particular school, and this is precisely the thesis he announced at the start of the work (*ND* 1.10). If one compares what Cicero has achieved in *De natura deorum* and in *De divinatione* with what he accomplished in *De finibus*, what would one be able to say about the *Tusculanes*? Although it is extremely difficult to come to any fully grounded conclusions on the basis of the mere outline of work of which only the prologue has come down to us, one can at least imagine that the dialogue on the *Timaeus* which was to bring together, in addition to Cicero himself, the Peripatetic Cratippus and the Neo-Pythagorean Nigidius Figulus, would have been intended to achieve a breakthrough in the direction of transcendence in the realm of physics, too, and thereby to change the terms of discussion with respect to the hegemonic naturalism of the Hellenistic era.

Recent works have shown that the boundary between Hellenistic philosophy and Middle Platonism was much more permeable than was generally thought,

and in particular that many New Academic themes had a continuing life in the dogmatic views of the Middle Platonists.[29] Thus Carneades' formal argument for and against justice, expounded by Cicero in book 3 of *De re publica*, was taken up again in the *Commentary on the Theaetetus* with the conclusion that the foundations of justice ought not to be sought, as the Stoics had sought them, in the concept of nature, but rather in the *homoiōsis tōi theōi kata to dunaton* which is invoked by Plato in the *Theaetetus*. Justice is therefore defined not by the way in which it is rooted in this world, but by a flight to a place outside this world (*Com. in Theae.* 6.20–5, 31–5, 7.14–20. Plat. *Tht.* 176b). Things are, to be sure, somewhat less simple in Cicero. The duality of the Academic instruction he received, the variety of philosophical influences to which he was subject, his own reading of Plato, his marginal position in the world of philosophy, and his subjection to a number of Roman social conventions always makes the interpretation of his philosophical work complex. In addition, the fact that it was only the dictatorship of Caesar which gave him the leisure to reimmerse himself in the philosophical questions and quarrels which he had encountered in his youth produces a chronological discrepancy between the world of his dialogues and the intellectual reality of his own epoch. It is nonetheless true that his attempt to articulate the relation between his professed attachment to the generalized *epochē* and a Platonism which is neither dogmatic nor aporetic means that his work can be considered in many respects as the final expression of the New Academy and the first of Middle Platonism.

[29] See esp. Bonazzi 2003, Lévy 2008, Opsomer 1998.

4

PLATONISM BEFORE PLOTINUS

HAROLD TARRANT

I THE PLATONICS

This chapter deals with the development of Platonism from the late first century BCE to the end of the second century CE. The principal figures here, in rough chronological order, were Eudorus, Thrasyllus, anon. *Commentary on the Theaetetus*, Plutarch of Chaeronea, Theon, Taurus, Albinus, Nicostratus, Atticus, Severus, Harpocration, and Alcinous. All are normally treated as Platonists today; antiquity treated most of them as 'Platonics'.

By the end of the first century CE we hear of philosophers who could be described as 'Platonics' (*Platonici*), whether as a title connected with a recognized profession or as a general description of their concerns.[1] There were a number of centres around the Mediterranean at which a 'Platonic' might reside and operate. During the Hellenistic period there had been no need for such a term at all, since one's philosophical background had usually been indicated with reference to the philosophical group or school with which one had studied (usually at Athens), and to which one continued to feel some allegiance. Up to Cicero's generation it was normal for those with serious educational ambitions to study in Athens, and not unusual to seek tuition from more than one school. Those men of letters who felt the need to communicate in a philosophical vein did not normally have to adopt any title that indicated their favourite philosophy, while those who claimed to officially represent a school, and to teach its doctrines or methods, adopted such titles to legitimize their role. Such a title was usually based on the name that the original school had taken, usually from the location of its activities. Hence those feeling a close connection with Plato's school would have been known simply as 'Academics'.

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[1] See Glucker 1978: 206–25 for a discussion of the relevant terminology. Cicero's brother once calls him a *homo platonicus*, but there is no evidence as yet that any philosopher chooses to specify his interest using this term. Glucker speaks of Thrasyllus as the first known philosopher to be called by this term.

The term 'Academic' had described individuals of very different types. The fragments of the early Scholarchs (Heads of the Academy) show that they differed considerably in their range of interests and in the doctrine that they promoted. There was considerable scope for disagreement with Plato himself, as shown by the metaphysical system of Speusippus, his nephew, who was first to succeed him. To Xenocrates, the third Scholarch, though he was less often in open disagreement with Plato, are credited many doctrines that one would not have expected Plato to endorse. Both of these had been part of the vibrant debates of Plato's later years, and were consequently more obviously influenced by the Plato that we know from the 'late' dialogues. Fourth came Polemo, who had joined the Academy under Xenocrates and clearly specialized in ethics. In this area our sources see him as having been in broad agreement with his predecessors, particularly Xenocrates. Together with his long-term friend and colleague Crates, who briefly succeeded him, he appears to have developed the notion of divine love as an educational catalyst, building on Plato's much earlier *Symposium*, and to have cultivated the more Socratic image of a man inspired by something divine. These features may have given a more Socratic image to the Academy overall than it had had under earlier Scholarchs.

Up until this point later sources saw the Academy as retaining the same general character of positive teaching as they associated with Plato, but Numenius (fr. 24.5–18) thought that the Platonic doctrines were being eroded, even though he seems to have respected Xenocrates in particular. In his eyes, as in the eyes of Cicero and his mentor Antiochus of Ascalon, the major break had come with the accession of Arcesilaus, who seems to have modelled himself on a rather different 'Socrates', the one who in Plato's early dialogues frequently professes his ignorance and habitually refrains from offering his own opinion on the matter being debated. The Academy had engaged dialectically with other schools, but for the demolition of rival systems rather than for the construction of any positive body of doctrine of its own, and it adopted the technique, not unknown in Plato's so-called 'early' doctrines, of arguing both for and against a thesis. This 'sceptical' Academy as we call it continued for some generations, and its greatest exponent was Carneades in the middle of the second century BCE. Interpretations of Carneades himself varied, but a loyalty to some version of Carneades had continued alongside the school's nominal loyalty to Plato for some time. As long as the Academy maintained some sense of an unbroken tradition one needed no separate category of philosophers to be known as Platonists.

Some twelve years into the final century BCE the Mithridatic Wars caused major upheaval in Athens, the schools ceased to function in their traditional way, and Athens lost much of its pre-eminence in the higher educational world.

Followers of the Platonic Academy, already seemingly experiencing uneasy relations, broke into open dissension, and conflict occurred over the true heritage of the Academy between the surviving Scholarch, Philo of Larissa (158–84 BCE), and his rapidly rising pupil, Antiochus of Ascalon. The latter wanted to draw a distinction between the Old Academy, as it had been under Scholarchs down to Crates, and a New Academy ushered in by Arcesilaus at the beginning of the second quarter of the third century BCE, but the distinction itself proved controversial and the term 'Academic' eventually became confined to those who welcomed the contribution of Arcesilaus and his so-called 'scepticism', not necessarily to the exclusion of doctrines associated with Plato and his immediate successors. Ultimately, this also meant that a different term would have to be found for those who preferred to signal their allegiance to Plato without any suggestion that they found Arcesilaus' contribution helpful. Inscriptional evidence and a variety of texts make it clear that the term 'Platonic' eventually supplied what was needed, but from the beginning the term was potentially confusing.

An anonymous *Commentary on the Theaetetus*, which cannot be later than the papyrus which preserves it (c. 150 CE) and is often held to date from the first century CE or slightly earlier, refers to 'those from the Academy' as those who accepted the 'sceptical' heritage of the school, associating them with a particular type of *philosophic activity or stance* (70.12–26, cf. 6.30–41), while some in his day used the term 'Academic' more obviously to indicate a sceptical position (54.38–43). It is thus becoming a word to describe a particular type of philosophical stance, in the same way as 'Epicurean', 'Stoic', or 'Pyrrhonian' (6.21, 6.29–7.1, 11.23, 61.11, 63.3, 70.18). The term 'Platonic', however, is used at 2.11–12 and fr. D to indicate people occupied with the interpretation of Plato. It remained possible as late as Proclus to refer by the term 'Platonic' to interpreters whose primary allegiance is to another philosopher's system.[2] This meant that no term unambiguously referred to those professing adherence to Plato's doctrines, although the majority of Plato's interpreters clearly did so.

In these circumstances a working definition of a Platonist in this period might include any who appear to promote an essentially Platonic doctrinal system, which will, as a minimum, involve a role for transcendent ideas and for some kind of life beyond the body for the core of the human person; and any with a special liking for dealing with Platonic texts, regardless of any

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[2] Panaetius the Stoic (*In Tim.* 1.162.12–13) and Numenius, more correctly called a Pythagorean (*In Remp.* 2.96.11, cf. Iambl. *De an.* 23). The case of Trypho, who is called a Stoic and Platonic by Porphyry (*VPlot.* 17), is unclear, but he may have been a Stoic with strong interests in interpreting Plato.

allegiance to another philosophy. A full treatment of Platonism during this period would find some place for all Platonic interpreters (except those who are polemically motivated), for, as is often observed, doctrine and interpretation of key Platonic texts seem to go hand in hand. In fact some of the most noteworthy developments in Platonic interpretation seem to stem from the 'Neopythagorean' Numenius, even though by no means all of his doctrines made a lasting impression on the development of Platonism.

2 VARIETIES OF PLATONISM

The Platonism of the two to three centuries before Plotinus is traditionally known as 'Middle Platonism'. This term is inclined to give the impression that there is a distinct brand of Platonism that intervenes between (1) the true Platonism of Plato and his immediate successors and (2) a distinct modification of that Platonism that characterizes Plotinus and all ancient Platonists thereafter. In this regard the term 'Middle Platonism' is misleading, and I hope largely to avoid it here. Some Platonists with whom we shall deal were more faithful to the original spirit of Plato's doctrines than Plato's immediate successors, and others had ideas that took sufficient liberties with interpretation and doctrine to embarrass Plotinus and his circle.

Because Plotinus never wrote commentaries, much of the philosophical work of Porphyry, Iamblichus, Proclus, Damascius and Olympiodorus appears to have as great a debt to pre-Plotinian interpreters as to the philosophical vision of Plotinus. Porphyry speaks of the *hupomnēmata* (reminders or annotations, usually indicating some kind of 'commentary') that were read in Plotinus' circle, and they included the work of prominent second-century Platonists, of at least one Pythagorean (Numenius), and of prominent recent Peripatetics. That they were all read does not indicate that they were treated with equal respect, but rather that all could offer a platform that became the basis for fruitful doctrinal and exegetical discussion. It is noteworthy that there is no mention of the commentaries of any whom Plotinus had known personally, whether teachers such as Ammonius Saccas, rivals such as Longinus, or friends such as Origines and Amelius. It is not surprising, then, that through Porphyry the so-called 'Middle Platonists' seem to have had as much influence on the way that Plato commentaries developed as Plotinus did. And of the friends of Plotinus whom Porphyry used, Origenes and Amelius were in turn influenced by pre-Plotinian Platonists.

Those who had cast doubt on the originality of Plotinus during his lifetime saw him as belonging to the tradition of those with a combined allegiance to Plato and to Pythagoras, including both Moderatus (late first century CE)

and Numenius who were nominally Pythagoreans.[3] This ought to alert us to the fact that contemporaries did not see a great resemblance between Plotinus and seemingly more conventional Platonists, such as the biographer Plutarch (c. 45–125 CE), Gaius (*floruit* c. 125 CE), Albinus (*floruit* c. 150 CE), and Atticus (*floruit* c. 178 CE). Hence Plotinus himself could be seen as something of a 'fringe Platonist', but that cannot be said for his influential follower Porphyry, who came to Plotinus already steeped in the more regular scholarly Platonism taught by Longinus and retained a mind of his own on some important issues.

One way of distinguishing types of Platonism among Plotinus' predecessors has been to classify them according to their friendliness or hostility to certain other philosophers and philosophical schools, particularly Academic 'sceptics', Aristotle, Pythagoras and the Stoa. Karamanolis has recently examined the whole period with regard to its shifting attitude towards Aristotle, most often an uneasy ally, but an undoubted enemy for Atticus and perhaps also for some others.[4] Scholars of the early twentieth century were sufficiently struck by widespread use of Stoic terminology to postulate strong influence on that front, but this is seldom accompanied by radical concessions to Stoic doctrine, merely by the willingness to be swayed by good Stoic arguments on occasions where the natural boundaries of Platonism permitted it. And in logic the Platonists, if they were going to offer strong guidance to their pupils, had little choice but to supplement anything they could find in Plato with approved doctrine from either Aristotle or the Stoa. Even so, some found more to criticize here than others. So many different attitudes to Aristotle and (to a lesser degree) the Stoa are detectable that it is ultimately impossible to categorize these Platonists according to such criteria. What we can say with some certainty is that Plotinus had such a wide range of precedents that the degree to which he chose to be swayed by Aristotle or the Stoa was his own decision.

Platonists might also be distinguished on the basis of their dominant interests, some seemingly being preoccupied with mathematics, such as Theon of Smyrna (contemporary with Plutarch), others with ethics (though grounded in theology), and others with philosophical literature, such as Apuleius (*floruit* c. 160 CE). Such a distinction is problematic because of our limited knowledge of the output of most of them. Again, they could be distinguished on the basis of geography, dividing those operating in Athens from those functioning elsewhere, as Dillon (1977) did, but with the subsequent collapse of the 'School

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[3] Unknown persons, answered by Amelius, Longinus and the author himself in Porph. *VPlot.* 17–21.
[4] Karamanolis 2006. Lucius, Nicostratus and Eudorus come to mind, insofar as they are hostile to Aristotle's work the *Categories*, but it is unsafe to infer a general hostility from this more specific one.

of Gaius' theory that had once seemed to give a little coherence to the non-Athenian practitioners, such a distinction fails to capture any essential difference. Finally one might make distinctions on the basis of the degree of literalism with which interpreters approached Platonic texts, with Atticus as Proclus' supreme example of the literalist, followed perhaps by Plutarch, Gaius and Albinus; at the other extreme one finds Numenius and those influenced by him. In the end, however, it would seem that early imperial Platonism had many faces that are not easily categorized. It was finding its way forward, first discovering how to read Plato, then discovering explanations for the anomalies, and ultimately finding explanations for passages that pointed towards unpalatable doctrines. Ultimately, this led to reading Platonic texts *imaginatively*, but as John Dillon has shown with regard to Platonist commentaries of the era a great deal of 'pedantry and pedestrianism' remained alongside more illuminating exegesis.[5]

3 THE WRITTEN COMMUNICATION OF PLATONISM

The writings of these Platonists fell into a variety of categories, one of which was the Platonic 'commentary'. It is a constraint for us that no complete or near-complete commentary survives. The *Theaetetus* commentary does not get far beyond the introductory stages of the dialogue before the papyrus runs out at around 158b, but it does give us a reasonably clear idea of the type of lemmata, the way that they are explained by paraphrase, and the extent of the more adventurous hermeneutic material. Two papyrus fragments of an *Alcibiades* commentary do not give a radically different impression, nor do other papyrus fragments to be dated from this period. The chief dialogue to attract commentaries was the *Timaeus*, this seemingly being the work that every Platonist curriculum had to include. The impressive fragments of Taurus' *Commentary on the Timaeus* (T22–34 Gioè), perhaps written at around his alleged *floruit* of 145 CE, are sufficient to make us wish for more, but, unfortunately, we do not possess from this period a substantial piece of continuous commentary on this pivotal dialogue, other than the work of Galen on its medical parts. Galen had Platonist leanings, but he lived and thought primarily as a physician, not as a professional philosopher. His admiration for Plato did not cause him to commit to key doctrines concerning the transcendent Ideas and an immortal inner person. And he informs us that he is atypical in wanting to comment upon these later physiological parts of the *Timaeus* at all. At the beginning of the work Platonists in the second century tended not to comment on anything

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[5] Dillon 2006.

preceding Timaeus' great monologue,[6] and all that we know to have attracted regular Platonist comment before Porphyry could be loosely described as the part pertaining to physical and metaphysical principles.

Some idea of the sections of the *Timaeus* that attracted attention can be gleaned from Calcidius' rather later Latin translation and commentary. This is generally agreed to reflect broadly the perspective of pre-Plotinian Platonism, and it makes substantial acknowledged and unacknowledged use of the Platonist Theon of Smyrna, the Platonizing Peripatetic Adrastus, and the Platonizing Pythagorean Numenius. These debts, however, should not be allowed to obscure the fact that Calcidius has an agenda, which is itself a later one than the period with which we are dealing. Not all even of this commentary has survived, but we also have its table of contents that gives a general idea of the commentary's scope. Calcidius' translation of the Latin begins at the beginning, but his commentary proper begins with 31c and later material returns to 28b. The early conversation and the story of Atlantis he dismisses as involving straightforward narrative.[7] Translation and commentary run out at 53c. A commentary so clearly divided into topics rather than into sections of text does have its later (and fuller) counterpart in Proclus' *Commentary on the Republic*, but to what extent it was normal in the first two centuries CE we cannot guess. It is quite possible that a number of different formats were used according to the teaching styles of different individuals and the suitability of each style to particular Platonic works.

Some interpretative works actually centred on single questions raised by Platonic texts or on quite short passages in dialogues. We have several examples of the former in Plutarch's *Platonic Questions*, while his *On the Generation of the Soul in the Timaeus* is of the latter kind, but it seems that a number of authors did tackle key passages like the 'Myth of Er' in the *Republic*.[8]

Interpretative works served to expose the pupil to the heritage of Platonism, once they had opted for it. Other works were required to introduce Platonic doctrines to those who might be considering such an option and to those who wished to familiarize themselves with a variety of philosophical systems as Cicero and many others had done. The doctrinal handbook, such as that of

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[6] Severus is the one singled out for mention by Proclus (*In Tim.* 1.204.17–18 = T3 Gioè) for declining to comment on any of the introductory material; compare our remarks on Calcidius below.

[7] 58.26–59.2 Waszink; like his avoidance of allegorical interpretation, this treatment of the story of Solon, prehistoric Athens, and Atlantis as a *simplex narratio . . . rerum ante gestarum et historiae veteris recensitio* seems to guarantee that he is not here under the influence of Numenius (Proc. *In Tim.* 1.76.30–77.23 = fr. 37 des Places) or Cronius. Rather it suggests Severus (Proc. *In Tim.* 1.204.16–18; cf. Longinus, ibid. 18–24).

[8] Dercyllides in Theon, *Exposition* 198.9; cf. Plutarch's discussion of the four regular solids in the *Timaeus* in *Obsolescence of Oracles*.

Alcinous or Apuleius' *De Platone*, should be distinguished from introductions
to Platonic texts such as Albinus' *Prologue* and the source (in the Thrasyllan
tradition) of Diogenes Laertius 3.48–67. There remained rivalries between the
different philosophies, so that polemical treatises continued to be written against,
for instance, Stoics and Epicureans. With Atticus, it becomes clear that anti-
Aristotelian polemic could become polemic against those of one's own primary
persuasion who adopted facets of Aristotelian doctrine. Indeed, it is inevitable
that Platonism's dominance during this period would result in what we might
call 'internal' quarrels about Platonism's true nature.

Platonists were acutely aware that Plato had mostly written in dialogue form,
and that he was both a philosopher and a literary author. As a result those
Platonists with obvious literary talents sometimes tried to use them to enhance
their message. Plutarch wrote many dialogues in the Platonic tradition that
attempt to communicate ideas of a predominantly Platonist kind. Numenius also
wrote in dialogue form in his *On the Good*. Apuleius experimented with a variety
of literary forms, often leaving us with strong suggestions of a philosophical
message without reducing the works' appeal for those who might normally
reject philosophy. Examples are to be found in his *Metamorphoses* (or *Golden
Ass*) and his series of short pieces known as the *Florida*.

4 THE QUESTION OF PRE-PLOTINIAN PLATONISM'S SOURCES

The questions of the origins of what was then called 'Middle Platonism' used to
be keenly debated. When viewed, rather artificially, as a single movement, the
Platonism of this period seemed to demand a father-figure whose vision gave
it its shape, as (it was presumed) Plato had done earlier and Plotinus would do
later. The Platonists with whom we are dealing had not usually left enough for
us to expect to see them acknowledging such a figure, Plotinus had not been in
the habit of referring to intellectuals of the Roman era, and Porphyry's list of
commentators read in Plotinus' circle (*VPlot* 14) includes only Severus, Gaius
and Atticus of those styled 'Platonists'. Of those who are mentioned regularly
by Proclus in his *Commentary on the Timaeus* (again probably reflecting what
had once appeared in Porphyry) the earliest is Plutarch, who spans the first and
second centuries CE.

Plutarch himself, although an 'intellectual giant' of the Platonic tradition, is
too late to have interested scholars as the supposed luminary who introduced the
new Platonism, and there were other arguments for by-passing him too. First,
though not inclined to conceal firmly held views, he is not an open advocate of
the Platonist 'dogmatism' that scholars had perceived as a precondition for this
kind of Platonism, and he seems to see himself in the tradition of the 'New'

as well as the 'Old' Academy, questioning the validity of the distinction that Antiochus of Ascalon had forcefully made. Antiochus had been the staunchest advocate of Platonic 'dogmatism', but when Plutarch mentions him in his *Life of Cicero* (4) he appears to disapprove of his innovations and to suspect his motivation. Second, Plutarch, though a lively intellectual of Platonist persuasion who conversed regularly with others, was not the Head of some famous Platonist school and is not the 'professional philosopher' that scholars were seeking. Third, we have enough of Plutarch to know that he did not leave behind the clearly articulated Platonic system that was thought to have been influential, for he often communicates obliquely, making considerable use of multi-speaker dialogues when writing in the Platonic tradition, sometimes employing myth and metaphor to hint at his deepest views, and at others applying Platonism to more peripheral questions of some contemporary interest. Hence, the onus is usually on his own interpreters to read a Platonic system into his work. Finally, Plutarch refers to others who can be regarded as his own predecessors.

Much of this only demonstrates the unrealistic expectations about a second founder of Platonism: the expected professional philosopher who re-establishes Platonism by promoting a new vision with dogmatic force and systematic clarity never existed. It is, however, to Plutarch that we must first go if we desire to trace further back the origins of early imperial Platonism. To begin with, Plutarch can be plausibly connected with several of those who followed him. His name is regularly connected with Atticus in Proclus (*In Tim.* 1.326.1, 381.26–7, 2.153.29, 3.212.8). The hero of Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* (or *Golden Ass*), narrated in the first person and so suggestive of autobiographical elements, is said to be related to Plutarch and to his nephew Sextus, also a Platonist, something that appears to place this odd work (or perhaps its Greek model by Lucius of Patrae) somehow in the Platonist allegorical tradition and to acknowledge a debt to Plutarch. Such a debt is easy to envisage in the light of the Isis book with which the work concludes, and Apuleius also seems close to Plutarch on matters of demonology in his *De deo Socratis*. Finally Aulus Gellius (*NA* 1.26.4) has his Platonist mentor Taurus refer in glowing terms to 'our Plutarch', apparently acknowledging a debt. These hints are at least as much as one might expect to have found in our fragmentary evidence, and establish that Plutarch was an influential figure in this period of Platonism.

It is therefore with Plutarch that one should begin any search for the origins of Platonism. Here it is vital that the depiction of the intellectual life in which Platonist views are aired is not such as to conjure up images of large formal schools, but of informal intellectual gatherings where views other than those of Platonists could find expression. This was a world in which intellectuals would travel a good deal, sharing views with those that they encountered

elsewhere. Though individuals tended to assume that others had read widely, oral activity was clearly of great importance, possibly reflecting the belief that Plato himself privileged oral over written activity.[9] Revered intellectual beliefs of non-Greeks were often introduced, from Egypt for instance, or Persia. Plutarch's own revered mentor Ammonius, who bears an Egyptian name and appears in a number of dialogues, already speaks with confidence in the broad correctness of the Platonic tradition, and the views expressed by him seem to have Plutarch's approval. Other characters can also introduce material in the Platonist tradition, sometimes involving interpretation of Plato, and especially of mathematical elements in Plato, which were clearly attracting considerable interest.[10]

In general the interpretation of Plato is better seen in the *Platonic Questions* and in *On the Psychogony in the Timaeus*, neither of which is in dialogue form. The latter work names several sources, including the Academics Xenocrates and Crantor from the first and second generations after Plato himself, Eudorus of Alexandria, an Academic from the late first century BCE who also knew and approved of both these early exegetes,[11] and Posidonius of Apamea, the Stoic polymath who influenced Cicero, Strabo and Seneca among others. Plutarch refers in fact to 'those around' Posidonius (1023b), a common way of referring to a given philosopher along with any others who may adopt his position; hence one may, but is not forced to, postulate a group of interpreters who agree with Posidonius' explanation of the construction of the Platonic World Soul. Posidonius' interpretation of Plato's psychology in the *Timaeus* is also referred to by Plutarch's contemporary Platonist, Theon of Smyrna,[12] and by Sextus Empiricus, in whom it appears that Posidonius considered himself to be interpreting *Pythagorean* theory (seeing Plato's character 'Timaeus' as making a distinctively Pythagorean contribution, F85EK = S.E. *M.* 7.93). Posidonius (T91 = F151 EK) likewise attributed Platonic tripartite psychology to Pythagoras too. Finding Pythagoreanism in Plato would become a regular part of the philosophy of the age, particularly for self-styled Pythagoreans.[13] However, Galen

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[9] Aristotle's account of Plato's so-called 'unwritten doctrines' is clearly becoming important at this time, sufficiently so to have inspired an emendation to the text of *Metaphysics* by Eudorus and Euharmostus (Alex. Aphr. *In Met.* 58.31–59.8 = Eudorus T2 Mazzarelli).

[10] There are mathematical passages scattered throughout Plutarch's *Moralia* (on which see below), while Theon of Smyrna and Moderatus are known to us mainly as a result of their mathematical and Pythagorean interests.

[11] 1013a–b; Eudorus is also mentioned at 1019f–1020c.

[12] *Expos.* p. 103 Hiller = F291 EK in relation to the seven numbers used in the construction of the World Soul.

[13] Stob. *Ecl.* 2.49.8ff., possibly still influenced by Eudorus whose work is utilized shortly before; 'Aetius' (Stob. *Ecl.* 1.12, 20, 22, 49; Ps.-Plut. 2.6, 4.2) as discussed in Tarrant 2000: 75–6; Moderatus at Porph. *VPyth.* 53, and Thrasyllus, Moderatus, Numenius and Cronius at *idem VPlot.* 20.71–6 and 21.1–9; Nicomachus of Gerasa, and 'Pythagoras' in Lucian *Auction of Lives* 3–6.

makes use of Posidonius' defence of the tripartition of the soul in the course of approving the psychology of Plato's *Republic*, suggesting that Posidonius had admired Plato himself.[14] The evidence suggests that Posidonius was an important figure in the history of Platonic interpretation, even though one cannot expect Platonic interpretation and doctrine to coincide in somebody who described himself as a Stoic. That is palpably the case in the 58th and 65th *Epistles* of Seneca, which give considerable insights into the Platonic interpretation of the time, and confirm the interest that a Stoic may legitimately take in Platonic texts.

Eudorus is better entitled to be considered a Platonist, in spite of his status as an 'Academic'[15] and his own undoubted interest in the Pythagoreans.[16] Consequently there was a time when scholars looked to Eudorus to explain a whole variety of common features in pre-Plotinian Platonism, and he occupied, perhaps deservedly, twenty-two pages in Dillon's book *The Middle Platonists*, sharing a chapter with Philo of Alexandria. John Rist was an early sceptic regarding what he saw as a still-growing tendency to credit unexplained doctrines to Eudorus,[17] and a promised edition of Eudorus' fragments by Bonazzi and Chiaradonna appears set to take a minimalist view, particularly regarding material in the second Book of Stobaeus' *Eclogues*. Rejecting the Stobaean foundations upon which much of what Eudorus' reputation as a Platonic interpreter rests would leave much of the recent scholarly picture of Eudorus without any real cohesion. There are also a few arguments from silence, and particularly from the silence of Proclus' commentaries,[18] that warn us that he may just have been one figure among many of his time who played some part in giving shape to the new Platonism. We cannot even say what kind of philosopher he was. Does his interest in Pythagoreans imply more commitment than it had for Posidonius? Does his association with positive teachings imply the commitment to dogma that many postulate, or does the evidence show no more than it had done for

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[14] See F142–6 and 150–53 EK, from books 4–6 of *On the Doctrines of Plato and Hippocrates*.

[15] Stobaeus *Ecl.* 2.42.7 = T1 Mazzarelli, Anon. 1, *Intr. ad Arat.* 97 Maass (= T11), and Simpl. *In Categ.* 187.10 (= T16).

[16] See his account of Pythagorean metaphysical principles at Simpl. *Phys.* 181.10ff., backed by his emendation of the text of Arist. *Met.* 988a10–11 (recorded by Alex. *In Met.*) so that the matter as well as Ideas are derived from the One; and, if Eudorus may be credited with the theory of the *telos* of Platonism at Stob. *Ecl.* 2.49.8ff., one notes that Socrates and Plato are said to be following Pythagoras; finally, the closeness of aspects of Eudorus to some late Pythagorean texts has suggested to Dillon 1977: 117–21, among others, the influence of the Pythagoreanism of the period. The alleged similarities between Eudorus and Philo of Alexandria, who is once called a 'Pythagorean' by Clement (*Strom.* 2.19.100.3.4) and who is not otherwise directly associated with a philosophical school, also do something to suggest that Eudorus was a Pythagoreanizer.

[17] See his review of Tarrant 1985, where he speaks of 'Pan-Eudorism'.

[18] As Proclus depends largely on Porphyry for his early material (Tarrant 2004), it seems that Porphyry too failed to see Eudorus as a central figure.

Philo of Larissa and Plutarch, who both expressed views of their own together while seeing some merit in Academic Scepticism? Do his objections to the Aristotelian account of the categories make him a trenchant anti-Aristotelian? Does the apparent fact that he wrote one or more Platonic commentaries make him a clear case of a 'Platonist', when Potamo, also of Alexandria, wrote on the *Republic* but called himself an 'Eclectic'?[19]

More importantly we have to ask whether Eudorus was really an innovator. On the composition of the Platonic World Soul he found something useful in two Old Academic views, but is not credited by Plutarch with a view of his own. Perhaps he is simply one of 'those around Posidonius', but perhaps he said nothing that required reporting. Later (1020c) he is affirmed to be following Crantor on the mathematics of the soul's harmonic nature, and the reason why he has been reintroduced at 1019e is the clarity of his exposition. Was he perhaps more of an interpreter than a philosopher, or more of a scholar than an original mind? There are a few key doctrines that scholars like to credit him with, including the view that 'assimilation to God' is the human goal, that the Ideas are the thoughts of God, and that the world demands not only transcendent Ideas (in the Platonic tradition) but also immanent forms (in the Aristotelian tradition). The first is clearly and interestingly discussed in the Stobaean passage that allegedly follows him, but we may detect the basic doctrine in Ciceronian texts that go back to Antiochus if not before, and Plato gives plenty of prompting in this direction (cf. *De leg.* 1.21). The second is quite plausibly Old Academic. The third is already present in Platonic material in Seneca (*Epistles* 58 and 65), and Whittaker (1969), with an eye on Eudorus, favoured a source commenting on the *Timaeus*, but Plutarch's discussion of Posidonius' interpretation of the World Soul certainly gives prominence both to intelligibles and to the limits of physical bodies (as distinct from their matter).

The evidence points to Eudorus having given momentum to the Platonist movement not by the striking originality of his doctrines but by his ability to explain clearly the concepts that belonged to an earlier age. In this regard he was continuing in the footsteps of Posidonius. We cannot even affirm that Eudorus would have regarded himself as a 'Platonist', however appropriate the term seems. If that disappoints our desire to identify a Platonic visionary at this time, then it may simply be that our desire is misplaced. What was really important is widespread admiration for Plato and the breadth of the desire to understand him. It made his philosophy a regular topic of conversation at the more serious gatherings of intellectuals. The texts that we have reflect a vibrant intellectual background, and it is to them that we must turn.

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[19] See D.L. 1.21 for his philosophy and the *Suda* ad loc. for his commentary.

5 PRESENTING AND EXPLAINING THE CORPUS

The most important text for Platonism is the text of Plato himself. Some works had clearly remained quite well known throughout the Hellenistic period, including *Timaeus*, *Phaedo* and *Republic*. However, the Hellenistic scholar Aristophanes of Byzantium had arranged only fifteen works when he sought to shape the corpus, along dramatic lines, into trilogies.[20] These fifteen included the *Minos* and *Epinomis*, which are almost certainly spurious, and a group of *Epistles*, some of which may have been. They gave no exposure (apart from the *Euthyphro*) to what we think of as the Socratic side of Plato, with its focus on undermining the theses or activities of others rather than on establishing central theses. His arrangement did not have the effect of leaving all the rest of the corpus in obscurity, but debates in the first century BCE about the nature of the Platonic heritage, and in particular about how far Plato had sanctioned the straightforward exposition of doctrine, needed answering with reference to a comprehensive and authoritative body of texts. Such a corpus may have existed, but seems not to have been widely circulating or adequately explained.

We can say better who was trying to *explain* the whole corpus than who was helping to make it more freely available. But certain works now being written presuppose the availability of comprehensive texts. We have a short introduction, or *Prologue*, to the full corpus by the second-century CE Platonist Albinus, and the first of three appendices to Diogenes Laertius' *Life of Plato* (D.L. 3.48–67) is also just such an introduction. Both refer to the work of Thrasyllus, who appears, directly or indirectly, to be Diogenes' principal source, but is criticized by Albinus. Albinus (*Prol.* 4) accuses Thrasyllus (court intellectual of the Emperor Tiberius in the early first century CE) and Dercyllides (of unknown date) of having placed dramatic considerations ahead of substantive ones when arranging the corpus into nine tetralogies. So as far as Albinus was concerned, one or the other of these two must take responsibility for the form of the thirty-six-work corpus that has come down to us.[21] We know too from an Arabic source (al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, p. 614 Dodge) that Theon of Smyrna, a Platonist of distinctly mathematical interests whose *Exposition of Mathematics Useful for the Understanding of Plato* has come down to us, wrote at some time in the late first or early second century CE on the order and titles of Plato's dialogues. The *Exposition* refers both to the harmonic theory of Thrasyllus and to an

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[20] *Republic–Timaeus–Critias*; *Sophist–Statesman–Cratylus*; *Laws–Minos–Epinomis*; *Theaetetus–Euthyphro–Apology*; *Crito–Phaedo–Epistles*.

[21] Certainly not everything associated with Thrasyllus was new, and there appears to have been some early tradition that the corpus had been originally arranged like a sequence of tragedies at the *Dionysia*, but Albinus knew no earlier tetralogies than those that he associated with these two.

interpretative work by Dercyllides on the spindles and whorls of the 'Myth of Er' in Plato's *Republic*. It is therefore likely that one or the other was the primary inspiration (but not necessarily 'source') of Theon's own activities in introducing the corpus.

The place of Thrasyllus in organizing the corpus is controversial, but the role of Dercyllides is still more difficult to fix, since we cannot affirm where he stood in relation to Thrasyllus. All we can be certain of is that he recognized the same first tetralogy, consisting of *Euthyphro*, *Apology*, *Crito* and *Phaedo*. However, he addressed the Platonic theory of matter in the eleventh book of a work *On Plato's Philosophy*, and it may be with this extensive work about Plato in mind that Dillon is content to treat him as a Platonist.[22] This contrasts with a widespread unwillingness to use this term for Thrasyllus, even though a scholiast on Juvenal affirmed that he had devoted himself to the *Platonica secta*.[23] If Thrasyllus leaned at times towards the Pythagoreans, this may simply reflect an alliance that was typical of the age, and the claims of these two to be regarded as Platonists are approximately equal.

Dercyllides unearthed his material on Platonic matter from Hermodorus, an Old Academic and contemporary of Xenocrates, and this recalls the way that Posidonius and Eudorus were taking Old Academic texts into consideration in the interpretation of Plato. Even though Hermodorus is responsible for the outline of the theory, Dercyllides is still selecting the views that he will promote, still convinced like other Platonists of the age that Plato had a theory of matter, and still writing in a way that suggested an interpretation of the receptacle in the *Timaeus*, the Indefinite (*apeiron*) of *Philebus* 23c ff., and Aristotle's reports of Plato's 'unwritten doctrine'. Among the ideas that Dercyllides sees fit to pass on here is the notion that Plato worked with a system of three basic categories, 'in itself', 'relative to an opposite' and 'relative to another'. So, a Platonist system of first principles is beginning to take place, closely related to a Platonist logic.

Both Dercyllides and Thrasyllus seem not only to have been involved in organizing the corpus but also to have been attempting to explain how philosophy in the Platonic tradition operated. Among the material in Diogenes that arguably derives from Thrasyllus' stance is the claim that Plato did establish doctrines, revealing them only in the instructional (*huphēgētikos*) works, while inquisitive (*zētētikos*) works aimed rather to refute. This major division was central to a classification by the dialogue's so-called *character*, which resulted in four

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[22] Dillon (1977: 133) places him in the milieu of Alexandrian Platonism, and (2006: 20–2) treats him in the company of Platonists without further ado.
[23] Scholion on Juv. 6.576 = Thrasyllus T1a.

species of instructional works (physical, logical, ethical, political) and four of inquisitive also (perhaps for 'testing' the youth, for 'delivering' their own inner theories, for 'exposing' the sophists, and for 'overturning' them).[24] The classi-fication must have originated with persons who saw two strands in the Platonic tradition, one doctrinal and the other more aporetic. As if to further explain the disputes about interpreting Plato, the material in Diogenes suggests that he had deliberately concealed some of his meaning by using a plurality of terms in the same sense, and the same terms in different senses. This not only involves interpretation, but establishes that Plato was a complex author who *required interpretation*.

   Much of the significance of Dercyllides and Thrasyllus might have been lost, but for the scholarly activities of Porphyry, inherited from his early mentor Longinus. It had been Porphyry who passed information about Dercyllides and Hermodorus to Simplicius, and Porphyry was in general a major source of pre-Plotinian material for Platonists of later antiquity. Porphyry himself shows how Longinus had been able to place Plotinus in the same tradition as Thrasyllus and Pythagorean authors like Moderatus and Numenius (*VPlot.* 20–1), seeing him as somebody who dealt with the basic principles of Plato and Pythagoras together. Porphyry also preserves something about a Thrasyllan '*Logos* of the forms' in his *Commentary on Ptolemy's Harmonics*.[25] One assumes that Thrasyllus had tried in a work on harmonics to relate the *logos qua* ratio of Pythagorean harmonics to some universal principle, associated with a controlling divinity, which is somehow responsible for embracing all the formal principles of the natural world. Porphyry has this *logos* not only unfolding the formal power encapsulated in seeds, but also underpinning a cognitive process that extracts the forms from matter and eventually yields an awareness of the Platonic Idea. But it is only the beginning of the process that is marked as Thrasyllan, and all one can say with confidence is that Thrasyllus had some *logos*-theory that involved formal principles, and that Porphyry thought it special enough to refer to. The fact that Porphyry has strayed a long way from his goal of commenting on Ptolemy and thus seems to be following a source, coupled with the facts that he has stated a policy of naming sources and that no other source is mentioned, led me to conclude that most of this material was broadly Thrasyllan. If this were right the passage would be especially notable for two reasons: first, such a *logos*-theory inevitably makes one think of Thrasyllus' contemporary Philo of Alexandria, and second the passage contains allusions to doctrinal material in

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[24] There are uncertainties here, as can be seen from the variant *epideiktikos* replacing *endeiktikos* at Albinus, *Prol.* 6.
[25] Page 12 Düring.

the sixth and seventh Platonic *Epistles*, material that is otherwise unnoticed in extant works until the second century CE.

The activities of those who undertook the organization of the corpus did not ensure that all works included by them were accepted as Plato's own. The *Epinomis* was still attributed to Philip of Opus, while the authorship of such works as the *Alcibiades II*, *Hipparchus* and *Erastae* were all apparently debated during this period.[26] There is no evidence, however, that any were omitted from the corpus arrangements that have come down to us, including two in Arabic sources (one seemingly derived from the work of Theon referred to above) and the *Prologue* of Albinus. Other Platonists seem to have had few doubts about works other than these four.

The activities of the corpus organizers made little impact on some Platonist authors of the period. Plutarch, the anonymous *Theaetetus* commentator and Alcinous show little or no awareness of the activities of Thrasyllus and Dercyllides.[27] On the other hand a second-century papyrus recently published, and perhaps from another commentary on the *Theaetetus*, offers an explanation of the internal cohesion of the second tetralogy. It explains particularly the special non-dogmatic character of the *Theaetetus*, as opposed to the preceding *Cratylus* and the following *Sophist* and *Politicus*, in terms of Plato's desire to counter erroneous positions on epistemology before explaining the rest of his theory. What is said suggests conformity also with Thrasyllus' second titles, as *Cratylus* is about the correctness of names, and *Theaetetus* about knowledge; it also agrees with the depiction of the *Cratylus*, *Sophist* and *Statesman* as 'logical' dialogues, i.e., dialogues offering instruction in logic.

The kind of Platonism associated with Thrasyllus, Dercyllides and Theon had been learned rather than edifying, and certainly not inspired. It had tended to see mathematics (including harmonics), and therefore mathematical passages in Plato, as a principal concern. However, these authors do show a clear awareness of the metaphysical element in Plato, in Thrasyllus' *logos*-theory, in Dercyllides' treatment of Platonic matter, and in Theon's comparison of philosophy to a sacred rite (*Expos.* 14.18–16.2), which uses the mystery terminology of the *Phaedrus* and aims at the goal of assimilation to the divine. This brings us to

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[26] For the *Epinomis* see D.L. 3.37, anon. *Proleg.* 13–19; for *Hipparchus* and *Alcibiades II* see Aelian *VS* 8.2.16, Athenaeus 6.506c, and Tarrant 1993: 17 n. 37, 150–1; for the *Erastae* see perhaps even Thrasyllus T18c (= D.L. 9.37).

[27] The technical terms for the classification of dialogues are absent, so far as may be told, from the commentator's discussion of the nature and primary topic of the *Theaetetus* in columns 2–3; they appear to have no explanatory value for Plutarch; and Alcinous, discussing which types of syllogism Plato employs in which situations, uses the term *huphēgētikos* for dialogue character at 158.28 without importing the rest of the classification.

the threshold of a fully revived Platonism that depicts Plato as the builder of a doctrinal system.

6 MOVING FORWARD

The central author in the next part of our account will be Plutarch. Even so, we should perhaps begin with reference to the 58th and 65th *Epistles* of Seneca, which reveal to us some features of the developing Platonist metaphysics. *Epistle* 65 discusses the types of causes acknowledged by various schools, and at 7–10 Plato is considered to have added a fifth cause to the four familiar Aristotelian ones, a paradigmatic cause (or Idea) over and above final, motive, formal and material causes. This already gives the basic five-cause system that is present even in the introduction to Proclus' *Commentary on the Timaeus*,[28] and one might well believe that it was present in interpretative works on the *Timaeus* before Seneca; but it may simply be that Seneca draws primarily on the familiar wisdom of the intellectual world at Rome. It is plausible that Thrasyllus had exercised a controlling influence on the way in which Plato's philosophy was seen in Roman circles, particularly those close to the imperial household.[29] Since, as a Stoic, Seneca does not approve such multi-cause systems, it is unlikely to be his own innovation.

A division into six of Plato's senses of 'what is' in *Epistle* 58 is compatible with the metaphysic of the five-cause passage. One recalls how the corpus organizers were conscious of Plato's tendency to use terms in a plurality of senses (D.L. 3.63–4), and the division in this *Epistle* should be seen against that background. We have a generic sense of being, referring to everything that may be said to 'be', and five others. These five again suggest a metaphysical hierarchy. Again, the material seems related to the interpretation of the *Timaeus*, particularly to the famous question that launches Timaeus' monologue: 'What is it that always is and has no becoming?' (27d),[30] but Seneca may here too be indebted to contemporary intellectual debate, and one feels that details are at times being understood in distinctly Stoic terms.

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[28] *In Tim.* 1.2.30–4.5; note that an auxiliary or instrumental cause is sometimes added (as in Porphyry fr. 120), but this does not alter the shape of the basic five-cause system.

[29] If Thrasyllus is still the source of Porphyry at *Harm.* 13.21–14.29, where the leap to the Idea is again an 'add-on', it is worth noting the influence of the philosophical digression of *Epistle* 7 there alluded to, which actually calls the Idea 'the fifth', and sees it as offering a step-up beyond the four elements there involved in empirical cognition. For a passage in Plutarch that makes much of hints of a five-fold metaphysic in Plato, see *Mor.* 391b–d.

[30] The question gives impetus to Numenius' metaphysical discussion in *On the Good*, frs. 3–6, and Ammonius' contribution to discussion of the Delphic E (below); cf. Whittaker 1965.

7 THE PLACE OF ALCINOUS

As one moves towards the authors of the second century Alcinous becomes increasingly important because of the range of philosophical topics he covers. Of Alcinous we know nothing except the name by which his *Handbook of Platonism* or *Didascalicus* has come down to us. We do not even know whether the name is that by which its bearer had originally been known, or, like the names of Porphyry and others,[31] a name acquired by a non-Greek within a philosophical school. What concerns us here is the nature of his handbook, the date at which it was put together, and the date(s) from which its basic materials are derived. Alcinous is clearly trying to produce from disparate materials a reasonably coherent introductory doctrinal handbook, as can be seen at the close:

To have said this much suffices for an introduction (*eisagōgē*) to Platonic doctrine-building (*dogmatopoieia*). Perhaps parts of it have been stated in an organized fashion, and parts as they came up and without order, but [it has been presented] so that as a result of what has been stated we may become keen to study and discover the rest of his doctrines too.

This suggests that he is conscious that his materials have not produced an organic whole, but that this does not worry him because he is only setting students upon a Platonic path, in recognition that Platonism is a life's journey and cannot come neatly packaged in Epicurean fashion.

Alcinous is certainly following a source closely at the beginning of his exposition of Platonic physics (12.1), where the similarities with a passage (in Stobaeus) of Arius Didymus can scarcely be coincidental. At other times much less striking similarities with Apuleius' *De Platone* also suggest some common source. It has been argued by Göransson that Alcinous is not following a single source but a number of sources,[32] and there certainly seem to be a number of different layers of material in the work. Parts of it are laced with vocabulary that emphasize the author's agreement or disagreement with certain ways of reading Plato, which do not appear to be the kind of thing that is preserved when following sources. These parts, including the end of the section on logic where interpretations of the *Euthydemus*, *Parmenides* and *Cratylus* are suggested (end of 6), chapters 7–11 on mathematics and metaphysics, chapters 23–5 on psychology, and parts of the earlier chapters on ethics (27–30), deal with the dominant interests of

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[31] There are interesting cases of adopted names in Porphyry's *Life of Plotinus*, since the author had been known (i) by the transliteration of his own name under Longinus, (ii) by its translation into Greek by Amelius, and (iii) by a word that suggested royalty more obliquely under Plotinus (17). Amelius' name had been changed to suit a philosopher who exalted the One, making it Amerios ('Partless', 7), while Amelius bestowed the name Mikkalos on Paulinus (also 7).

[32] Göransson 1995.

second-century Platonism, with a greater interest in hermeneutics and a more pervasive interest in theology and psychology. Some of these parts cannot accurately be called 'introductory', for there is little point in discussing what the *Cratylus* really means for anybody unfamiliar with the content of the dialogue itself, and little point in going into what one believes to be the human good 'if one accurately understands his writings' unless the reader already has a basic familiarity with Plato. There is also little obvious point in including as an appendix to the theology some twenty-three lines (166.15–38) on how one proves the qualities to be incorporeal without offering any reason for the reader to be interested in such issues.

Finally, one would expect a single coherent handbook of doctrines to be arranged in accordance with the division of Platonic philosophy that was offered at the outset. However, the actual arrangement differs considerably from that outlined in chapter 3 (153.25–154.5). Here there is a fundamental tripartition into theoretical–practical–logical. *Logic* is divided into division, definition, induction and syllogistic. *Practice* is divided into ethics, 'economics' (or family management) and politics. *Theory* is divided into theology (studying unmoved objects), physics (studying the heavens and the physical world) and mathematics. In what follows theory precedes practice, and comes in the order mathematics–theology–physics. There is no discussion of 'economics' or of definition *per se*. The account is preceded by an elaborate discussion of Plato's *criterion* (epistemology), a section on analytics (if it should not be restored at 153.31) is added to the logic, an extensive section of Platonic psychology and a chapter on fate are added after the discussion of physics, and there is a chapter before the close on the sophist, based closely on Plato's *Sophist*. It may have been prompted by the final lines of the preceding section on politics (188.5–11), which are based primarily on the *Statesman*, and, with the end of chapter 6 (159.38–160.41), it reflects a strong interest in the so-called 'logical' dialogues of Plato: *Cratylus*, *Sophist*, *Statesman* and *Parmenides*, with the addition of the *Euthydemus*.[33] This in turn suggests a desire to give Plato as 'scientific' an image as possible. We shall discuss Alcinous' doctrines and date as we progress.

8 PLUTARCH

Plutarch is another figure requiring separate discussion. Though he is better known for his biographies, which themselves serve to illustrate moral lessons,

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[33] The names of these dialogues occur eight times in all in the text, while those of other dialogues are mentioned only a further fourteen times. The source of D.L. 3.50–1 includes only the first four as being of the 'logical character', Albinus *Prologue* 3 seems to agree, but Galen included his summary of the *Euthydemus* along with those of the other four in his first book of *Compendia*.

and therefore have their own quasi-philosophical purpose, we possess several wide-ranging works addressing philosophical and related issues more directly. It has already been argued that Plutarch is a central figure in early imperial Platonism, and for this reason he is deserving of careful attention. However, there are a variety of difficulties involved in studying him, many of them similar to the difficulties that we experience when reading Plato. Both are literary authors, and Plutarch frequently casts his best work in dialogue form, making it clearer what he thinks worth discussing than what *doctrines* he adhered to. He is also cautious, finding something in common with the New Academy even though it is quite clear that he finds no reason whatever to avoid either belief or commitment.

Fortunately Plutarch sometimes speaks himself within his dialogues, allowing one to be clearer where the author stands. In the *E at Delphi* he is the penultimate speaker to offer an explanation of why the epsilon has been inscribed on Apollo's temple, and takes second place to his teacher Ammonius, who offers the final and seemingly definitive account, taking the E to stand for an affirmation of the god's unqualified 'existence' beyond the realm of generation in the form of the address εἶ ('you are'). Plutarch in this work is still depicted as a young man, but his preference for a mathematical explanation (taking the E as the number 5) is carefully linked not only with Pythagoreanizing speculations about the properties of this number, but also with an interpretation of passages from the later dialogues of Plato (391b–c), including the *Sophist* and *Philebus*. We see here evidence of Plutarch's early puzzling over some of the most enigmatic passages of Plato, trying to understand them in relation to one another.

Ordinarily the view that Plutarch espouses in person will coincide with his interpretation of Plato, and without forcing the Platonic text available to him. Thus he is a natural Platonist, who has little difficulty understanding the world in which he lives in Platonist terms. The most obvious way in which Plutarch bears witness to the revival of what is recognizably 'Platonism' is in his open commitment to the supernatural. Since Hellenistic philosophy there had been no shortage of theology, but the clear tendency had been to regard god(s) as part of an organic whole, the natural world, typified in the Stoic identification of god and nature. There is no evidence that we have moved significantly beyond this in Eudorus or Thrasyllus, for example. With Plutarch, committed to the validity of Greek religious traditions through his role as priest at Delphi, a great deal of additional divine machinery becomes necessary to explain the proper functioning of oracles, dreams and the like.

A famous passage of Plato's *Symposium* (202d–203a) had sought to explain prophecy through *daimones*, a multifarious tribe of beings responsible for bridging a gulf between humans and gods. Plutarch introduces this theme early in his important discussion of *daimones* in *The Obsolescence of Oracles* (415a), and

the *daimones* here (416c) differ significantly from gods insofar as they share in the non-rational emotions (*pathē*) of humans, and consequently also in degrees of virtue (417b). Their intermediate nature is said to parallel that of the moon, between earth and sun (416e),[34] and for Plutarch their place is essential in order to avoid *either* a radical division between gods and humans *or* an insufficient distance to separate them, so that gods actually come to be present personally at religious rites (416f–417b). It is also vital to explain the uncivilized rituals of early or remote humans, for Plutarch follows Greek traditions in accepting the impeccable rationality of anything that can properly be called a god. Hence his character Cleombrotus piously claims that unseemly myths also tell of the exploits of *daimones* rather than of gods. It is to the vagaries of these *daimones* that he would attribute temporary desertion of oracular shrines. When this subject is revived at 431b with a request for an explanation of *how* the *daimones* are responsible for the operation of oracles, Plutarch's teacher Ammonius is allowed to suggest that *daimones* are in fact only souls clothed in air,[35] and that we need no explanation for the contact of soul upon soul. At this point Lamprias, the narrator and Plutarch's brother, comes in to argue that souls with special prophetic powers after death are only retaining gifts that they had in life, but whose power was often swamped by its immersion in the bodily world (431e–432f). Prophetic souls are those most responsive to the required external impulses, including physical ones such as vapours, and prophecy, at Delphi or elsewhere, is not attributable to any process of reasoning (432c–d). Appeals to the legacy of the Academy and an aporetic (but not despairing) conclusion warn us that Plutarch desires to keep an open mind. What has been important is the overall kind of discussion rather than its details.

At the beginning of the treatise *On Isis and Osiris* is an address to the priestess Clea that explains Plutarch's indecision (351c–d):

Sensible people, Clea, must ask for all good things from the gods. We go on to pray especially to obtain from their very selves as much knowledge about them as humans can achieve, thinking there is nothing greater for humans to receive nor more sacred for a god to grant than the truth. God makes a present of the rest of their needs, but to intelligence and wisdom he grants access, keeping and using these as his own proper possessions.

Knowledge is the very source of god's power and happiness, and our quest to 'assimilate ourselves to god as much as possible'[36] is a quest for knowledge,

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[34] This association of *daimones* with the moon is present also in the more imaginative treatise *On the Face of the Moon* 944c–d.

[35] Here one should look not only to Hes. *Erg.* 123–5 for a precedent, but also now to the *Derveni Papyrus* 6.2–3, cf. 9–10; their airy nature may be inferred if editors correctly restore the beginning of line 11, but also perhaps from the airy nature of Zeus and other divinities in the exegetical parts of the text.

[36] The human goal or *telos* in Plutarch (*Mor.* 550d–e, cf. 1015b) as elsewhere in later Platonism.

especially knowledge about gods (351e). Plutarch may speak as one who has travelled part of the road, but no human can speak with the authority of one who has himself reached the desired knowledge. As a result Plutarch will yield much space in his dialogues to others who have made it their business to search for the truth, but to none does he allot a wholly authoritative position. In this regard he does not shun all signs of disagreement with Plato, particularly where the Platonic evidence is not wholly consistent. This is evident in the *Eroticus* or *Love Dialogue*. Here the divinity of Eros, which Socrates and 'Diotima' forcefully argue against in Plato's *Symposium* (201e–202d), is a central plank in the argument. It is even claimed that philosophers and poets are in agreement about Eros' divinity (363e–f), specifically mentioning Plato and alluding rather to a variety of material in the *Phaedrus* where Love is said to be 'a god or something divine' (242e2). Further, Plutarch's own experience of a loving marriage has ensured the denial of some of the recurrent themes of the *Symposium*, such as the superior nature of male-to-male love, an idea still associated with some Platonists in the second century CE.[37] Plutarch treats all loving relationships as being on a par.

In the context of an increasing willingness to introduce non-Greek material into broadly Platonist discussions, a willingness that will be continued by Numenius, Iamblichus and Syrianus later, it is important that Plutarch himself in the *Eroticus* makes use of comparisons with Egyptian *mythologia*, which according to 762a preserves scattered traces of the truth. The very word *mythologia* suggests the presence of a rational message embedded in a story, and hence inaccessible without deep interpretation. After a request at 764a, Egyptian thoughts on love are introduced. Central to this is the analogy of Eros and Aphrodite to the sun and moon respectively, which hints at the lack-lustre nature of sexual activity without love (764d). But Plutarch with his usual caution warns of ways in which the analogy is less appropriate (e.g., 764e). Again the central myth-like passage of the *Phaedrus* (244a–256e), which like Plutarch's work may be seen as apologetic for Eros, underpins the discussion, with Eros regarded as the source of, or catalyst in, our being returned from the image of beauty here to the true beauty beyond. The result is that the foray into Egyptian religion remains rooted in Platonism.

Egyptian *mythologia* is tackled at much greater length in *On Isis and Osiris*, and Plutarch warns that it should not be taken literally (355b), but in the manner of those who approach myths 'in a holy and philosophical fashion' (355d). A hint of what this might be is given at 359a: like a rainbow that reflects the light of the sun, so the *muthos* reflects a kind of *logos* that turns back the mind to other,

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[37] See 'Ion' in Lucian, *Symposium* or *Lapiths* 39; more subtle by far is Taurus 10 T = Aulus Gellius *NA* 17.20.1–7.

presumably higher, things. He displays little commitment even to the status of the two principal divinities of the title. Throughout it seems that Plutarch is more interested in encouraging a reverent attitude towards the divine than in explaining exact truths. From 355d to 358e he outlines key elements in their myth cycle, but disregards the more disgraceful tales as unbefitting for any genuine god. He discusses intelligently the view that the myths are historical in origin, and tell of human royal families (359d), but is more attracted (360d) to the idea that the central figures are *daimones*, an early generation greater than humans but not unequivocally good and rational like the gods themselves. If so, he surmises that the divine couple may have been elevated because of their virtue from this more 'heroic' status to that of gods in the same way as Heracles, or (he claims) Dionysus (361d). A connection with Dionysus is explored later, when Plutarch goes on to discuss theories that the myths tell of major physical forces on earth, Osiris-Dionysus being moisture in all its forms (364d–365b), and the enemy Typhon being drought (366c). Alternatively, there are theories that postulate an allegorical reference to heavenly cycles (368d).

Plutarch himself is finding hidden truth in all this *taken collectively*, but not in its isolated components (369a), which he will reject more forcefully at 374e– 377c. It is as if even the theories about the meaning of the myths contain only hints, combining to turn the mind towards some higher truth but directly revealing none. A shift to philosophical theology sees him introduce a favourite theme of contrasting, if unequal, powers of good and evil, whether Presocratic, Zoroastrian or Chaldaean. He takes final refuge in more metaphysical Platonic oppositions, with a distinct preference for the one place where he believes that Plato himself no longer speaks in riddles and symbols, *Laws* 10.896d–e. There Plato requires a beneficent soul plus at least one non-beneficent soul to serve as origin of evil (370f). Here we have Osiris and Typhon, and as Isis he posits an intermediate animate nature with a natural tendency towards the good. It is clear at 372e that the Receptacle of the *Timaeus* (49a6, 51a7) underlies this concept of an Isis who is all-receptive nurse of form and order. Plutarch has adopted very much the role that he attributes to the god Harpocrates (378c), as 'guardian and corrector of youthful, imperfect, and insufficiently explained reasoning about the gods among humankind'.

Towards the end of Plutarch's rambling journey, as he discusses the variegated robe of Isis and the pure white robe of Osiris, we meet the idea that the sensible may be viewed repeatedly and in a variety of conditions, while we are able to have just one momentary vision of the intelligible light, an experience recalling briefly both the *Symposium* (210a, 211e) and the *Seventh Epistle* (341c–d, 344b). Osiris is equated with the Platonists' transcendent and intelligible deity, in this life known in dream-like fashion only by intellection through philosophy, but

encountered more directly after death. Even though Plutarch offers advice and instruction to a lady willing to be guided, he has felt it necessary to work through a whole range of theories beginning with the less sophisticated, giving them consideration but subjecting them to criticism, and working gradually towards the Platonizing account that he prefers. Though intended to be instructive, the treatise is methodologically an Academic investigation: perhaps because he considers method to be part of the lesson communicated.

In like manner his treatise on the *daimonion* of Socrates builds up towards the preferred account, which occurs shortly before the end of an action-packed dialogue, is delivered by Socrates' friend Simmias of Thebes, and includes the story of Timarchus' vision at the Oracle of Trophonius. According to the theory set out here Socrates' *daimonion* was not a unique phenomenon, but a case of an uncorrupted and dispassionate intellect, left in contact with a part that floats on high while the rest of his soul is submerged in matter. This illuminates him with a daimonic light (*daimonion phengos*) for sensing the rationally expressed but voice-free communications of his *daimōn*, intellect being touched from without by a superior intellect. Contact with the original source of the thought makes linguistic structures irrelevant images (588d–589c). Since the whole theory concerns the individual's personal *daimōn*, and this *daimōn* is intellectual and 'outside' (*thurathen*, 589b) impacting upon the purest and most receptive intellect inside, it is difficult not to suspect the influence of Aristotle's external active intellect of *De anima* 3.5.

The story of Timarchus serves to give a vivid cosmic setting to the body-free intellects, giving them pinpoints of light and placing them around the moon, with gods in the planets above them. These separated intellects are rightly called *daimones* because of their external nature (591e), but each is an individual's *daimōn*, with a direct line connecting it to the highest internal part of the individual over whom it watches.

Apuleius a little later will make the tutelary *daimōn* a third kind, distinct from both the mind within (which is sometimes called *daimōn*) and from the spirits of the dead (*De deo Socratis* 150–6). Following a tradition already found in Philo (*Gig.* 6–9) Apuleius had argued that *daimones* uniquely fulfil the role of the proper dwellers of the air (*DDS* 137–41), while Alcinous too is ready to associate classes of super-human beings with particular elements,[38] but Plutarch avoids simple material connections while assuming that the air is the medium

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[38] *Didasc.* 15; the term seems to have been used here in a more general sense, embracing the heavenly bodies (171.15) and perhaps the Earth itself (171.27–34), which might explain a *daimonic* presence in all elements (as might *Epinomis* 984d–985c), not the air alone. Nothing, however, prevents an animate being from passing outside its own characteristic element, like a sea-bird (properly terrestrial) flying and diving.

through which the intellect on high is able to make connection with the internal intellect below (589c). Plutarch's theory of *daimones* is complex, lacking the attempt that these later authors make to be systematic, but consequently allowing more scope for explaining the beliefs and practices of forefathers and overseas friends alike. It is not surprising that Plutarch often talks of the vice of superstition (*deisidaimonia*, literally 'worrying about *daimones*'), devoting a whole treatise to it and distinguishing it from piety.

Plutarch is best known among later Platonists as a champion of literal creation. Surprisingly for one who employs allegorical interpretation of other religions, he is not keen to interpret Plato non-literally except where poetic language clearly demands it (*On Isis and Osiris* 370f). Hence he avoids appealing to Socratic irony in the *Theaetetus* (*Platonic Questions* 999c), or to the status of Timaeus' cosmology as a *muthos*. His relative literalism caused later interpreters such as Proclus to see him, perhaps unfairly, as a precursor of the more rigorous literalism of Atticus later in the second century. A statement at *On the Procreation of the Soul in the Timaeus* 1014a appeals to principles of interpretation that recognize the unusual nature of the work to be interpreted, but seeks to get around the difficulties by a further appeal to 'what is likely' (*to eikos*) and to details of the language. The tactic would appear legitimate in view of Plutarch's conviction that earlier interpreters have gone far beyond the reasonable bounds of interpretation in seeking to get around the idea that the World Soul was brought into being (1013d–e).

Plutarch is committed to the idea that the supreme god is both father (i.e., the one to give life from himself) and creator of the world (*Timaeus* 28c; *Platonic Questions* 1000e), but this does not entail that *everything* must derive from him. Rather he regularly affirms that both unordered bodily matter *and unintelligent soul* have always existed, and that the creation involves the giving of intelligence by god to soul followed by souls' organization of body (*Platonic Questions* 1003a, *On the Procreation of the Soul in the Timaeus* 1014a–c). In this way the creator may be the artificer of beauty and goodness, and anything ugly or evil may be attributed to the original motive impulse of soul, saving Plutarch what he perceives as the folly of attributing evil either to a good god or to unqualified matter, or perhaps to the Stoic 'consequence' (*epakolouthēsis*, 1015a–c). His original chaotic matter he finds in the Receptacle of the *Timaeus* (now looking less like Isis!),[39] while the original chaotic soul is detected in the Indeterminate (*apeiron*) of the *Philebus*, the Divisible nature at *Timaeus* 35a (identified with

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[39] Plutarch is aware that there is potential confusion because original soul may be described homonymously as 'matter' and 'substrate' (1022f), and because the receptacle itself includes irrational motion that must be attributed to soul (1014b). But note that neither here nor in *On Isis and Osiris* is it suggested that Plato's Receptacle is evil.

Necessity), the soul responsible for evil at *Laws* 10.896e–898c, and the 'innate desire' (*sumphutos epithumia*) of *Statesman* 272e6 (*On the Procreation of the Soul in the Timaeus* 1014a–1015b). So the creator is the author of the universal order or *cosmos* rather than the creator of the 'stuffs' that made up that *cosmos*, and it is for him this *cosmos* (as other Platonic works are held to show) that Plato calls 'generated' (1017b–d).[40]

Plutarch's care over developing a coherent interpretation of Plato that also underpinned his philosophical agenda did not prevent most of his successors disagreeing with him. The tendency was for subsequent Platonists to distinguish ways of saying the world was 'generated' (*genētos*) that did not imply its creation in time. The most thorough surviving treatment of the issue is that of Taurus, happily preserved in Philoponus' *On the Eternity of the World* 6.8 (= Taurus 22 T and 23 F). Besides the obvious sense of 'generated', Taurus distinguished things of the generated type (though never actually generated); of composite structure (though never actually composed); in generation (though never not so); or eternally dependent on a generating cause. Whether or not he was influenced by Aristotle, Taurus himself preferred to adopt the Peripatetic position that the world was eternal, and that its literal creation would mean its susceptibility to destruction (cf. *De caelo* 1.12).

The position adopted by Alcinous also differs from that of Plutarch insofar as he denies that 'generated' means there was ever a time when there was no cosmos, and he appears to accept both the last two senses of Taurus (14.169.32–5); however, he goes on immediately to offer a picture of the creator who awakens a slumbering World Soul (soul *of the* cosmos!), turning it towards himself, so that on viewing the intelligible Ideas within him it may receive the forms (*eidē kai morphas*, 169.35–41). This may seem close to Plutarch's view that creation is the ordering of what has been hitherto unordered, but it differs in preserving the denial that there had been a *pre-cosmic* state of soul or even body. Instead Alcinous is postulating a period or periods where the organizing power within the world experiences something akin to a hangover or coma (*hōsper ek karou tinos batheos ē hupnou*). This presumably involves something akin to the universe of Plato's *Statesman*, with a world whose internal forces send it from time to time into a state of forgetfulness (273c6) and perplexity (273d5) until, before its collapse, the god resumes the helm. Much the same position has been adopted as an explicit compromise by the relatively late second-century Platonist Severus (6 T), who makes the *cosmos* ungenerated in the simplest sense,

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[40] One consideration qualifies Plutarch's picture of a generated cosmos, and that is his endorsement of the *Statesman*'s picture of alternating cycles of order and degeneration (269c–274d); but even in Plato there is a suggestion that the cyclic universe is itself engendered by a divinity (269d1, 269d8–9).

though its successive phases – and successive orders – are generated. What Alcinous and Severus have perhaps tried to achieve is a position where an eternal universe could be postulated without making god's providence, affirmed earlier at 12.167.13, redundant. The threat that providence would become redundant is one of the principal fears that caused Atticus to insist on a generated universe (frs. 4.9, 13), as if providential care could never be offered to a self-sufficient being, only to an entity that owed its very existence to the carer. As Dillon has observed (1977: 253), his customary hostility towards Aristotle means that 'the logical problems raised by Aristotle bother Atticus not at all'.

Providence is something that Platonists cannot compromise on, found as it is in a vital passage (30b6–c1) of the all-important *Timaeus*, where the cosmos is said to have become ensouled and intelligent thanks to god's providence. Hence it is part of the very discussion of the world's generation that is central to the debate over generation. Proclus' discussion of this passage (*In Tim.* 1.415.19–416.5), perhaps ultimately dependent on Porphyry, seems to belong to pre-Plotinian times, beginning with Plutarch, alluding also to the *Chaldaean Oracles*, and at times reminding one of Numenius' distinction between the demiurge and a superior but inert *nous*-god that also functions as the Good. Plutarch (fr. 15) is here credited, it seems, with the view that the demiurge is correctly named 'providence' (*pro-noia*), because though he is intelligence (*nous*) he contains within him something over and above intelligence. Talk of the correctness of names indicates that the broad etymological strategies of the *Cratylus* are being employed, that *noia* is taken to indicate *nous*, and that *pronoia* is being taken to indicate something prior, and hence superior, to *nous*: or at least to *nous* as normally conceived. Being a fairly conservative Platonist Plutarch can only have had in mind the Idea of the Good of Plato's *Republic*, which is superior to knowledge, truth and being (6.508e3–509b10). The demiurgic mind of the *Timaeus* is *fundamentally* good (29e1), and it is his necessarily benevolent will that results in his providence at 30c1. Whether Plutarch ever followed through the implications of this is doubtful, for there is no reason to suppose that Plutarch could not have placed the Good somehow *within* the figure of the demiurge, where pre-Plotinian Platonists sometimes placed the Platonic Ideas,[41] though Middle Platonists often seemed equivocal on the Plotinian circle's vexed issue of whether Ideas are properly internal or external to the demiurgic mind. This may reflect a tendency of the era to see the Platonic demiurge as a complex figure, masking both the Idea of the Good and the power of creative intelligence.[42] But

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[41] Most obviously in Seneca *Epistle* 65.7, and Alcinous 9.163.14–15.

[42] So I think Numenius fr. 21, where Proclus (*In Tim.* 1.303.27) must if the evidence is to be consistent be speaking of the Platonic demiurge being a double persona for Numenius, embracing aspects of

the Proclan passage follows the idea through further. *Pronoia* becomes *an activity* of the Platonic demiurge prior and superior to the activities of intellect (415.23). Two activities on different metaphysical levels suggest separate entities, standing in the same relation as father and son. So in mythical terms the intelligent ruling god Zeus, whose name indicates the cause (*Di-*) and life-giver (*Ze-*) according to Plato's *Cratylus* (396a2–b3) as the passage observes, has as his father Kronos that which is prior to him, unsullied intellect (*koros nous*, *Crat.* 396b5–7). Thus Plato is thought to place a god with single transcendent activity, the Chaldaean 'Once', before a god of double transcendent activity, the Chaldaean 'Twice', who now gives his laws[43] and now returns to remain in contemplation.

Plutarch then is seen here leading into a discussion of two gods that are far more reminiscent of Numenius, but he himself is content like Atticus (e.g., fr. 26) or Apuleius to speak of the demiurge of Plato's *Timaeus* as the supreme god, and many other Platonists would have agreed. However, even in Apuleius there seems to be a tendency towards the theoretical separation of two aspects of the demiurge, as Finamore's clever discussion of *On Plato* 193–4 shows.[44] Here too we may have a modest step towards the kind of separation of two divine entities that we meet in Numenius and in chapters 10 and 28 of Alcinous. Finamore also seeks to relate this to Apuleius' description of the principal god and creator as 'supra-mundane' at *On Plato* 204, but as *caelestis* at 193. Their Greek equivalents, one might have thought, could be applied to Alcinous' first god and heavenly intellect respectively. But that is if one takes *caelestis* as the adjective 'heavenly' as opposed to its common if poetic substantival sense of 'god'. Yet is it not strangely inept in the case of any transcendent god (*supramundanus*) to call it a *caelestis* even as a simple word for a god? Perhaps it is not, since even Plato's *Phaedrus* speaks of Zeus who is the great leader in the heavens, driving at the front in his winged chariot and arranging and caring for all things.

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his first and second gods. There is little evidence that any Platonist figure prior to Numenius ever felt the need to have an inert intellect god above the creator-god, and it is noticeable that Alcinous (of whom that might be claimed, though he is of unknown date) does not feel *in sections directly dependent upon the Timaeus* (excepting the digression on the interpretation of generation), the need to distinguish between his inert transcendent principle of goodness and his governing heavenly intellect as he does in the theological chapter 10 (164.17–27, 164.40–165.4) and again in the ethics (28.181.42–5).

43 One should note that Numenius' second god is called lawgiver in fr. 13, while his post-creational phase is seen in frs. 15 and 22 as retirement to his watchtower and as contemplation.

44 Finamore 2006: 35–7, especially 37: 'Apuleius refers separately to the first god and to his mind – not because they are separate in actuality (for they are not) but because they are separable in thought. God . . . is a mind but, in Apuleius' personal religious thought, he is the highest being in a truly personal religion . . . His *nous* is just one aspect of him, and a lower one than that.' One might seek to avoid Finamore's inclination here to link the lower aspect of this divinity with providence, not the higher.

The ambiguity of several Platonist theological positions from Plutarch on must be due in part to the variety of Platonic texts that the would-be follower of Plato had to take into account in a respectful manner. This could be seen in the way that Apuleius, dabbling in the new negative theology, has to over-look one of the negative attributes implied by *Parmenides* 142a3–6 at *On Plato* 190. The text reads *Quem quidem caelestem pronuntiat indictum, innominabilem, et ut ait ipse aoraton, adamaston*. Reading *adoxaston* for this final term I translate 'This celestial divinity he declares to be unable to be spoken of, unable to be named, and in Plato's own words "invisible" and "un-opinable".' This list of related privative adjectives is implied by two sentences at *Parmenides* 142a3–6, including: 'So it has no name, no description, no knowledge, no perception,[45] no opinion', but it omits any term meaning 'unknowable', since that conflicts with the *Timaeus*' statement at 28c4 quoted by Apuleius immediately after-wards: 'the creator and father of this universe is *hard work to discover*'. Alcinous, who explicitly lists the *via negativa* among three ways of conceiving of god,[46] and employs several privative adjectives including (1) 'unspeakable' and (2) 'un-needy' (164.31–32), (3) 'partless' (165.34), (4) 'motionless' (165.23/38), and (5) 'bodiless' (166.1), seems influenced directly or indirectly by the *Parmenides*, Whittaker's edition listing relevant parallels at 137d2–3, 138a6, 138e4, 139a3, and 139b4–5.[47] Again, however, the earlier Platonist shies away from drawing too many consequences for Plato's theology from the first hypothesis of the *Parmenides*, which Plotinus' school would embrace with relish. God may readily be called 'One',[48] but he is not so content-less as the *Parmenides* might suggest, has positive attributes, and remains both god and intellect.

Sometimes, however, there is a movement towards thinking in terms of metaphysical hypostases (mind, soul, etc.) rather than individual metaphysical entities. In Plutarch's essay *On the Face of the Moon* we read 'for intellect is better and diviner than soul to the same degree as soul compared with body' (943a). The three are associated with Sun, Moon and Earth respectively, and, once souls have been purified of the body and risen to the lunar region, a 'second

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[45] One may claim that *anaisthēton* would have been more accurate but I suspect that Apuleius remem-bers the Platonic discussion of things eternal and things transient at *Phaedo* 79a–b, which confines *all* sensation to the latter, but privileges sight and uses the adjective *aoraton* (b12); just after this at 84a8 the *Phaedo* speaks of what is 'true, divine, and un-opinable (*adoxaston*)'. I suggest that Apuleius, who has used this very passage at *On Plato* 193, has specifically remembered the use of these two adjectives there, prompting the *ut ait ipse* and the use of Greek. Plato does not use *anōnomaston*, nor *arrēton* in a relevant sense and prominent context.

[46] *Didascalicus* 10.165.16–34; the other ways are the *via analogiae* and the *via eminentiae*.

[47] 142a3–6 might also have been mentioned, as it seems relevant to (1).

[48] An example is Maximus Tyrius 29.7g, Aetius 1.7.31 On the rather limited scope that the Pythago-rizing principles One and Dyad have in Plutarch see Opsomer 2007.

death' (942f) removes intellect from souls. More myth-like material in *On the Sign of Socrates* (591b) speaks of four principles (*archai*) of all life,[49] of which the latter three are movement, generation and decay. Monad joins the first two in the invisible, Intellect the next two at the Sun, Nature the last two at the Moon. The triad Monad, Intellect and Nature may seem an obvious precursor of the Plotinian hypostases, but it is hardly performing a comparable function. Alcinous may confuse commentators on his theology when at 10.164.18–23 he writes as follows:

Since than soul intellect is better, than intellect in potency the intellect that actively thinks all things together and for ever, and than this [intellect] its cause is fairer and whatever entity is established still higher than these, this would be the first god, which serves as cause of perpetual activity for the intellect of the entire heaven.

However, while the language seems more abstract and hypostatic, it is clear to me that the intellect in perpetual activity is the heavenly intellect, that it is thinking all things *intelligible*, i.e., all the Platonic Ideas, and that the first god is conceived of as cause of this intellect's activity and as superior, *qua* supreme Good, to the remainder of the intelligible world: 'over and above intellect and being'.[50] There is no suggestion that human beings can somehow ascend internally according to the same path by which their thoughts can grasp in succession each higher being at the universal level. The goal for us will be simply assimilation *insofar as one can* to the god within the heavens (28.181.42–5). Our intellectual goal can be reached by reason and instruction (182.5–8). No mystic union with the supreme principle seems possible in such a system.

9 EPISTEMOLOGY FROM PLUTARCH TO ALCINOUS

The first of Plutarch's *Platonic Questions* is devoted to explaining the Socratic midwifery of the *Theaetetus*, and especially the barrenness of Socrates in the role of intellectual midwife there (150c7–8). The explanation (1000d–e) is that Socrates has no time for ordinary theories and doctrines, but only considered cognition of the divine and intelligible important. This knowledge cannot be discovered by resources of our own, nor implanted by teachers, but must be 'recollected'. By reducing young persons to perplexity before revealing the innate concepts that can, upon refinement and development, lead to the

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[49] The text is damaged; it may be that life is rather the first of principles.

[50] For god as *either* intellect *or* over and above intellect see the language of Origen in dialogue with Celsus at *Contra Celsum* 7.38; the phrase is not used by Alcinous, but is clearly inspired by the Idea of the Good at *Republic* 6.509b9 where the phrase 'over and above being' is used; later Platonism introduces 'intellect' with some support from 508d–509a, for 508e3–4 makes it 'cause of knowledge and truth'.

desired recollection. With so radically different a notion of the knowledge that is aimed at, denying that the teacher *qua* teacher possesses it and affirming that the learner already has the seeds of it, it is unsurprising that Platonism works with an epistemology quite unlike that of rival philosophies. Plutarch himself, while entirely prepared to look at standard questions of physics or ethics in a more traditional and didactic manner, often prefers to teach through hints when dealing with the incorporeal entities that Platonism now makes its principal consideration. The epistemological necessity of recollection is claimed in the much-disputed fragments 15–17, which come from the *Phaedo*'s exegetical tradition. Religious rites and myths are also seen as promoting enlightenment through recollection.

This kind of epistemology, based on the idea of innate notions that are common, but not equally accessible, to all human beings, is also found in the papyrus *Theaetetus* commentator.[51] Again this view sees midwifery as a kind of purificatory stage preparatory to progress in recollection by the pupil (46.43–48.11), for the midwife compels people to discuss and doubt their private notions (48.25–35). Latent common notions then need to be brought to the surface (47.19–24) and clarified (46.43–47.7) before one can give proper expression to them. The teacher is not obliged to be free of doctrine or to conceal it in all circumstances, but it must be avoided in *this* educative process (17.35–45, cf. 55.8–33). Since learning is identified with recollection, as in the *Meno*, and also with coming to know things, as at *Theaetetus* 145c–e (cf. 14.45–15.5), the end-point of recollection will be a kind of knowledge, the 'simple knowledge' that is prior to composite fields of knowledge (15.8–16). The author finds the definition of that simple knowledge at *Meno* 98a, thus confirming the *Meno*'s central place in this epistemology: simple knowledge is 'right opinion bound by cause of reasoning' according to the commentator's reading (3.2–3; 15.18–23). That this involves knowing-why as well as knowing-that may be inferred from 3.3–7, but details are not tackled in what is extant.

Meno 98a is important to a number of other relevant authors, including Albinus (*Prologue* 6) and whichever Taurus composed a *Commentary on the Republic* where the part of column 15 that defines Platonic knowledge is duplicated (Taurus 21 F). It is not, however, employed in the fourth chapter of Alcinous, where a different account of Platonic epistemology, privileging the *Timaeus*, *Phaedrus*, *Philebus*, *Sophist* and *Theaetetus* is given. Alcinous, seldom unduly influenced by dialogues regarded as 'Socratic' today, is keen throughout to make distinctions,

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[51] Text and commentary in Bastianini and Sedley 1995; its date in relation to Plutarch remains controversial, though most would agree on its similarities. The exegesis is mostly extant until about 153c, with fragments at 157.

particularly between various cognitive faculties and their respective objects. The passage is notable for distinguishing between first and second intelligibles (155.39–42), the former (= Ideas) being apprehended non-discursively by intellection along with scientific reason, the latter (= immanent forms) by scientific reason along with intellection (156.5–8). He uses the concept of natural notions, regarding them as 'a kind of intellection stored up in the soul' mirroring true intellection that happens only in the discarnate state, and he claims that Plato refers to these notions as 'simple knowledge', 'plumage of the soul', and occasionally 'memory', and they are the stuff of scientific reason (155.26–36). It may seem odd that the term 'recollection' is avoided here, though the theory is treated and explained in more than passing detail in relation to the arguments for the soul's immortality (25.177.45–178.12). The common notions of ethical qualities are also the basis for practical reasoning (156.19–23). The chapter has attracted quite a lot of attention, and contains insights into the ways in which second-century Platonism developed that cannot be paralleled in the fragments of others (partly because of the loss of any later commentaries on the *Theaetetus*).

10 LOGIC IN ALCINOUS

For logic we are again dependent primarily on Alcinous, though I have dealt earlier with categories-theory in the context of the Platonist response to Aristotle. The content of most of those sections of the logic that were anticipated in the division of philosophy is relatively unsurprising, much of it Aristotelian with a Platonic veneer, and I shall concentrate on sections that I believe more original. The analytics has a distinctly non-Aristotelian appearance, for Alcinous highlights several high-profile ascent-passages from central dialogues: the ascent to the beautiful from *Symposium* 210a–e (157.16–21), leaving the physical for the intelligible; the methods of *Republic* 6.510b–d and *Phaedrus* 245c–246a (157.21–36) leading from demonstrated to undemonstrated intuitions; and the hypothetical method of *Phaedo* 101d (with another nod to *Republic* 510b), leading from hypothesis to non-hypothetical principle. The author's enthusiasm for specifically Platonic content leads him to offer a miniature interpretation of the *Euthydemus* as a Platonic handbook of eristics (159.38–42), corresponding to Aristotle's *De sophisticis elenchis* as the *Parmenides* foreshadows the ten categories of *Categories* (159.43–44). And it leads to a still lengthier interpretation of the *Cratylus* (160.3–41), which makes names conventional, but the name-giver only names correctly if the name reflects the nature of the thing to which it refers. Alcinous' interest in the so-called 'logical' dialogues of Plato is underscored by the way in which he contrives to conclude the political section with material based on the *Statesman* as Whittaker's *apparatus* shows (189.5–11), after which he

appends his discussion of the sophist, offering a miniature interpretation of the *Sophist* (189.12–27). The chapter balances the opening discussion of philosophy and the philosopher, but Alcinous appears to be adding his own material of an interpretative nature, which again presupposes a certain familiarity with the corpus on the part of the reader, to what had been originally designed more as a handbook of doctrines.

11 BASICS OF PHYSICS

The *Timaeus* has always dominated any picture of Platonic physics. It is the basis of chapters 12 to 23 in Alcinous, which include some material that might be called 'theological' in 12–15, including discussion of the paradigms and of *daimones*, while 23 shifts to psychology, still maintaining a *Timaeus*-based focus because it deals with the way the soul is combined with the human body. In contrast to the anti-Aristotelian Atticus (fr. 5) he seems to accept that aether is a fifth element in chapter 15, but there is no elaboration. Apuleius tends rather to regard it as a pure kind of fire in *On the God of Socrates* 138, but allows it to remain a separate element at *On the World* 291. An imaginative discussion of the five regular solids (*Timaeus* 53c–55c) and their relationship to the elements, based on the theory of Theodorus of Soli, appears in Plutarch's *On the Obsolescence of Oracles* (427a–428a), but Ammonius seems sceptical of the five-element theory. Except perhaps for Atticus, these are not hard-fought issues, and Galen, at the beginning of his commentary on the dialogue's medical significance, bears witness to the tendency of commentators on the *Timaeus* to stop before they get to physics proper.

Much more interesting is the issue of fate, which was a challenge to Platonists, since unlike the Stoics they wanted for the sake of their ethics to preserve some genuine autonomy for human beings, and yet Plato had made the creator show the newly created souls the 'fated laws' of the world at *Timaeus* 41e. Plutarch shows at *Moralia* 740c–d how fate, chance and individual autonomy are all allowed for in the Myth of Er at the conclusion of the *Republic*. The same passage is employed by Alcinous, whose fundamental position in chapter 26 is that all things are within fate's domain, but not all things are actually fated. Further, while our choice of lives and of actions is a free choice, the consequences of this choice 'will be brought to completion in accordance with fate' (179.12–13). Fate is thus a little like a law of cause and effect. An unusual treatise *On Fate* is included among Plutarch's works, though it is agreed to be by another author. It is notable for its doctrine of three stages of providence (572f–574d), detected in the creator himself, in the heavenly powers and in the *daimones* who watch over us on earth. They are all detected in the *Timaeus*, particularly at 41e–42e,

and whereas fate is subject to the primary providence, the second providence is somehow implicated with fate, while the third is posterior to fate and subject to it.

12 PSYCHOLOGY

Middle Platonist psychology employs, as expected, the tripartition of soul familiar from Plato's *Republic*, but not to the exclusion of the bipartite division associated rather with Aristotle. On the boundaries of Platonism, Galen's defence of the tripartition against Chrysippus in *On the Doctrines of Hippocrates and Plato* is particularly well known. Alcinous in *Didascalicus* chapter 23 uses the three physical locations of the human soul from *Timaeus* 69c–72c, which he admits might have been employed in the preceding physical section (176.7), to lead into a dedicated discussion of psychology. This begins with a section demonstrating that the tripartition extends to the powers of the soul (1) because different physical locations are allotted to them, (2) because the powers are sometimes found to be in conflict, and (3) because the emotions and reasoning require a different education, teaching and habituation respectively. This is only represented as an argument for bipartition, and it followed another sign that the division between reason and emotion is what really matters (176.42).

Equally essential to the revived Platonism is the immortality of soul. Alcinous collects arguments from the *Phaedo*, *Republic* 10 and *Phaedrus* in chapter 25, where he also discusses the vexed question of *the scope* of this doctrine. We know that at some time this became a standard topos in the commentary tradition, and Harpocration, who was late enough to have been influenced by Numenius in many respects, is cited by Hermeias (15 T) as a proponent of the view that even souls of ants and flies are immortal, since the *Phaedrus* (245c5) declares the immortality of *all* soul, and that human souls, as Numenius too maintained (fr. 49), could therefore transmigrate into the meanest of creatures (18–19 T). Alcinous (178.26–32) offers arguments against the immortality of utterly irrational souls, and *Timaeus* 69c7–8, to which people like Albinus (test. 16 G) and Atticus (fr. 15) made appeal, supports them by referring to the extra form of soul added on by the younger gods as 'mortal'. Yet, also in conformity with the *Timaeus* (90e–92c), he adopts the belief that human souls can migrate into animals (178.36). And he also finds the equivalent of the appetitive and spirited faculties of humans in the souls of the gods (their *hormētikon* and *oikeiōtikon*, 178.39–46), so that tripartition does not in itself entail our possession of mortal parts of the soul. On the equally vexed contemporary question of why the soul descends into a body,[52] Alcinous is content to give some alternatives (178.36–8),

[52] This issue becomes more complex after Cronius, Numenius (fr. 48), and Harpocration (16–17 T) come to regard all entry into bodies as an evil for the soul.

including innocuous reasons like conformity with an arithmetic cycle or with divine will, and more sinister ones like the soul's own unbridled or body-loving nature.

13 ETHICS, GOAL AND VIRTUES

The ethics of the Middle Platonists can be spoken of as an area of greater agreement, though there were generally dissenters on any given issue. As in logic there was a tendency to appropriate for Plato what was perceived as useful in Aristotle, and certainly the Aristotelian doctrine that the moral virtues were both in one sense an extreme and in another a mean between two vices was employed by authors such as Plutarch (in *On Moral Virtue*), Apuleius (*De Platone* 228) and Alcinous (30.184.14–36). The appropriation is partially justified by such passages as *Statesman* 283c–285c and *Philebus* 23c–30e. There will be subtractions from and additions to the Aristotelian virtues, but one may say that orthodox early imperial Platonism inclines towards Aristotle on this issue.

A significant issue in the ethics of the day are the passions or affections (*pathē*), which some Stoic theory would have desired to eradicate completely. The passions for the Stoics were pleasure, pain, desire and fear, all so defined as to have them involve irrationally excessive responses to what one was experiencing. Plato sometimes seemed to turn desire and fear into expectations or anticipations of pleasure and pain respectively (e.g., *Protagoras* 356d, *Philebus* 34c–36b), so that the Platonist would naturally give precedence in the discussion to pleasure and pain. But Plato's principal discussion of pleasure in the *Philebus* did not encourage one to forsake pleasure altogether, merely to choose what was appropriate – indeed it left the life completely isolated from pleasure to the gods (33b), demanding something more complex to humans. The complex psychology demanded by the Platonists, with parts of the soul required to look after the interests of the body, made the eradication of pleasures and pains *as usually defined* impossible. Equally the affections were something usually opposed to reason, and one could not afford to have them grow stronger than reason. Therefore such authors as Plutarch, Taurus (17 T) and Alcinous (32.186.14–29) favoured *metriopatheia* or the moderation of the passions, at least in the case of those passions that allowed moderation.

Problems with interpreting Plato's various discussions of virtue lead to the postulation of different levels of virtues or quasi-virtues, as also in Plotinus *Ennead* 2.2. I have treated this topic more fully in Tarrant (2007b), and argue that both Alcinous and Apuleius actually envisage three levels: a first at the *natural* level involving natural good qualities, a second at the level of habituation and involving effort to make progress, and a third involving learning and reasoning. These are all ways of coming close to the moral goal according to Alcinous

(28.182.3–6), and after a largely unsurprising discussion of Platonic virtue he goes on to affirm at the beginning of chapter 30 that there are virtues in other senses too, named after the complete virtues. He employs for them the terms for natural endowments (*euphuiai*) and advancements (*prokopai*). It is natural to take these separately as the former strive to build upon whatever nature has given one. A particular feature of non-perfect virtues is that one may possess some without others, unlike the perfect virtues (29.183.15–16). It may also be implied that they admit of greater and lesser degrees of intensity, something denied of perfect virtue. Apuleius discusses these matters in *On Plato* 2.228, though here again there is usually some ambiguity about whether we are dealing with two types of virtues or three. However, one thing this text does is to make explicit the need for nature, exercise and teaching all to be contributing if virtue is to be perfected. In the anonymous *Theaetetus* commentator too (11.13–12.8) we also seem to have three sets of desirable qualities: natural endowments, the same under further development, and virtue proper. I argue that Aristotelian texts like *Politics* 7.13.1332a38–40 postulating the desirability of all three, as well as Protagoras' great speech in Plato's *Protagoras*, have been influential in refining the later Platonic account of the various kinds of virtues.

Finally we must mention the moral goal or *telos*. Platonists during this period seem to be in general agreement that Plato's moral goal has been best expressed in the phrase 'assimilation to god insofar as is possible' (*Theaetetus* 176b etc.). Relevant texts include Plutarch *On Divine Vengeance* 550d–e, anon. *Commentary on the Theaetetus* 7, Albinus *Prologue* 5, Alcinous chapter 28, and Apuleius *On Plato* 2.252–3. Since most philosophies tended to align their concepts of what a god is with what a human *ought to be*, it was probably not their most controversial doctrine. However, this ought to warn us that the idea of assimilation to god might change as one's concept of god changes. It is in this context that we should view the clarification of Alcinous at 181.44: 'obviously the heavenly god, not in Zeus' name the god above the heavens'. Alcinous' first god owes much to Aristotle's unmoved mover (10.164.23–31) as well as to Plato's Idea of the Good. The first known figure to interpret Plato as postulating an unmoved god of this type and distinguishing it from any power active within the cosmos was Numenius in the middle of the second century. We have seen also in relation to the psychology that Alcinous seems to be aware of developments in the time of Numenius and Harpocration, so it seems logical to see Alcinous as already responding to some of Numenius' ideas. *Timaeus* 90a–d had clearly been advocating that we assimilate our souls to the perfectly rational soul moving and governing in the heavens, giving a reasonable idea of what kind of god Plato thought one should assimilate oneself to. Assimilation to anything akin to an Aristotelian unmoved mover sounds a ridiculous goal for human beings.

I think that we have confirmation here of my reading of Alcinous' text as an updated handbook, building on some traditional basics, but responding also to issues and ideas that were part of the intellectual world of his own time.

CONCLUSION

Early imperial Platonism may easily seem unexciting if one expects to find here ideas akin to those found in Plotinus or in Proclus. This is a period when Platonic interpretation was finding its feet, and what it meant to be a Platonist was still far from clear. There were significant differences of opinion in some areas, while other areas of philosophy were not so contentious. Anything involving theology, religion and our understanding of what we are doing in this world was perhaps most likely to receive serious attention, become controversial, and lead forward to the solutions offered by the school of Plotinus.

THE SECOND SOPHISTIC

RYAN FOWLER

I LITERARY PLATONISM AND THE PLATONIC RHETOR

There was an interest in Plato in the first and second centuries CE that extended beyond the trends of summarizing and commentating on Platonic texts. This interest followed the established cultural tradition of orators and authors who were seen as emulators of sophists in the fifth century BCE. In the so-called 'Second Sophistic', many of these men of letters took Plato, both as author and philosopher, to be their rhetorical and ideological model. The individuals at this time particularly influenced by Plato, roughly in chronological order, are Dio Chrysostom of Prusa, Publius Aelius Aristides of Mysia, Lucian of Samosata, Maximus of Tyre and Lucius Apuleius of Madaura. These individuals distinguished themselves from the scholastic tradition of Platonist studies that had developed in their various phases since Plato's death.

Dio (c. 40–c. 120) was an early progenitor of this type of author, and his work exemplifies the resurgent and ubiquitous interest in Plato in non-Academic circles. In his speeches on behalf of rhetoric, Aristides (c. 117–81 CE), considered a paradigmatic sophist in the Common Era, shows how 'direct' communication with 'Plato' can be feigned six centuries after the *Dialogues* were written. Lucian's (c. 125 – after 180) dialogues are a source of information about the sophists and philosophers who dominated the intellectual world during the mid-Empire, and are themselves modelled after particular Platonic dialogues. Maximus' (c. 125–c. 180) *Dialexeis* has become an important source for understanding the role of a public Platonist in the second century. Apuleius (c. 123–c. 180), called a *philosophus Platonicus* during his lifetime and after,[1] was no less interested in the popularity and reputation afforded to declamatory orators during

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[1] *ILA* 2115 (on a statue base, from some point in the years 337–361, i.e., almost two centuries after Apuleius' *floruit*) [ph]ilosopho [Pl]atonico / [Ma]daurenses cives / ornament[o] suo. D(ecreto) d(ecurionum), p(ecunia) [p(ublica)] // D(omino) n(ostro) divi C[ons]/tanti[ni] / Maxim[i fil(io)]; Apuleius is called *philosophus Platonicus* or *Platonicus* by Augustine (*De civitate dei* 8.12, 8.14, 8.24, 9.3, 10.27), and once each by Sidonius (*Epistula* 9.13.8), Cassiodorus (*Institutiones* 2.5.10), and Charisius (*Ars grammatica* 2.16 = Keil, *Gramm. Lat.* 1.240.27).

the Second Sophistic. His *Florida*, for example, is a collection of twenty-six rhetorical pieces that reflect a Latin writer's interest in working with the style of epideictic rhetoric practised by his Greek contemporaries.

2 PHILOSOPHY AS PERFORMANCE

According to Philostratus (c. 170–250 CE) in his *Vitae sophistarum* (*VS*), the Second Sophistic 'sketched the types of poor and rich men, princes and tyrants, and handled arguments in speeches for which history leads the way' (481). Thus Philostratus applies the term to a style of rhetorical performance, which, he writes, was invented by the fourth-century Athenian orator Aeschines. We now generally construe the Second Sophistic as a historical period ranging from 50 to 250 CE, roughly covering the time period when this rhetorical style was popular in nearly every part of the mid-Empire.

It is not clear when these display speeches expanded beyond rhetorical training to join panegyric and encomiastic speeches as public entertainment. Certainly by the second half of the first century CE, declamation moved into the highest rank of cultural activities and acquired an unprecedented and almost unimaginable popularity.

Born and in general operating at the geographic periphery of the Greco-Roman world, these second-century authors wrote with profoundly acculturated voices. At the same time, there was great concern in their work to emulate the themes and language of classical Greece in order to add their names to the long tradition of Hellenic thought. For these writers, most from Asia and Africa, invoking Plato and the tradition of Platonism proved the most effective strategy of appealing to past Hellenic literary glory, second only to a display of familiarity with Homer.

Interest in Platonic and Platonist themes at this time was usually, but not exclusively, exhibited in epideictic speeches. This rhetorical showcasing led to internal tensions involving the authors' methods and their own knowledge of Plato's views of *epideixeis*. Given the desire to exhibit sophistic virtuosity, these works vary considerably in style, tone, approach and quality. Regardless, many authors during the Second Sophistic who were not strictly speaking in the Platonist tradition dealt with Platonic themes and ideas in a self-consciously literary and sophistic manner.

In his dedication of the *VS* to Antony Gordian I, Philostratus states that he has written 'in two books, an account of men who, though they pursued philosophy, lectured as sophists, and also of the sophists legitimately so-called' (479). He writes of the same ambiguity in previous authors who used the title 'sophists' (*sophistai*) not only of orators (*rhētores*) whose surpassing eloquence

won them a brilliant reputation, but also 'of philosophers who expounded their theories with fluency' (484). According to Philostratus, the ancient sophistic art should be seen as 'philosophical rhetoric' (480), and he begins the *VS* with those who 'were not actually sophists but seemed to be so, and thus came to be so called' (484). Philostratus refers to Dio as a sophist, for example, but confesses his doubts about the label, 'such was his excellence in all departments' (486); Dio's style 'had an echo of Demosthenes and Plato' (487), because he had mastered both the oratorical and philosophical styles. The eleventh-century *Suda* calls Dio both a philosopher and sophist, though Dio ostensibly wished to distance himself from contemporary sophists (e.g., *Orationes* 33.4).

These titles are often conflated by Philostratus by the name *sophistai*. There is other evidence besides the *VS* for the importance of such labels, both epigraphical and legal: for example, the privilege of not serving on a jury was extended to *rhētores*, *grammatikoi*, *hiatroi* and *philosophoi* (*Digest* 27.1.8). Though the title of *sophistēs* seemed to have been given to *rhētores* who entered upon a career of public displays, uses of the titles *philosophoi*, *rhētores*, and *sophistai* are erratic in the *VS*, as well as in the sixth-century *Digest*. While his chronicle of the Second Sophistic begins with the lawyer Nicetes of Smyrna (first century CE; *VS* 511), who lived four centuries after Aeschines, Philostratus begins his biographical list with the fourth-century BCE mathematician Eudoxus of Cnidus, who studied for a time at Plato's Academy, and was honoured with the title of 'sophist' because he improvised with success (484).

Whatever the exact delineation between these types of thinkers, the two activities of philosophy and sophistic display were inextricably connected in the first two centuries CE since public performance had became integral to both. From Philostratus' work it is clear that to be thought a *sophistēs* was to be known for a particularly articulate and florid style; a philosopher may achieve the title of 'sophist', but the reverse does not seem to happen. While writing or performing sophistic speeches, an author could reject the title of sophist, but a reputation for eloquence was essential. No other type of intellectual of the time could compete with these authors in popularity, and though sophists often show jealousy of philosophers, philosophy would not be found without eloquence.

Greek-speaking men of letters who produced works during the Second Sophistic often wanted to be regarded as philosophers and not as sophists. The reputation of a *philosophos* separated one from rival orators through the impression of rigour and gravity, but also allowed for the ability to criticize other sophists freely. Some of the negative comments about sophists, as well as instances of self-promotion as a philosopher, can be treated as posturing in a competitive field. The desire for such a reputation in the second century is

likely to account for many of the 'philosophical turns' we hear about; a few of
the most famous conversion stories are those of Dio, Favorinus and Lucian.[2]
And to be known as a philosopher at this time was, generally speaking, to evoke
and imitate Platonic themes and style.

During the Second Sophistic philosophers became performative artists and
began for the first time to take the stage. No longer unkempt[3] and private
as before, they appeared fastidious in appearance and commanded enormous
audiences. Platonists were drawn to the stage more than other schools at the
time: Stoics, Epicureans and Cynics seemed to have held a certain distaste for
public spectacle. In a number of *Orationes*, Dio berates the so-called philosophers
who did not appear in public for fear that they would never affect improvement
in the masses, and also those so-called philosophers who simply exercised their
voices in lecture halls (e.g., 8, 10, 32). Between Plutarch's lifetime and the era
of Plotinus and the revitalization of a systemized Platonism, the Platonic rhetor
appeared and grew to eminence in the public sphere.

The popularity of such declamatory rhetoric abated little in the third to fifth
centuries, but the speeches lost some of their philosophical veneer and became
properly sophistic. As the early Christian apologists began to confront Plato in
their own works, they took their cues from the Second Sophistic authors who
had successfully combined philosophical themes and declamatory methods, and
who were the shining *Konzertredner* of the first two centuries of the Common
Era.

There was, therefore, a small range of Platonic works in the Second Sophistic
after Plutarch's essays: summarizing hypotheses (such as the *Didascalicus* and
Eisagōgē eis tous Platōnos dialogous), commentaries (titles of which are primarily
found in Proclus' own *In Platonis Timaeum commentaria*), and rhetorical texts and
public displays that emphasized Platonic allusions, methodologies and themes.
It is the last group that interests us here.

3 PLATO AS RHETORICAL MODEL

Most of those authors familiar with Plato in the Second Sophistic looked to
the philosopher as a literary model. There was particular interest in Plato's Attic
vocabulary and his style.

Aulus Gellius (125–180), who gives his own Latin version of a passage from
the *Symposium* (180e) that he admired (*NA* 17.20), distinguishes between reading

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[2] Other examples are Polemo in Diogenes (D.L. 4.16) and Justin Martyr (*Dialogue with Trypho* 2–3).
[3] E.g., Philostratus on Aristocles of Pergamon: 'So long as he was a student of philosophy he was
slovenly in appearance, unkempt and squalid in his dress'; when 'he went over entirely to the
sophists', he became fastidious in his dress and discarded his slovenly ways (*VS* 2.567).

Plato for stylistic technique and reading him philosophically. He writes that his teacher Calvenus Taurus complained of a student who wanted to read Plato only to improve his style (*NA* 1.9.9–10). Taurus, as the head of the Academy in Athens during the time of Hadrian, is an example of a Platonist instructing a sophist; according to Philostratus (*VS* 2.1), Taurus taught Herodes Atticus as well as Aulus Gellius, who provides most of our information about his teacher.

Since display speeches hold a prominent place in the Second Sophistic, at issue for many of these authors was Plato's concern for the emptiness of rhetoric, which was centred on issues of persuasion without knowledge and the very nature of epideictic oratory (e.g., in the *Gorgias*). What would have been a conflicting mixture of reason and persuasion for Plato was by the first century a common aspect of the literary landscape. This shift combined the two established correlates of the educational system during the Empire; after the second century BCE, any author would have had some training in both rhetoric and philosophy. The pedagogical interest in 'ancient' orators and philosophers, coupled with an emphasis on epideictic exercises (*progumnasmata*), developed into an influential and lucrative profession in the Second Sophistic. Elements of justification, defence and reconciliation regarding Plato's past attack on rhetoric, however, continued from this time until the last stages of the ancient world.

One example of this conflict is found in Aristides' *Pros Platōna peri rhētorikēs*.[4] In this lengthy oration, Aristides defends forensic speechmaking, and then applies this defence to other types of rhetoric. While Aristides elsewhere considers panegyric and epideictic discourse to be genres capable of high eloquence, this speech 'against' Plato focuses on political rhetoric, and so was not made primarily on behalf of display speeches. Aristides has a follow-up speech made on behalf of orators, *Pros Platōna huper tōn tettarōn*. 'The Four' are Pericles (c. 495–429 BCE), Cimon (510–450), Miltiades (c. 555–489) and Themistocles (c. 524–459). First, note the time frame of Aristides' examples. Every author in the Second Sophistic looked back to the affairs of classical Greece; none of the allusions made by the Second Sophistics known from Philostratus, for example, postdates 326 BCE. Second, there is a conspicuous absence of either sophists or epideictic orators: 'The Four' are all statesmen. Aristides uses a counter-attack on Plato's initial attack on sophistic rhetoric (as found in the *Gorgias*) to promote a type of Isocratean political oratory, then by extension applies his defence to rhetoric as a whole.

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[4] Translated less agonistically as *To Plato: Concerning Oratory*. In this speech, Aristides takes advantage of the multiple meanings of *hē rhētorikē* (sc. *technē*) that had continued into the second century CE. The issue of Plato's judgement of rhetoric was of some interest in later Platonism: the lost *Peri rhētorikēs* of the Platonist Porphyry (234?–305?) was, according to the eleventh-century *Suda*, a response to Aristides' *Peri rhētorikēs*.

Given the combination of the received Platonic position on rhetoric and these authors' decidedly sophistic means of expression, this defensive stance dominated discussions of philosophy and rhetoric in the first three centuries CE. How each author managed the tension between popular display oratory and philosophical methodology is a testament to his self-identity and understanding of his literary endeavours as a philosopher-*cum*-sophist.

Beyond exploiting well-worn events and characters from the sixth and fifth centuries BCE, Second Sophistic authors attempted to emulate the language of classical Greece. Those authors operating in Asia Minor and Syria took pains to avoid anything less than pure Attic: the Syrian Lucian and Mysian Aristides are considered successful examples. The strict avoidance of Attic on the part of some philosophers – Galen, Epictetus, Plutarch – is perhaps owed to their self-conception as thinkers rather than rhetoricians. Sophists outside of any scholastic philosophical tradition, however, took great pains to imitate Plato's language and style in order to warrant their association with classical Greece.

We need only look to Ps.-Longinus' *Peri huphous* (*De sublimitate*) for evidence of Plato's importance to style in the first three centuries CE. Plato is quoted nine times on matters of composition, and defended without reserve against the criticisms of Caecilius of Calacte (first century BCE). A prolific critic, Caecilius had written his own work on the sublime, and his claim that Lysias was 'in every respect a superior writer to Plato' (32.8) prompted Ps.-Longinus' critique. Plato is not above criticism for Ps.-Longinus, but there is much praise for his style in the work.[5] Plato's emulation of great writers of the past is mentioned by Ps.-Longinus as 'yet another road to sublimity', especially his use of Homer. Though Plato is ridiculed by many about his 'literary madness into crude, harsh metaphors or allegorical bombast' (32.7), as a writer he is 'firmly set in his importance and magnificent solemnity' (12.3).

Lucian, chiding those who pass Plato by for more modern writers, recommends the philosopher as a literary model alongside Thucydides (*Lexiphanes*) and Demosthenes (*Rhetorum*). In the *Piscator*, Lucian gives a summary of Plato's characteristics as spoken by Chrysippus: 'high thoughts, perfect Attic style, grace, persuasion, insight, subtlety, and cogency of well-ordered demonstration' (62). Lucian's *Philopseudēs* contains questions about correct Attic usage that are settled by precedents set by Plato.

Authors in the Second Sophistic were keenly aware of the conflict between their own purposes and Plato's thought, and often sought to diminish these

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[5] In *Peri huphous* two sections of the *Laws* are guilty of 'frigidity' (*psuchros*) in expressing exotic ideas (5.741c, 6.778d). For two of the criticisms of Plato, there are parallel compliments concerning the appropriate use of the same figures: metaphor and periphrasis. *Republic* 9.586a is complimented for its 'soundless flow' (*psophēti rheōn*), itself an echo of the *Theaetetus* (144b).

differences. It may be that the increased interest in Plato was less a response to revived Platonism than an answer to the charge that rhetoric lacks any systematic methodology; however, we should not ignore the fact that this trend appeared at a time in which there was continued interest in Plato's philosophy in the work of more traditional Platonist authors.

Since we have consistent information that Plato's oeuvre had merit as literature and was held up as a model of style, we can safely say that the dialogues themselves were in fact read, and that Plato did not survive in the second century simply from Introductions or Summaries or handbooks of other kinds, though such aids existed and were surely used. Unlabelled verbal reminiscences (the common reference to the winged chariot from the *Phaedrus*, for example) should also indicate a familiarity within both author and audience. Although mined for philosophical themes, Plato's dialogues had an important stylistic influence in the Second Sophistic.

4 PLATO AS IDEOLOGICAL MODEL

The Platonic debates most interesting to second-century sophists were all developed after Plato's death: daimonology, the theoretic ideal, fate and free will, and the nature of the Good. A self-consciously Platonic author, Maximus avoids any real discussion, for example, of the distinction between first and second god, primary mind and cosmic mind (or world soul). In his many discussions of the separation of the material and intelligible worlds, he refrains from mentioning the Forms by name, but in *Dialexis* 1.5 he writes:

If the soul leads us to an object that is stable, unified, bounded, and defined, naturally beautiful, accessible to effect, apprehensible by reason, pursuable with love, attainable with hope, then its exertions are blessed with good fortune, victory, and success.

Whether this is the Good *per se*, or the organization of the Forms, this description mirrors what we have from Plato (*Phaedo* 79c–80a).

If one takes the work we have from the Second Sophistic as a whole, Plato is used to invoke Hellenic culture more often than any author other than Homer, both in the frequency of allusions and variety of contexts in which the allusions occur. Nearly every dialogue of the standard Thrasyllan division of Plato's text is represented.[6] Of Plato's standard nine tetralogies, Dio seems to use at least fifteen dialogues as sources; Lucian references twenty-one;[7] Maximus of Tyre alludes to

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[6] Excluding those authors who worked within the tradition of Academic Platonism, there is reference to twenty-four dialogues; to include them would complete the list (though the *Ion* seems to have only one possible reference in Alcinous' *Didaskalikos* 4).

[7] Including the *Epistulae* as one work, and removing the *Theages* from the list.

eighteen; Apuleius references at least twenty-two; and Aristides, at least twenty. By way of contrast, Plutarch alludes to thirty-two dialogues; and Epictetus (c. 55–c. 135), who was certainly familiar with Plato's Socratic dialogues, refers to passages in fifteen dialogues.[8]

Apuleius' applications of Plato mirror his literary versatility. A translator and adaptor of first- and second-century didactic Platonism, Apuleius does not rethink inherited theoretical positions in any substantial way, nor does he engage in criticism. Though his Platonist works show a certain inconsistency and vagueness, the most obvious target in his philosophical works is impiety; for Apuleius, philosophy is concerned with the art of living. In his sophistic displays, alternatively, Apuleius emerges as a compiler of existing Platonic materials more than an original investigator. *De deo Socratis* is written in a sophist's rhythmical, archaic style, and is exemplary of the popular Platonic lectures that were pervasive during the Second Sophistic. Apuleius, as a Latin sophist, shows great concern for both his reputation – the self-promotion of the cult of his own personality is clear – and his prodigiously displayed literary and scientific polymathy.

Aristides is perhaps the key to understanding how a quintessential Second Sophistic could engage in sustained Platonic themes. While other authors wage their own idiomatic battles between rhetoric and philosophy, Aristides thought it important to engage Plato's dialogues directly. What emerge are forensic exercises in which Plato and Aristides engage in pseudo-dialogues. The most prominent orator of his time uses Plato's own words ostensibly to confront both the philosopher and his 'slanderous treatment' of rhetoric; however, Aristides only obliquely challenges Plato and his ideas. Instead, Aristides was rejecting the scholastic use of Plato in the second century, either by Gaius and the Pergamum Platonists or the Cynic philosophers who had long mined the *Gorgias* for testimony against oratory. *Peri rhētorikēs* effectively does for Plato's views on rhetoric what Academic Platonists had long been doing for his metaphysics: Aristides pulls apart disparate statements from seminal works of Plato and anatomizes them so that the philosopher's thoughts could be clearly understood. Plato is a peer and colleague for Aristides, though one treated with grave respect; he pays tribute to Plato's eloquence, transferring to him Cratinus' line about Pericles, that he was the 'greatest tongue of the Greeks' (72).

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[8] Beyond Platonists, the influence of Plato generally remained strong in second-century philosophical circles. Stoicism and Platonism continued their mutual influence, as they had for some time. Respect for Plato was high among the Peripatetics: the commentaries of Alexander of Aphrodisias (*fl.* 200 CE), for example, are replete with references to Plato. In his commentary on the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aspasius (c.100–150 CE) references no fewer than six dialogues. The generally hostile Sextus Empiricus (*fl.* end of second century CE), our main source for Pyrrhonian Scepticism, shows a good knowledge of Platonism, and names Plato (along with Thucydides and Demosthenes) as one of the masters of the Greek language (*Adversus mathematicos* 1.98).

The second title of Lucian's *Peri parasitou hoti technē hē parasitikē* invokes the long-standing tradition of rhetorical handbooks, nearly all of which were titled *hē technē rhētorikē*. The subject refers to Socrates' central question in the *Gorgias*, whether rhetoric is an art. Yet Lucian's work is not a mere reversal of Plato in which superior rhetoric is pitted against inferior philosophy. Lucian takes Plato's conception of rhetoric as a form of flattery (*kolakeia*), and turns the embarrassment of the label into a virtue, one superior to both rhetoric and, doing Plato one better, philosophy. 'Parasitism' in Lucian's dialogue is shown to be not merely an art, but the art of flattery. In the background of any discussion of this dialogue, then, is the connection between Plato's idea of rhetoric as flattery in opposition to philosophy[9] and Lucian's satirical conception of parasitism as superior to the philosophy and rhetoric of the time.

Maximus is clear in his *Dialexeis* that his audience of *neoi*[10] should distrust the 'reasoning of the masses for whom sufficient grounds to praise an utterance are furnished by a fluent tongue, a rush of words, Attic diction, well-constructed periods, and elegant composition' (25.3). This is an exemplary description of the most coveted and successful oratorical traits in the Second Sophistic. Maximus is careful to show that his Attic style differs from this representation: everything he does is in the name of philosophical discovery, and Plato is his exemplar as a thinker (*Dialexis* 11), and ethical agent (15). Such a project, however, does not prevent him from entertaining his audience while educating them, Maximus boasts that he is able to speak as effectively to the guileless *neoi* as the most sophisticated philosopher (1.8).

Though the influence of Plato is ubiquitous in the second century, few of these authors are interested in being placed within a particular school or sect. Apuleius is an exception since he was not in direct competition with the Greek-speaking sophists and philosophers who spent the majority of their time negotiating between the Roman East and the centripetal force of Rome. For most Platonic rhetors, contemporary sectarianism and the hostility between factions are to blame for the fact that 'the much-vaunted Good has been completely lost to sight by the Greek world' (*Dialexis* 26.2). Such pedants were more interested in academic over-theorizing and obscure mathematics rather than in becoming virtuous men who lead happy lives.

Maximus challenges the idea that the pursuit of virtue can be undertaken only by scholarchs:

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[9] I.e., as understood in the *Gorgias*. Plato's sketches of a type of philosophical rhetoric as found in the *Phaedrus* would be an important addition to such a discussion.

[10] The transitional period between childhood and one's own rationality; cf. Plutarch *De audiendis poetis* 37c–f.

Is the goal for us human beings so specialized and complicated a matter and so hard to grasp, so obscure and so implicated with lengthy study, that we could not achieve it except by humming and strumming and protracting geometrical lines this way and that, and exhausting ourselves in such pursuits, as if our aim were quite other than that of becoming good men?[11]

This question defines Maximus' use of Plato in his philosophical enterprise, and in many ways reflects the guiding question of many Second Sophistic authors. Criticism of traditional Platonism is common at this time, in that any practical direction found in the dialogues has been set aside in favour of more drawn-out expositions of Platonic minutiae. Lucian, for example, was interested in revitalizing the dialogue form, but was not going to discuss 'subtle themes like whether the soul is immortal, how many cups of pure, changeless essence, when god made the world, he poured into the vessel in which he created the universe, and whether rhetoric is the shadow of a part of state-craft, a fourth part of flattery' (*Bis accusatus* 34; cf. *Gorgias* 465cd).

According to Maximus, all one truly needs in order to understand Plato are the dialogues themselves. A reader of Plato's words may still need further exposition, however, either because he is blinded by their intensity or he thinks they lack luminosity – either condition results in a misunderstanding.[12] In *Dialexis* 11.2 Maximus offers an image of what reading Plato requires: the Platonic exegetical process is akin to mining for precious metals.[13] After the first engagement (*hē prōtē homilia*) with Plato's dialogues, one needs the assistance of some further technique to 'try and purify what has been mined'. Just as fire is used to test gold, this analysis is performed with reason (*logos*), and only through this process 'can constructive use be made of the gold'. This idea underscores Maximus' practical attitude toward Plato in the *Dialexeis*, and he proceeds to discuss the proper exegetical techniques to interpret Plato's understanding of god: cross-examination (11.3–4) and allegorizing (11.5–11).

Since Maximus 'introduces' the tradition of Platonism to his young Roman audience, he distances himself from a diminished Academic tradition as well as demonstrating the proper objective of the philosophical project: to apply such thoughts to life. In spite of everyone's desire for it, in Maximus' eyes no one is anywhere near the Good. Men are searching for such treasure 'in the dark, snapping, quarrelling, exhorting, and looking askance at their neighbour to see if the other has it' (29.5). Inner peace as found only through philosophy is more

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[11] *Dialexis* 37.2, with the manuscript title, 'Whether the Liberal Arts have a Contribution to Make to the Cultivation of Virtue'.

[12] A reference to the sun simile (*Republic* c.507a–509c) as well as the educational process in the cave analogy (7.518).

[13] An image also used by Plato, *Statesman* 303e.

important than the avoidance of external calamity (the latter is the subject for poets). Platonic philosophy so conceived unabashedly reveals its Stoic inflection.

For Lucian, the intellectual landscape has been left to shabby philosophers (*Vitarum auctio*) and inane, parroting sophists (*Rhetorum praeceptor*). Lucian fashions his own dialogues after Plato's to show the rampant literary hypocrisy in the second century. Plato criticizes two things in fifth- and fourth-century rhetoric: unreflective routines and formalistic techniques. Lucian does the same for the second century. As Plato's *Phaedrus* characterizes the original sophists, Lucian's rhetorical 'handbook' in the *Rhetorum praeceptor* is a satire of the undeserved success of their Second Sophistic imitators. Lucian reveals the rhetorical art in the Second Sophistic to be Plato's nightmare: oratorical success in the second century is secured by the application of stylized empty formulae.

As the very model of the Second Sophist, Aristides has few positive things to say about the type. Alongside a few non-pejorative uses, his comments about sophists are nearly all negative and aimed specifically toward rivals or inferior orators. It has been noted that he had similar contempt for philosophers. Rather, Aristides criticizes those who used the name of 'philosophy' to hide their true nature.[14] Nearly a century before, Dio had also taken exception to orators who disguised themselves as philosophers for 'deceitful' (*deinos*) motives in order to perform only for personal gain and reputation (*Oration* 70). Aristides' concern for both types of intellectuals was not categorical, it was moral: he is as pleased with his attacks on lesser sophists as on vicious philosophers.

For Maximus, the decline of philosophy meant that bare doctrines had become common property for the world, and the noble pursuit of philosophy had therefore been released to 'wander amidst wretched sophistries' (*Dialexis* 26.2). Sophists privilege theory over the practical acquisition of virtue, so '[i]f all it took to gain virtue was theoretical knowledge (*theōrēmatōn arithmoi*) and a handful of doctrines (*mathēmata atta*), then sophists (*sophistai*) would be a valuable class of person' (27.8). A common target was the inconsistency between the words and deeds of those who purported to be philosophers, which included issues of 'frank speech' (*parrēsia*), as well as their purely technically oriented theoretical interests, which worked against any practical applications to life.

None of these authors pronounces on these subjects *simpliciter*; during this time respect for the real thing, whether sophist or philosopher, was quite strong. Platonic *rhētores* saw themselves as surrounded by vain posturing of two sorts: on the one hand are the technically oriented, handbook-producing Platonists of the time, and on the other are the shining stars of the imperial cultural sky, the

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[14] See, for example, *Peri rhētorikēs* 258–9.

ambitious, vainglorious sophists. The Platonic goal of happiness (*eudaimonia*) as likeness to god (*homoiōsis theōi*) or acquisition of virtue was lost on both.

5 PLATO AND THE THIRD SOPHISTIC

The rise of the Platonic rhetor directly impacted upon the methods of the Christian Sophists and Apologists and influenced the development of the philosophical-*cum*-religious sermon. During these first centuries the early Christian orators were developing their rhetorical styles, and the example of the Platonic rhetor was an important guide. One clear influence the Second Sophistics had on early Apologists, was the infusion of philosophical themes with rhetorical display; the more philosophical of the Platonic rhetors had attempted to combine seamlessly these two longstanding aspects of a proper Greek *paideia*.

The Christian Fathers would have cut their teeth on such an educational and recreative tradition – Origen's (c. 185–c. 254) typically Hellenistic education is a notable example – and the public renown of the professional pagan sophists of the second century demanded their attention. Dio had noted the difference between bad philosophers, who lacked severity, and good philosophers, who used both persuasion and reason (*peithos kai logos*) to 'calm and soften the soul' (*Orationes* 32). Platonic rhetors in the Second Sophistic were responsible for a public Platonism, evidence that the importance of Plato for Christian sophists did not stem solely from conventional Platonist scholasticism. The Platonic oratory that the Christian authors inherited had proven to be an extremely effective combination of philosophy and persuasion.

In the early first century, Philo of Alexandria was responsible for adding essential support to the Christian incorporation of Plato: the ideological connection between Moses and Plato. Justin (110–65) continued to map out Plato's lineage from – and plagiarism of – Moses (*Apologia* 1); Tertullian (160–c. 220) agreed that Plato had borrowed from the Jewish Scriptures (*Apology* 47.1); and Clement (c. 150–211/216), echoing the Pythagorean Numenius, would ask, 'What else is Plato but Moses speaking Attic Greek (*Mōusēs attikizōn*)?' (*Stromateis* 1.22; Eusebius *Praeparatio evangelica* 11.10; *Suda*, *Numenius*).

Early Christians had strong reactions to Plato. In the *Dialogus cum Tryphone*, Justin describes that his encounter with Plato's ideas had provided his soul with wings (a trite echo of Plato), which had led him to imagine foolishly that he would soon look upon God, since that is the end of Plato's philosophy (2). Porphyry accuses Origen of 'hawking himself and his literary ability about' because he 'was always consorting with Plato, and was conversant with the writings of Numenius and Cronius, Apollophanes and Longinus and Moderatus,

Nicomachus and the distinguished men among the Pythagoreans' (Harnack fr. 39). This aspect of the tradition may seem to culminate in Tertullian's (c. 160–220) accusation that philosophy is 'the parent of heresy', and his repulsion from all things Greek, including Plato. Yet Tertullian did not denounce philosophy absolutely: in his view the influence of Plato and Aristotle had allowed for the rise of Valentinian Gnosticism. Tertullian's refutation in *Adversus Hermogenem* draws on contemporary Platonic philosophy, and he seems to have some degree of respect for the philosopher.[15]

A form of Platonism would continue to have an influence on rhetoric after the second century. Hermogenes' (*fl.* 161–180 CE) *Peri ideōn logou* was appealing to Plotinus in that he employs categories congenial to third-century Platonism; for example, when discussing thoughts (*ennoiai*) that produce solemnity, he discusses 'thoughts said about the gods *qua* gods', thoughts that discuss natural phenomena caused by divine action, and 'thoughts that discuss matters that are by nature divine but often seen in human affairs' (1.6).[16] This interest would be continued in the fourth century by Sopatros' commentary on Hermogenes' *Peri staseōn* in his discussions of the origin of rhetoric. In the fifth century, Syrianus, head of the Platonic school in Athens, would write important commentaries on both *Peri staseōn* and *Peri ideōn*. Such work reflects the fact that Hermogenes had by that time become authoritative, overshadowing both Aristotle and Dionysius Thrax.

Plato continued to be admired throughout late antiquity for his literary merit and his philosophical idealism. In his Christian Platonism, Clement of Alexandria presents the goal of Christian life as deification, both as the biblical imitation of God and Platonism's assimilation to God. Origen's approach did not drastically deviate from Clement's, whose lectures he may have heard, and his thought displays the same influence of Stoicism as Platonism had from the time of Antiochus in the first century CE. Origen's ideas of eschatology and the purifying fire, bodily imprisonment, a lower versus ideal church, and his description of the activity of the *Logos* all provide evidence for the influence of Platonism. Numenius' approach to the doctrine of God in *Peri tagathou* had been helpful to Origen in order to explain the relationship between God, Christ and the world, and it was from Ammonius that Platonism became for Origen the best antidote

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[15] 'I am sorry from my heart that Plato has been the caterer to all these heretics' (*De anima* 23).

[16] Hermogenes writes in his work on style that there are two ways to improve one's writing: imitation through 'mere experience' (*empeirias psilēs*) and 'unreasoning practice' (*logou tribēs*, 1.1.12) or by approaching the ancients with knowledge (*epistēmē*) of the forms of style (1.1.17). These epistemological levels – information through experience (cf. *Gorgias* 463b, 501b) and accurate knowledge (*Phaedrus*) – show a basic Platonic framework in Hermogenes as applied to rhetoric, much as it was originally used by Plato. Hermogenes writes that one must learn what 'each quality of style is in itself' (*auto hekaston kath' hauto*, 1.1.40), echoing a common Platonic formulation. (See de Lacy 1974.)

to Gnosticism. Plato's importance to Origen is further reflected by his counter-polemic *Contra Celsum*. Celsus had provided the first philosophical rebuttal of Christian philosophy in the second century CE in his *Alēthēs logos*, which was itself a work clearly influenced by Plato and the pseudo-Platonic writings.

Augustine's discussions of Apuleius are perhaps the clearest examples of the influence of Second Sophistic Platonic authors on a Church Father. Though the *Platonici* Augustine names in book 8 of *De civitate dei* are Apuleius, Plotinus, Porphyry and Iamblichus, the *daimones* found in books 8–10 are specifically taken from Apuleius' *De deo Socratis*. Apuleius' *De deo* is a prime example of a Latin author emulating the display speeches of his Greek contemporaries.

The early influence of Platonism on Augustine at the time of his professor-ship of oratory in Milan (384–6) would leave a lasting mark on his work. When discussing ambiguous signs and the use of pagan literature and philosophy in his *De doctrina christiana* – his synthesis of the study of rhetoric and biblical interpre-tation – Augustine rejects *sophismata* for the Platonic logical argumentation of division and definition (2.32.50). In *De doctrina* he enjoins the Christian orator to be the very model of eloquence, far excelling all others in the combination of elegance with wisdom. Augustine's model for this ideal, in form if not in content, would have been the writers and authors of the Second Sophistic as they were emulated by authors in the so-called 'Third Sophistic' in the latter third and fourth centuries, e.g., Eunapius (347– after 401), Sopater of Apamea, Chrysanthius of Sardis (fourth century) and Gregory of Nyssa (335–after 384). In turn, the Platonism of the Greek Fathers would enter the Western literary tradition through the translations and treatises of fourth-century orators such as Hilary, Victorinus and Ambrose. By the end of his life, however, Augustine in his *Retractationes* would regret the degree to which he made concessions to the Platonists in his early writings (1.1).

6 CONCLUSION

By the end of the first century BCE, the Hellenistic philosophical schools were moribund except perhaps for a form of Stoicism that focused on public and private morality, and provided much of the philosophical background of the official pagan religion, often in the form of allegorical interpretations. The renewed dogmatic Platonism that marked the first century BCE was diffused and fortified by the sophists of the first and second century CE. In their appropriation of the dialogues for their own idiosyncratic uses, these authors mined Plato for rhetorical and linguistic precedent and for philosophical themes by skipping over the previous five centuries of Academic tradition. During the Second Sophistic, travelling *ad fontes* to Plato's works became an indispensable strategy

in order to connect oneself to Greek philosophy and thus to the classical Greek past.

It is clear from its prominence that the expression of even a cursory knowledge of Plato's doctrines fashioned a lucrative image for an author during the Second Sophistic. These authors at once wished to invoke the entire Hellenic tradition and sought to carve out their own places in a crowded and prolific literary spectrum. In this way, they opened up their work to a type of humanism not found in literature since the fifth century BCE.

It is safe to say that these public sophistic expositions on Platonic thought contributed to the shaping of Platonism in the third century, not least because of the variety and diversity of the Platonism Plotinus inherited. The tradition of the Platonic rhetor, then, would live on after the Second Sophistic in both Plotinus' Platonism and in the work of the Christian writers. In turn, aspects of these two traditions would have their fruition in the Byzantine church.

6

NUMENIUS OF APAMEA

MARK EDWARDS

Numenius of Apamea on the Orontes is a thinker whom we know only from the reports of later witnesses who were anything but dispassionate historians of philosophy. The Christians who transcribe his difficult prose are seeking pagan affidavits to Biblical miracles, the temporal creation of the universe and the Trinitarian character of God. To Platonists of the third century, he is a reputable allegorist and a forerunner of Plotinus, though by no means the only source of his philosophy. For Proclus in the fifth century, he is one of the earliest exegetes of Plato whose opinions deserve a hearing, though they are seldom to be followed. Even his dates must be deduced from subsequent notices. He is quoted by the Christian apologist Clement of Alexandria, who was born about 160 CE, and as his pupil Harpocration taught in the reign of Marcus Aurelius, his acme may be assigned to the middle of the second century.[1] Little survives of his works *On Space* (fr. 1c4 des Places), *On Number* (fr. 1c5), *On the Imperishability of the Soul* (fr. 29.9–10) and *On the Inexpressibles in Plato* (fr. 23); we can guess that his *Epops* played on the likeness of sound between the word for a hoopoe and the noun *epoptēs*, which denotes a privileged witness of the mysteries (Origen, *Contra Celsum* 4.51 = fr. 1c). Excerpts from his treatise *On the Defection of the Academy* are abundant by comparison; while a text on the cave of the nymphs in Homer's *Odyssey* can perhaps be reconstructed from the testimonies of Porphyry and Macrobius. The remains of his treatise in six books *On the Good* are more copious still, and have been culled from a greater variety of authors. We must dwell in the following study on what is extant; not forgetting that after Eusebius (d. 339) our witnesses prefer paraphrase to quotation, and that none of the quotations which survive was designed to facilitate the writing of this chapter.

INTELLECTUAL MILIEU

'Pythagorean' (*Pythagōrikos*) is the most common epithet for Numenius (frs. 1c, 4b, 5.2, 24.3). There is reason to think that he too would have favoured this

[1] Dillon 1977: 362.

appellation, which implies that he will have acknowledged Moderatus of Gades as a predecessor.[2] Even when lamenting the defection of the Academy from its master, he says no more in praise of Plato than that he may not have been inferior to Pythagoras (fr. 24.19–20, from Eusebius, *PE* 14.4, 727c). He adds that, for all his schooling with the ironic Socrates, Plato chose to 'Pythagorize', marrying the elusive wit of the former with the solemnity of the latter (fr. 24.57 and 24.74–6). In the excerpt which stands first in the edition of des Places he speaks of an *anakhōrēsis* or ascent from Plato to Pythagoras,[3] whose doctrines are said to have served him as a foundation, in common with those of the Brahmins, the Jews, the Magi and the Egyptians. Numenius therefore appeals to a consensus of the ancients, though he assumes that the philosopher's itinerary must commence with Plato, that it will be confirmed at every stage by 'reasoning' and not by mere authority, and that the creeds of the wiser nations cannot fail to corroborate those of the best Greek schools.

A rare esteem for Jews is apparent, even when allowance is made for the partiality of our Christian sources. He is said to have ascribed to the Jews a notion of God as the father of all other deities, who has nothing in common with any and declines to share his glory (fr. 56 from Lydus, *De mensibus* 4.53; cf. Isaiah 42.8). While he is not the only Greek of his time to cite the opening verses of the Book of Genesis, he is the only one to observe that the famous injunction 'Let there be light' at Genesis 1.3 was anticipated by the motion of the Spirit on the waters, and the only one who is not content to admire or deplore, but places his own construction on the verse (fr. 30.3–6 from Porphyry, *De antro nympharum*, 63.9–12 Nauck). Clement of Alexandria ascribes to him the dictum 'What is Plato but an Atticizing Moses?' (*Stromateis* 1.22.150.4 = fr. 8.13), though it is fair to add that the later and more scholarly Eusebius endorses this report with hesitation (Eusebius, *PE* 11.10, 527a).[4]

It is widely held today that in the fragment numbered 13 by Des Places Numenius borrows the locution 'he who is' (*ho ōn*) from Exodus 3.14 or from the Platonizing commentary of Philo of Alexandria (*Vita Moysis* 1.75 etc.). In common with Festugière and Whittaker, des Places takes the second sentence to mean that 'He who is [sc. the first God] sows the seed of every soul in the sum of things that partake of him.'[5] Burnyeat,[6] taking 'he who is' and *autoon* in fr. 17 as synonyms, argues that both signify pure being, in which all finite

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[2] Frede 1987: 1075.

[3] So in the translation of Des Places (fr. 1a.4–5 = Eusebius, *PE* 9.7, 411c), though one could attach the verb *anakhōrēsasthai* to 'the testimonies of Plato', leaving 'the reasonings of Pythagoras' as the object of *sundēsasthai*, 'corroborate'.

[4] See Schürer 1909: 627 and Edwards 1990a: 74 n. 20 on the spelling of the name Moses.

[5] See Festugière 1953: 44 n. 2, and cf. n. 3; Whittaker 1967.   [6] Burnyeat 2005.

beings participate; Numenius, on this argument, turned to Jewish thought for a positive designation of the property which Plato ascribes by negation to the Good when he declares it to be superior to being at *Republic* 6.509b. The older translation of E. H. Gifford, 'He who is the seed of all sows all things in the entities that partake of him' is generally rejected on the grounds that 'a sower cannot sow himself'.[7] This logic is open to challenge,[8] and the prevailing theory implies that Numenius stole the phrase but neglected its original signification: 'he who is' is subsequently contrasted in fragment 13 with the Lawgiver who distributes his gifts, but in Philo and Exodus 3.14 the first god is the author of the Law.

An acquaintance with works outside the Jewish canon is more easily demonstrated. He is said to have affirmed, in contradiction to the Mosaic account of the exodus from Egypt, that the magicians Jannes and Jambres were able to relieve the most intense of the plagues that were visited on Egypt (fr. 9 from Eusebius, *PE* 9.8, 411d). These figures, who perhaps owed their celebrity to a lost *Book of Jannes and Jambres*,[9] jostle the sorcerers of other nations in ancient catalogues (2 Timothy 3.8; Apuleius, *Apologia* 90; Tertullian, *De anima* 1.57; Arnobius, *Adversus nationes* 1.52). Origen reports that their appearance in the third book of Numenius *On the Good* was preceded by an allegorical treatment of an episode in the life of Christ (Origen, *Contra Celsum* 4.51 = fr. 10a). He does not, however, say that the protagonists were named or the source acknowledged, either here or in the glosses on the Old Testament which he purports to have discovered throughout the writings of Numenius; nor do he or any other witnesses credit Numenius with a quotation of the New Testament. If we were to look for a single milieu in which magic was commended, the Mosaic books rewritten and the mysteries of the Gospel clothed in ciphers, it would not be among the Jews of the synagogue, but among the Gnostics – using that term in its strictest sense, to designate the circle of Christian heretics whom Plotinus, a century later, was to upbraid in the tone of an alienated colleague.[10] The relation between this group and that which produced the *Chaldaean Oracles* remains obscure, but both have been assigned to a 'Platonic underworld'.[11] Numenius touches hands with both Chaldaean and Gnostic thought in fr. 17: 'O mortals, it is not that mind at which you marvel that is the first, but another before this, older and more divine.' The cognate passage in the *Chaldaean Oracles* speaks of a 'second intellect, which you, race of mortals,

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[7] Scott 1925: 79; Dodds 1960: 15.
[8] Edwards 1989; cf. fr. 41 (cause identical with effect). Dillon 1977: 368n emends *ho ge ōn* (he who is) to *ho geōrgōn*, 'the planter', reading 'the planter sows' etc.
[9] Maraval 1977.
[10] Plotinus, *Enneads* 2.9.6; Porphyry, *Vita Plotini* 16; Edwards 1990a.   [11] Dillon 1977: 384.

style the first'. Against Lewey, Dodds argues that the hieratic style would not
have been spontaneously adopted by a Greek philosopher.[12] Yet Plato puts a
similar exclamation into the mouth of Socrates at *Cratylus* 408b, and it thus
appears that we have no sound criterion for determining which is the echo of
the other.

Numenius writes with vigour against the corruption of Plato's teachings by
the erroneous principles of other schools. The secession (he alleges) begins
with Zeno and his rival Arcesilaus, both at one time students of the Platonist
Polemo. Zeno (so Numenius continues), after forsaking a series of masters,
founded the Stoics in opposition to Plato; Arcesilaus opposed him with an alloy
of sophistry and scepticism, both acquired outside the Academy, and, while
remaining nominally an Academic, transferred his colours from Socrates to
Pyrrho by adopting suspense of judgement as a fixed position rather than as
an avenue to discovery (fr. 25 from Eusebius, *PE* 14.5, 729d–733d). Carneades
enlarged his arsenal, using a variety of sophistical techniques to give his oppo-
nents 'dream for dream' (fr. 27.37 from *PE* 14.8, 738b; cf. the 'people of dreams'
at fr. 32.6). Lacydes is a figure of mere burlesque, so cunningly defrauded by his
slaves that he loses faith in his own perceptions (fr. 26 from *PE* 14.7, 734a–737a).
It is clearly the intention of Numenius that the reader will arrive at the true
philosophy by negation of its sceptical antitype, just as his contemporary Atticus
accentuates those tenets of Platonism which were generally supposed to have
been denied by Aristotle.

Both followed ancient canons of invective which forbade them to quote
directly from Plato's dialogues. We possess, however, fragments of a treatise by
Numenius *On the Good* for which no analogue survives in our ancient notices
of Atticus. Cast in the form of a dialogue, it evidently derived its subject and
its mode of argument from the best-known writings of the Platonic corpus.
For all that, exact quotations from the corpus in this work are sparse, and if the
Timaeus seems to preponderate, we must remember that the few excerpts which
are not preserved under Christian ensigns come from Proclus' commentary on
that dialogue (frs. 21 and 22, from Proclus, *In Timaeum* 1.303.27–304.4 Diehl
and 3.103–28.32). Christians who discovered in the *Timaeus* a pagan testimony
to the oneness of God and the temporal creation of the world would, of course,
be likely to cite those passages from Numenius which appeared to convey the
same truths. The title of the work suggests that allusions to the *Republic*, or
to Plato's famous lecture *On the Good*, would have been more copious in a
more representative sampling of its contents. Numenius is cited often enough
in Porphyry's *Cave of the Nymphs* to justify the inference that some work of

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[12] Lewey 1956: 320n.27; Dodds 1960: 10–11.

his had already fused the astral topography of *Republic* 10 with the architecture of the Homeric cave which marks the end of the hero's wanderings in the *Odyssey*.[13] Yet even in this discussion there is more evidence of direct recourse to Homer than to Plato. It was manifestly never the intention of Numenius to write a scholium on Plato, but rather to allow the thought and diction of Plato to leaven a philosophy into which he had kneaded the wisdom of many peoples, some of them older than the Greeks.

THE TREATISE *ON THE GOOD*

From the first book *On the Good*, Eusebius transcribes an arresting simile, which may, as its position in the arrangement of des Places implies, have served as an exordium to the main argument:

As though a person sitting by a point of vantage (*skope*) were to see with a single glance of his sharp eye some small fishing vessel, one of those skiffs that put out alone, solitary, derelict, caught amid the billows – just so, one must retire afar from things perceptible to be with the Good, alone with the alone. (Fr. 2.7–12; from Eusebius, *PE* 11.21, 543b)

Here Numenius adapts an image from Plato's *Statesman* 272d, where the one who occupies the vantage point is the pilot after loosing the helm of the universe at the end of a fated cycle. Numenius was in turn to be imitated by Plotinus, whose conclusion to an early lecture, celebrating the 'flight of the alone to the alone', became the *envoi* to his work and life in Porphyry's redaction of the *Enneads* (Plotinus, *Enneads* 6.9.12). But Plotinus was addressing a circle of adepts, while Numenius wrote for those who had still to master, or even entertain, the principles of abstraction. In his first book *On the Good*, he proceeds to rehearse the familiar argument. If knowledge is to deserve the name, its objects must be eternal, since otherwise what we say of them would not be true on all occasions or in all respects. Statements of this kind cannot be made of perishable entities in the present world, and least of all of the universal substrate which we call matter. Matter is the receptacle of all properties, and therefore has no properties of its own; as we can never say anything of it which is truer than the contrary, it does not lend itself to rational inquiry (frs. 3 and 4.2–9 from Eusebius, *PE* 15.17, 819a and 819c; cf. Plato, *Timaeus* 52b). What, then, sustains the identity of objects that require this protean substrate as a condition of their existence? Not a material body, for that in turn would require some extrinsic force – nothing less than a god, indeed – to preserve it from deliquescence. Only of the incorporeal can it be said that it never suffers diminution or increase, that it

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[13] Edwards 1990b; Lamberton 1986: 54–77.

is equally free from perishing or becoming. Since it remains what it is without change or defect, what we predicate of it will be immutably and absolutely true (fr. 4a.15–19 from Eusebius, *PE* 15.17, 819d; frs. 5 and 6 from *PE* 11.9–10, 525b–c).

Similar arguments can be advanced to show that the soul which preserves the shape and operations of the body must itself be something other than a body, if it is not to be equally prone to dissolution (fr. 4b.9–10 from Nemesius, *De natura hominis* 2.8–14). If the Stoics reply that it is not so much a body as a motile tension co-ordinating the actions of the body, it is evident that this tension cannot itself be a species of matter, or the familiar objections will ensue (4b.13–20). If it is not matter but a material thing, it must partake of matter; but if that which partakes of matter is (by hypothesis) not matter, it must be immaterial, which is to say that it is not body (4b.20–5). This conclusion is reached by smuggling in the gratuitous notion that to reside in a substrate is to participate in it; but Numenius covers his sophistry by attributing to the Stoics a poor *ad hominem* argument against the Platonists. If, they say, the soul has three parts, must it not be divisible like the three-dimensional body? To this Numenius answers that even if every body admits of a threefold division, this does not entail that whatever can be divided into three must be a body (4b.25–30). Magnitude and quality, for example, are incorporeals which admit of division only in conjunction with the bodies that they define; the soul likewise is accidentally, but not essentially, subject to division when it accompanies a body (4b.30–4). Furthermore, if we make the soul a body, we require a source of motion: if the motion comes from without the soul it is 'soulless' (*apsukhon*); if from within it is ensouled. Since what is ensouled is something other than soul, this result entails that a single entity is at once *apsukhon* and *empsukhon*, which is a manifest contradiction (4b.34–9). Finally, the character of the soul is indicated by its diet, since it feeds not, like the body, on gross nutrients, but on the intellectual disciplines, which Numenius takes to be self-evidently incorporeal (4b.39–44).

THEORY OF THE SOUL

These arguments, attributed to Numenius by our Christian sources, may not be compelling but they are certainly Platonic in tenor and content. Platonists, on the other hand, attach his name to tenets which either contradict this teaching on the partless soul or encumber it with dangerous corollaries. Proclus reports, for example, that he regarded the soul as a number, jointly engendered by the indivisible monad and the indeterminate dyad to serve as a medium between mundane and supramundane principles (fr. 39.3–5 from Proclus, *In Timaeum*

2.153.19–21). Iamblichus maintains that he located the intellectual world, the gods, the daimons, the Good and all supernal entities in the partible soul, admitting no distinction in nature between the soul and that to which it owes its origin (fr. 41 from Iamblichus, in Stobaeus 365 Wachsmuth; fr. 42 from *ibid.*, 458.3–4). This soul encompasses the content of the second mind, described below. According to late witnesses, all three parts of the soul – the rational, the irrational and the vegetative – are separable from the body in Numenius, who extended immortality from the rational soul to 'the ensouled condition', a term which seems to be used in contradiction to 'nature' and hence perhaps to exclude the vegetative soul (fr. 40a.1–2 from [Olympiodorus], *In Phaedonem*, 124.13–14 Norvin; cf. fr. 47 from Philoponus, *In Aristotelis de Anima*, 9.35–8 Hayduck). Porphyry, on the other hand, acquits him of dividing the soul into three parts or into two, but adds that he preserved its unity only by postulating a distinct, irrational soul (fr. 44 from Porphyry, *Ad Gaurum*, in Stobaeus 350.35–351.1).

For all that our witnesses say of him to be true, therefore, Numenius would be required to hold (a) that humans possess one indivisible soul, (b) that they possess two souls, one or both of them indivisible, and (c) that the soul is single, but tripartite, encompassing both the higher and the lower agencies. It would be possible to reconcile (a) and (b) on the hypothesis that Porphyry took an allegory or a parabolic dictum as a literal proposition. He himself, having found both (a) and (c) in Plato, proposed to harmonize them by interpreting the 'parts' of the soul as *dunameis* or potencies and arguing that a diversity of operations need not impair the unity of an immaterial subject. Since he was widely regarded as an admirer and disciple of Numenius, there is no obstacle to supposing that the latter had arrived at the same solution, though we may wonder why, if Porphyry was attuned to the presence of metaphor in Plato, he could not put an equally charitable construction on the mythological idiom of Numenius.

We can strengthen this concordat by supposing (d) that the partible soul which is said to contain the intellectual universe is properly indivisible, but undergoes a visible differentiation of functions as an accidental consequence of its alliance with the body; and (e) that if immortality is reserved for the rational and the animal souls, this signifies only that the vegetative functions will become dormant once the union with the body is dissolved. What reasons Numenius gave for the embodiment of the soul we must deduce from allusions to him in Porphyry's *Cave of the Nymphs*, which speaks of a descent to earth through Cancer and a return to the higher sphere through Capricorn. These are the northern and southern gates of the zodiac, corresponding to the two doors of the cave in Ithaca, one of which is allotted to mortals (that is, to

earthbound souls), the other to immortals (that is, to souls who have escaped the flux of matter), as the hero at last makes landfall in the *Odyssey* (fr. 31 from Porphyry, *De antro* 70.25–72.19 Nauck). Pleasure is the spell that draws the soul downwards according to one excerpt, which adds that necromancers tempt it back to earth by lacing milk with honey (fr. 32 from Porphyry, *De antro* 76.1). This notion of a passage through the spheres was perhaps a commonplace of the time, as cognates are found at Origen, *De principiis* 2.11.6 and *Corpus hermeticum* 1.24–6.

   It does not, however follow that because the soul performs a physical journey, it must itself possess physical dimensions: the *Phaedrus*, the very dialogue which affirms the imperishability of the soul, likens the faculties of this soul to a charioteer with two steeds, but does not say what we should understand by the chariot (245c–246c). Platonists after Numenius interpreted this as a body of fine matter, which enables souls to subsist and exercise their natural functions in the intervals between sojourns in this world.[14] He intimates that the soul possesses more than one kind of body when he says that before it enters *sterea sōmata*, or three-dimensional bodies, it is opposed by 'material daimons' who will also try to prevent its return to the heavens (fr. 37.10–23 from Proclus, *In Timaeum* 1.77.17–20). These are distinguished from a divine class of demons, perhaps identical with the gods who impart their energies to matter (fr. 50 from Proclus, *In Timaeum* 3.196.12–14), and from those souls which perform daemonic operations after death (fr. 37.10–15). As daimons were supposed to have airy bodies, we may assume that Numenius clothed the soul in a similar envelope after its departure from the body.

COSMOGONY

If we ask why evil is so tenacious in the lower realm, the answer lies in the very constitution of the soul, which, as we noted above, is said to issue from the monad and the dyad. The monad is the Pythagorean counterpart of the Good, by virtue of which, according to the *Republic*, the other Forms or intelligible archetypes of being, subsist and are known for what they are (*Republic* 6.509b–c). The Forms thus constitute the first plurality, and for Numenius it follows that the matrix of the Forms will be the Dyad, as the first offspring of the monad. But whereas Plato posits the Good as the highest possible object of cognition, surpassing *ousia* or essence, Numenius styles it a god and a mind and does not deny it an essence, though this essence appears to be incommunicable.

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[14] Dillon 1977: 376.

The first god is Good itself (*autoagathon*);[15] its imitator is the good demiurge. The essence (*ousia*) of the first is one, that of the second another. Its imitation is the beautiful world, made beautiful by participation in the beautiful. (fr. 16.14–17 = Eusebius, *PE* 11.22, 544b)

This participation of the second mind in the first explains the dictum that there is participation among noetic entities (fr. 46c; Proclus, *In Timaeum* 3.33.33–4). There is the germ of a distinction between the beautiful and the good in the quoted passage, anticipating Plotinus, *Enneads* 1.6.9; but no hint that subordination entails deficiency or evil in the second mind. Depicting the second mind as a steersman who looks to the first as its rudder, Numenius does not hint that this steering may miscarry (fr. 18.9–14 from Eusebius, *PE* 11.22, 539d). When he came to explain the origin of the world, however, he reasoned that the turmoil of the elements below must originate in a perturbation or schism above.

The first god is simple in himself, and never prone to division because he is wholly concentrated in himself. But the god who is second and third is one.[16] As he inclines towards matter, he unifies it, but is rent asunder by it, because it has an appetitive nature and is in flux. (fr. 11.11–16; Eusebius, *PE* 11.17, 537a–b)

This passage appears to say (a) that the world has a temporal origin;[17] (b) that its creation required a substrate independent of – and hence no doubt coeternal with – the two noetic principles; and (c) that this event was the result of error and schism in the second noetic principle. That Numenius should have held (a) is more than credible, since this was the natural reading of the *Timaeus* in the eyes of his contemporaries Atticus and Plutarch. It is also likely enough that he espoused (b) by accepting Aristotle's equation of matter with the receptacle of the *Timaeus* and the indefinite dyad of the unwritten teachings. Notions akin to (c) are amply supplied by hermetic and Gnostic literature of the period, with which, as we observed above, he was probably acquainted. We might conjecture that the material dyad would be the offspring of the monad, yet there is evidence that Numenius imputes its chaotic motions to the presence of an autonomous will, which is actively fissiparous and malign.[18] Such conceits are not easily

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[15] Also 'idea of the good' (*Republic* 6.508e3) at fr. 20.5 from Eusebius, *PE* 11.22, 544b. The second mind is the demiurge of the *Timaeus*, the first occupies the position of the paradigm (Baltes 1975), though it does not contain the forms.

[16] Frede 1987: 1065–6 takes this to connote a real diversity of operations in the divine, which precludes any stricter identity between the third and second gods than that which obtains between a derivative and its essence.

[17] Dillon 1977: 374.

[18] Fr. 52.76ff. from Calcidius, *In Timaeum* 298. See Alt 1993: 37–40 on the evil World Soul and the paradoxical attribution of 'Zweiheit' both to the second mind and to the substrate. As Dodds 1960: 21 notes, the schism in the second mind is transferred to the soul in Plotinus, *Enneads* 3.9.3.

reconciled with Plato's axiom that the world exists because its maker is good, and that it is what it is because he enjoys an unmediated vision of the Forms (*Timaeus* 28d–30a).

Numenius can be reconciled with Plato if his cosmogony is interpreted as the playful or symbolic exhibition of an evergreen paradox: since the One is good, it must be procreative, but what it engenders must be something other than the One. The offspring cannot even possess the same attributes, for the oneness of the One would be compromised by duplication. What is other than the One must be inferior, which is to say that it must be in some measure evil; the dyad is thus defective insofar as it is a dyad, and what is depicted in myth as a bifurcation merely exemplifies its logical want of unity. Evil is thus a corollary of benevolence, and the argument, when expressed without myth, does not seem to require a temporal creation or the seduction of the intellect by matter. Proclus derides the tragic diction of Numenius in a passage, unattested elsewhere, which spoke not of two, but of three gods, under the titles grandfather, offspring and great-offspring (fr. 21 from Proclus, *In Timaeum* 1.303.27–304.7). Although the third is identified as the world, it is surely the lower half of the sundered intellect, otherwise called the World Soul, which is of a piece with the world in the sense that soul and body form a single subject. Numenius certainly believes in three gods, as he ascribes this position to Socrates at fr. 24.51;[19] the tragic manner seems, on the other hand, to be dispensable. A gloss on *Timaeus* 39e identifies the first god with the 'living creature', the second with the intellect, the third with the discursive functioning of the intellect. The first is said to think through the instrumentality of the second, the second to create through the instrumentality of the third.[20] There is nothing here to indicate that the world is a by-product of confusion in the supernal realm, or that the first mind is indifferent to its vicissitudes: what is moved is inferior to the cause of motion, but in the latter there can be neither idleness nor deficit.

CONCLUSION

Numenius may be an eccentric Platonist, but it would be more eccentric still to call him anything other than a Platonist.[21] The supremacy of the noetic, the

[19] Frede 1987: 1055.

[20] Fr. 22 (Proclus, *In Timaeum* 3.103.28–32). Dodds 1960: 14 proposes that the second mind is the intellect in the true sense, while the third represents the same mind weakened by discursive reasoning. The first, on this view, is supranoetic rather than noetic; hence when the second is said to be its own idea at 16.9, this will be an aberrant use of the term to signify an objectification of the ineffable.

[21] See Festugière 1953: 123–32 against the thesis of Puech 1934 that he caught an infection from the East.

incorporeality of the soul and the correlation between desert and suffering in its earthly pilgrimage are his cardinal tenets; the evil in matter is ineradicable, but for the soul under discipline it is not without remedy. Lydus calls him 'the Roman' (*De mensibus* 4.8 = fr. 57.1), and, whether or not he taught there, it was Rome that nursed his intellectual progeny. It cannot be true, as some alleged, that Plotinus embezzled his entire philosophy (Porphyry, *Vita Plotini* 17), for Plotinus has no notion of an evil soul or a fall precipitating the creation. On the other hand, we have Porphyry's testimony that his colleague Amelius had learned by heart the works of the great Pythagorean (*Vita Plotini* 3). Porphyry himself accused Numenius of a bifurcated concept of the soul which he could not espouse, but was thought to have been a 'wonderfully' faithful exponent of his demonology (Proclus, *In Timaeum* 1.77.22). Numenius seems not to have anticipated the Later Platonic postulate of a First Cause higher than intellect and being (as Moderatus did), but his fusion of metaphysics and psychology shows that he, like Plotinus, regarded the deliverance of the soul from its worldly attachments and the purification of the mind from error as inseparable goals.

7

STOICISM

BRAD INWOOD

The relevance of Stoicism to later ancient philosophy can hardly be overstated. Stoic philosophy began in the wake of the creative explosion of philosophical activity initiated by Plato in the fourth century BCE and sustained by Aristotle and the other followers of Plato. While the Academy entered its sceptical phase and Aristotle's school invested its energy in scientific rather than philosophical inquiry, Zeno of Citium and his followers emerged as the principal philosophical heirs of Plato and Aristotle, held that position for at least two centuries, and continued to present a vital alternative to the revived Platonism and Aristotelianism of the early Roman Empire. The institutional cohesion of the Stoic school in the Hellenistic period was impressive, though it provided for a quite wide range of philosophical viewpoints; Stoicism avoided the unusual degree of intellectual conservativism and reverence for the founder which characterized Epicureanism in the period. In addition to the internal debates about doctrine which might be expected in any philosophical movement, from the later second century BCE onwards Stoics came more often to differ among themselves on matters which we can suppose are connected with their attitude to Plato's or Aristotle's intellectual legacy.

One sign of this revival of interest was the intensity of debate, mostly in ethics, that seems to have followed from the joint embassy of philosophers sent by Athens to Rome in 155 BCE. Carneades represented the Academy, Critolaus the Peripatos, and Diogenes the Stoic school. This grouping of the major schools is indicative of their importance in the intellectual life of a Mediterranean world that was already beginning to be shaped by the central role played by Rome; it foreshadows the importance of this trio of schools for debate in physics, metaphysics, ethics, and logic throughout the imperial period. It is certainly no accident that Carneades' critique of both rival schools spurred them to revision and refinement of their doctrines. Nor is it an accident that his own epistemological stance provoked a long wave of internal debate in the Academy, a development that culminated in the fragmentation of the school in the first century BCE. Critolaus' revisionist version of eudaimonism, which held that all

three kinds of good (bodily, mental and external) were *necessary* for the happy life, challenged Stoics and Platonists alike, and in the generation after Diogenes we see Antipater, the next head of the Stoic school, arguing that Plato had already held the Stoic view that only the *kalon* (what is honourable in the Stoic sense, that is, virtue) is a genuine good.[1] Panaetius, reacting to Peripatetic and Platonic physics, came to have doubts about several key features of his school's providential cosmology (including the place of conflagration and divination in their view of the world)[2] and may even have reassessed key Stoic doctrines about the structure of the human soul – as his follower Posidonius certainly did.[3] Though later critics, such as Galen, no doubt overemphasized Posidonius' sympathy for Platonic psychology, the Aristotelian approach adopted by Posidonius in natural philosophy is vouched for by the Stoic sympathizer Strabo, who had no polemical axe to grind on the issue.[4]

Viewed broadly, there can be no doubt that from the time of Carneades onwards the debates among Stoics, Platonists and Aristotelians intensified and became one of the driving forces of philosophical activity. This is a pattern that persisted through to the third century CE, with the result that when we attempt to understand the emergence of key features of later ancient philosophy, especially in the badly documented period from about 100 BCE to 100 CE, it is always necessary to keep in mind this three-way debate among the major Socratic schools. A general awareness of the central Stoic doctrines developed in the Hellenistic period and their later development is critically important.

Throughout the Hellenistic period, the school's geographical and organizational centre had lain in Athens, although there was considerable and growing philosophical activity in a variety of cities in the eastern Mediterranean, with Rhodes becoming particularly important. This is not surprising, as the integrative effect of Macedonian, Seleucid and Ptolemaic political organization provided an environment conducive to the movement of intellectuals among cities and regions. The fact that the school's founders and early leaders came originally not from the Greek mainland but from Citium in eastern Cyprus, Assos and Soli in southern Asia Minor, and Aegean islands such as Chios surely encouraged this diffusion. But the centrality of the Athenian school came to a decisive end when the political and military upheavals of the early first century

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[1] We learn of this work, three books in length, from the report by Clement of Alexandria at *Strom.* 5.14 (= *SVF* 3 Antipater 56). Clement says that Antipater demonstrated that Plato held that virtue is sufficient for happiness.

[2] See, for example, D. L. 7.149 and Cicero *De divinatione* 1.6; on conflagration Stobaeus *Ecl.* 1.20, Cicero *De natura deorum* 2.118. For Panaetius' doctrines see van Straaten 1962, Alesse 1994.

[3] For the doctrines of Posidonius, see the comprehensive collection in Edelstein and Kidd 1972–89.

[4] Strabo 2.3.8 = T85 (Edelstein and Kidd).

BCE led to the conquest and sack of Athens. This disrupted the continuity of all the Athenian schools and accelerated the process of decentralization, both geographical and intellectual, which had already begun to develop in the late second century.[5]

Cicero's philosophical works give us a glimpse into the state of philosophy, at least in Rome, in the middle of the first century BCE. This is a convenient reference point for this discussion, for Cicero also provides the best evidence about Antiochus of Ascalon, the leading Academic philosopher of his day. Antiochus has often been seen as a key figure in the rise of Platonism (in contrast to the sceptical Academy of the Hellenistic period), but he is also a key figure for understanding the relationship of Stoicism and Platonism. For despite the ongoing controversy about his significance for the history of Platonism, there is no doubt that Antiochus was an Academic deeply influenced by many aspects of Stoicism (as well as by facets of Aristotelian philosophy). Antiochus had a particular view about the relationship of Stoicism to the legacy of Plato in the late fourth and early third centuries BCE and emphasized its debt to the Academy (as he also emphasized the debt of the Peripatetic school to the Academy) and attempted to minimize internal disagreements within the Platonic tradition as he understood it. As an allegedly 'pure Stoic' (*germanissimus Stoicus*, see *Lucullus* 132)[6] who claimed to represent the legacy of Plato in the first century BCE, Antiochus shines a spotlight on the various questions, historical and philosophical, about the relationship of the school of Zeno to Platonism and Aristotelianism which, though unresolvable, need to be kept in mind when considering the trajectory of later ancient philosophy.

Antiochus saw Stoicism as an offshoot of the genuine Platonic philosophy, committed to the central truths of the tradition as he understood them. This way of looking at the history of philosophy in the Hellenistic period certainly shaped his understanding of Plato's legacy. In ethics, for example, the Stoic version of eudaimonism became Antiochus' reference point and the Stoic theory of *oikeiōsis* became central to his conception of human nature and its relationship to moral ideals. To judge from our best source, *De finibus* 4–5, Antiochus also drew heavily on Peripatetic insights into human nature and development and no doubt found more room in his broadly Stoic account for theoretical wisdom as a fundamental human motivation than most Stoics would have done. He took

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[5] We do not hear about Alexandrian Stoics at this time, but the existence of flourishing schools on Rhodes in the late second century BCE is significant. See also Sedley 2003, esp. 26–7.

[6] Cicero's *Lucullus* is also referred to as book 2 of the *Academica*. It is the second book of Cicero's original two-book treatment of Academic Scepticism; *Academica* 1 refers to the surviving half of the first book of his second, four-book edition of the same material. The best starting point for the study of this work is Brittain 2006.

a special interest in the aspects of Platonism which early Stoicism shared with Plato's later dialogues, in particular the providential conception of god developed in the *Timaeus*. Emulation of a suitably conceived deity was a key part of most Hellenistic and later ethical ideals, and Antiochus naturally emphasized those parts of Stoicism which fit best with the aspects of Platonism that he saw as central or as most widely shared among the broader Platonic tradition. Hence he was inclined to dismiss as misguided several distinctively Stoic doctrines; these included the notion that only the *kalon* (that is, the virtues, especially moral virtues) is good (which the Stoic Antipater had already attempted to claim for Plato), the claim that all vices are equal, and the doctrine that passions should be radically eliminated rather than being tamed by reason. In physics, the materialism of the Stoics seems not to have disturbed Antiochus as much as one might have expected in a Platonist, and it is remarkably hard to find evidence that Antiochus embraced Plato's theory of separately existing Forms – which the Stoics, of course, had rejected.[7] Similarly, the distinctively Platonic theory of recollection, tied as it is to some form of reincarnation, is absent from Antiochus' doctrines, just as it is absent from Stoicism, where it seems to have been replaced by their theory of 'common notions'.[8]

Antiochus also worked to find common ground between Plato and the Stoics in the area of logic and dialectic, and in this area the rapprochement can only be described as forcible.[9] Stoic logic was claimed holus-bolus as a part of the Platonic system, although there is nothing in his corpus to suggest that he had, even *in nuce*, an anticipation of the Stoic theory of inference. As far as we can tell, Antiochus may also have appreciated Aristotle's complementary contributions to the study of logic, but it was Stoic theory which he claimed, quite groundlessly, for Plato.

Antiochus thus represents one extreme position on the question of how Stoicism relates to the development of later Platonism (and to a lesser extent later Aristotelianism). For him, the unity of Plato's tradition was so complete from the very beginning that its proper history simply subsumes most of Stoicism – there are several distinctively Stoic doctrines which need to be marginalized and explained away as deviations from the tradition, as is also the case with Aristotelianism, but essentially Stoicism is a part of Platonism. Anyone following in the footsteps of Antiochus (though we do not know much about such people in the history of later ancient philosophy) would be able to draw on Stoicism from within, as it were, to enrich the intellectual resources of the Platonic

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[7] See the succinct report at Aëtius 1.10.5: 'Zeno's followers, the Stoics, said that the Ideas are our own thoughts.' See also the summary view expressed in Barnes 1989: 95–6.

[8] On this, see Brittain 2005 and Sandbach 1971.

[9] For a full discussion of the treatments of logic in Cicero's *Academica*, see Barnes 1995, esp. 145.

tradition. Needless to say, this is not how the Stoics, even those most open to Platonism (such as the Roman Seneca), understood their relationship with Plato.

Plato's dialogues were vitally important for the development of Stoicism. Stoic theology and cosmology owe a great deal to the *Timaeus* and their political philosophy was forged partly in response to the *Republic*. Recent research has brought to light how crucial the *Sophist* was in the development of Stoic metaphysical theory,[10] and there is by now no serious doubt that even the early Stoics who partly defined themselves by rejection of key Platonic doctrines were heavily influenced by him, as well as by many other major developments in fourth-century philosophy (and indeed by many Presocratic thinkers also). However, in their own minds the Stoics were first and foremost Socratic philosophers and Plato (along with Xenophon)[11] was often seen primarily as a source for inspirational images of Socrates and information about Socratic beliefs. This is perhaps especially so for dialogues such as the *Phaedo*, the *Protagoras* and the *Gorgias*.

Although (or perhaps because) the Stoics saw themselves fundamentally as Socratic philosophers, they also acknowledged an important role for Cynicism in their history. As a consequence, if one looks at the history of the school from its own point of view rather than through the eyes of the harmonizing Antiochus of Ascalon, one has to acknowledge that several key aspects of Platonic and Aristotelian thought were flatly rejected by the Stoics. The incorporeality of the human soul, the separate existence of immaterial forms, significant partition of the soul into rational and irrational components, and the possibility of a priori knowledge activated by recollection were only some of the features of Platonism which virtually all Stoics rejected. With regard to Aristotle, the Stoics repudiated the concept of a non-providential deity, an unmoved mover, the eternity and unchangeability of the cosmos, and a sharp separation between sublunary and superlunary realms (and the existence of a fifth element that fit so well with that cosmological doctrine).

Moreover, the Stoics were certainly materialists of a sort, holding that only bodies could be causes or be subject to causation. Although they allowed for some incorporeals (place, void, time and 'sayables', as Long and Sedley[12] translate *lekta*), they denied that such things were entities or existent; they merely 'subsist'

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[10] The classic work on this point is Brunschwig 1988.

[11] Anecdote has it that Zeno was originally attracted to philosophy by hearing a reading of book 2 of the *Memorabilia* (D. L. 7.2). The popularity of Xenophon in the second century CE confirms the ongoing importance of this tendency to include Xenophon alongside Plato.

[12] In Long and Sedley 1987, perhaps the most influential collection of materials on Hellenistic Stoicism since von Arnim's epochal *Stoicorum veterum fragmenta*.

without playing a role in cause or explanation; the only existent things are bodies. Hence there was much in Platonism and Aristotelianism that the Stoics had to reject. At the same time, as Antiochus saw,[13] there was a very substantial body of shared theory in physics and ethics as well as in epistemology and in the theory and practice of dialectical argument.

At the end of the Hellenistic era, then, Stoicism could be and was seen in two quite different relationships to the two schools, Platonism and Aristotelianism, which would play the largest role in the development of later ancient philosophy. It was both a complementary partner in a single tradition and a competitor in every area of philosophy. And this duality of perspective persisted throughout the history of later ancient philosophy. The complexity of the historical and philosophical situation for *us* is increased by the fact that our evidence about Stoicism, both early and late, often comes from later Platonist and Aristotelian sources, each of which has its own view about the relationships between the schools. In what follows I will not even attempt to disentangle the problems this raises for our understanding of Stoicism; much of this is still highly controversial in the specialist literature. What I will do is to focus on Stoicism as it developed between the time of Antiochus and the third century CE, when our useful information about the school essentially ceases.[14] For a general view of Stoic doctrines readers should turn first to the relevant chapters in the *Cambridge History of Hellenistic Philosophy* and to the *Cambridge Companion to the Stoics*.

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In the years after the closure of the central school at Athens, Stoicism of course lived on. It seems, from the inadequate evidence available to us, that the continuity of the succession of school heads was broken, though eventually a new scholarch was appointed by Hadrian in the second century CE when imperially endowed chairs for all four major schools (Platonism, Aristotelianism, Stoicism and even Epicureanism) were established. It is quite likely, however, that schools and school property continued to have some legal status and protection under the Roman regime even before Hadrian's day, although there is no evidence that any of the trustees or supervisors who emerged were philosophically significant or functioned as intellectual leaders.[15] But this institutional collapse at Athens was not a disaster for the school, since regional centres of Stoicism continued to function – in Rhodes certainly and in southern Asia Minor, especially Tarsus – and Stoic philosophers continued to work outside the school

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[13] Our knowledge of Antiochus' view of physics is drawn mostly from Cicero's *Academica*.

[14] The history of the school in the early imperial period is told in more detail in Gill 2003.

[15] See Oliver 1977 and Oliver 1983. I thank Stephen Menn for the reference. The evidence is almost entirely epigraphical.

environment as well, supported either by their own wealth (like Seneca) or that of prosperous patrons (like Diodotus, supported by Cicero, or Arius Didymus, probably supported by Augustus).[16] Rome itself supported several philosophical establishments – Attalus' and Sotion's schools are mentioned by Seneca, and we know that at least one new philosophical sect inspired in part by Stoicism was founded, the short-lived Sextii.[17] Alexandria no doubt enjoyed a similarly robust intellectual life – as is shown by the emergence in this period of the Jewish philosopher Philo as well as pagans such as Eudorus. The situation in provincial centres of the western provinces is not clear for this period, but the major cities of the Greek-speaking eastern provinces certainly supported philosophical writers and lecturers of all school affiliations. The school which Epictetus founded in Nicopolis in north-west Greece after he left Rome may have been unusual for its success and influence, but it was probably typical in the way it ran. If we are to think of Athens as eventually experiencing a philosophical 'revival' in the second century CE, it was certainly not a matter of restarting dead traditions. The continued presence and importance of philosophical schools, including Stoic schools, all over the Greco-Roman world can be taken for granted.

What this means in practical terms is that in any significant city some version of Stoicism was probably being taught and philosophical treatises on all aspects of Stoicism were being written in many parts of the Empire. We know quite a bit more about Platonists from this period, if only because their followers in late antiquity preserve the information for us. Less is known about Stoic philosophers. Nevertheless, this was a culture which could produce writers like Philopator (who wrote on physics in the early second century CE),[18] the little known Heraclides,[19] Hierocles (author of a *Foundations of Ethics* in the second century CE) and Cleomedes (author of a substantial work on Stoic astronomical theory, in the later first or – more probably – second century CE), none of whom worked in a major centre of learning. It is clear, then, that in this period serious Stoic philosophy was still a significant force in philosophical life, despite the apparent collapse of the leading school at Athens. Writers of the period, such as Plutarch and Galen, often direct their polemical criticism against Chrysippus, but we should not conclude from this that only Hellenistic Stoicism influenced the intellectuals of the imperial period. Quite the opposite: Stoic teachers and writers were, in effect, everywhere and for centuries they will have provided the contemporary and living framework that shaped the way later critics understood

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[16] See Donini 1982: ch. 2.1.   [17] See Inwood 2005: ch. 1.   [18] See Bobzien 1998: 368.

[19] Heraclides the Stoic is mentioned by Alexander of Aphrodisias as having attacked the doctrine of the fifth element (fr. 2, ll.1–4 Vitelli). I thank Inna Kupreeva for this reference. Text in Vitelli 1895, 1902 and translated in Sharples 1994: 89–94.

the Hellenistic school.[20] Alexander of Aphrodisias may well be one of our best sources for *early* Stoic doctrines about determinism, but the Stoic he attacked by name (and so presumably read and learned from) was a relatively recent figure, Philopator. The amount and quality of professional and even technical Stoic teaching and writing in the centuries between Antiochus and Porphyry should not be underestimated.

Our knowledge of the history of later Stoicism is impeded by the incompleteness of book 7 of Diogenes Laërtius' *Lives and Opinions of Famous Philosophers*. Our text ends with the biography of Chrysippus and the extensive catalogue of his works, but an index of more of its original contents is preserved in one manuscript.[21] Here the list of Stoics included in book 7 is as follows: Zeno, Cleanthes, Chrysippus, Zeno of Tarsus, Diogenes, Apollodorus, Boethus, Mnesarchides, Mnasagoras, Nestor, Basilides, Dardanus, Antipater, Heraclides, Sosigenes, Panaetius, Hecaton, Posidonius, Athenodorus, another Athenodorus, Antipater, Arius, Cornutus.

Not all of these Stoic teachers are identifiable with certainty, but there is no doubt that the last figure in this list, Cornutus, was the relative of Seneca who worked in Rome in the mid first century CE. Similarly certain is the fact that at least one of the two philosophers from Tarsus named Athenodorus was an adviser to Augustus as well as an active philosophical writer. Whether the Arius listed here is in fact the Arius Didymus who was also attached to Augustus' household and wrote extensively on the views of Stoic and other schools is not quite so certain, but seems on balance very likely.[22] It is also worth noting that this list omits several minor Stoics whom we know to have been included in book 7 (Ariston of Chios, Herillus, Dionysius and Sphaerus, all students of Zeno), so no doubt Diogenes Laërtius' list of significant Stoics understates the level of philosophical activity down to the mid first century CE. Since we know of active and creative philosophical work done by Stoics in the second century as well, it is clear that we have to assume that at least down to the time of Plotinus and Alexander of Aphrodisias and perhaps beyond Stoics made substantial contributions to the philosophical scene throughout the ancient world. Philosophers engaged in anti-Stoic polemic or who learned from Stoics should not be thought of as having had to reach back in time to the early school.

As we have seen, from the second century BCE onwards Stoic philosophers intensified their interaction with Platonists and Aristotelians in a way that enriched the intellectual life of the school. At the same time, and continuing

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[20] Non-philosophical literature of the second century CE confirms this general picture. Aulus Gellius treats Stoic philosophers as part of the intellectual landscape of Athens in his day and there are abundant references to their presence at Rome throughout this period.
[21] See Marcovich 1999: 2.   [22] See Sedley 2003, esp. 31–2.

through the early centuries of our era, Stoics continued to be in active debate with other schools, with Sceptics of both schools (Academic and Pyrrhonian), with Neopythagoreans, and even more closely with Cynics – although most Stoics surely reacted to their behavioural extravagances[23] with the same qualified disapproval that we see in Epictetus. In the first century CE, if we are to judge by Musonius (whose reaction to Plato is palpable),[24] Epictetus (whom A. A. Long[25] has now shown to be preoccupied with a Socratic heritage that he takes largely from his reading of Plato) and Seneca, Stoicism embraced its Platonic origins with a new open-mindedness.

Seneca is perhaps the clearest example of this. In many respects, such as the denial of separate forms, and of pre-existence of the soul, along with a certain naturalism in ethics and epistemology, Stoicism often seems more akin to Aristotle's school than to Plato's. No doubt this is because both Aristotle and the early Stoics, like many early Academics, found reason to reject Plato's embrace of realities which transcend the physical world and the kind of psychology and epistemology which naturally accompanies a Platonic metaphysics.[26] Nevertheless, perhaps because of a renewed appreciation for the central importance of the providential theology which the Stoics shared with Plato, for Seneca the Peripatetics became the principal opponents in ethics. It is a matter for debate whether Platonist ethics was on balance closer to Stoicism than Aristotelian ethics,[27] but in works like the *De ira* Peripatetic *metriopatheia* is the enemy rather than Platonist dualism. Seneca's relative willingness to import attitudes and inclinations from Platonism rather than Aristotelianism is striking.

But the dismal condition of our sources for Stoic philosophical activity in the early centuries CE is still a serious impediment to developing a detailed picture of the contemporary doctrines to which Platonists and others reacted. The Stoics of this period whose works we know best include a number who

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[23] Seneca and Epictetus, among others, indicate that contemporary Cynics preferred an unwashed, unkempt personal style, outlandish freedom of speech, and strong, anti-bourgeois doctrines especially on matters of wealth and luxury.

[24] A number of Musonius' diatribes deal with issues that arose prominently in the *Republic*, such as the education of women, the suitability of women for philosophy, the subordinate relationship of the citizen to the state and the importance of unity in a polity.

[25] Long 2002.

[26] Like Aristotle, Stoics were inclined to hold that human beings learn even the most abstract concepts by abstraction from sensory experience and that the human soul does not pre-exist a particular human incarnation. On matters of the unity or partedness of the soul and how a human soul relates to the body it accompanies, Stoic and Aristotelian theories diverge; but neither is inclined to the body-soul dualism standardly associated with Plato's thought in the ancient world.

[27] Stoic eudaimonism seems more clearly Aristotelian in its formulation, and yet the Socratic commitments of Stoicism do draw them closer to many aspects of Platonic ethics. The web of relationships among the three schools in the Hellenistic and imperial periods is complicated and there is no single axis of comparison on which we can situate the Stoics closer to one school than the other.

seem to have provoked relatively little reaction. Musonius Rufus, for example, an Etruscan with the standing of a Roman *eques*, wrote on ethical topics from an unmistakably Stoic point of view, but seems to have had little influence outside his own school until Stobaeus chose to include extracts in his anthology. (He was, however, an important influence on Epictetus, who quotes from him and refers to him.) Likewise, Seneca himself seems to have had virtually no impact on authors who wrote in Greek, and it remains a difficult task to ascertain the nature and degree of his impact on Latin philosophers of later centuries such as Calcidius, Augustine and Boethius. (His importance for Latin Christian writers seems to be extrinsic, based primarily on the acceptance of the biographical fiction that he was in communication with St Paul.) The emperor Marcus Aurelius, who bulks large for us in our picture of later Stoicism, seems to have been virtually unknown to the philosophical tradition of late antiquity. The more specialized writers about whom we know a reasonable amount (Cornutus, Philopator, Cleomedes, Hierocles) do not seem to have been particularly influential in non-Stoic philosophical circles – with the exception of Alexander's critique of Philopator.

The major exception to this pattern is Epictetus, the Stoic teacher who began as a slave at the court of Nero and became a teacher of Stoic philosophy in his own school. Forced out of Rome along with many other philosophers in the Flavian period, he established his school in Nicopolis, an important port city in western Greece. There he lectured both to specialist classes and to a wider public. His teaching seems to have been exclusively oral, but his student Arrian, a Roman aristocrat, published versions of his formal and informal lectures; these concentrated largely on ethics, but did not exclude relevant aspects of physics and logic. Epictetus' influence was enormous and extended far beyond the Stoic school. Platonists in particular seem to have taken notice of Epictetus, and Simplicius later devoted a lengthy commentary to the *Handbook* which was compiled from Epictetus' works.[28] The widespread popularity of Epictetus in his own lifetime and especially in the rest of the second century CE contributed significantly to the shaping of a diffuse, almost generic conception of the 'philosopher' which transcended school boundaries. As is visible especially in the philosophical diaries of Marcus Aurelius, whose enthusiasm for Epictetus was boundless, the ideal of the philosopher or the philosophical teacher did not need to be constrained by the particular doctrines of any given school – in book 1 of his diary Marcus thanks Platonists, including Sextus, a grandson of Plutarch, along with Stoics and others. Platonism and Stoicism were the two

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[28] *Simplicius: On Epictetus' Handbook* is available in an English translation (Brittain and Brennan 2002). There is a splendid critical edition by Ilsetraut Hadot (Hadot 1996).

most important contributors to this generous, almost ecumenical conception of philosophy,[29] though Pythagoreanism and Cynicism also played a role. The fact that this generic notion of the philosopher was particularly important outside professional circles is not surprising. But as other competing ideals for self-consciously reformist ways of life emerged (we should think here especially of the ideals of the growing Christian communities of the early Empire) it became both important and natural that a sense of the shared legacy of Greek philosophy should develop as an ideological competitor to new religious ideals. Stoicism, especially as represented by Epictetus, contributed substantially to that general pagan conception of 'the philosopher'.

Another influential lecturer who contributed to the general awareness of Stoicism in the early Empire was Dio Chrysostom. It is difficult to classify him as a Stoic in the narrow institutional sense, but his discourses, particularly those on social and political topics, were heavily shaped by Stoic themes and doctrines.

A less direct path of Stoic influence on later ancient philosophy originates with Philo of Alexandria. A Jewish philosopher who worked in Alexandria in the Julio-Claudian period, he reacted primarily to Platonism (which he may have known in the distinctive form associated with his older compatriot Eudorus, who was himself aware of and open to ideas derived from Stoicism) as he developed his distinctive mode of philosophical exegesis of the Jewish scriptures. But at the same time, many aspects of his work show clear signs of Stoic influence. It is difficult, perhaps impossible, to determine how much Stoic doctrine came to him directly from Stoic sources and how much he absorbed along with the Platonist teaching and reading that shaped his thought. But either way, Philo was an important direct and indirect influence on many later thinkers – the indirect influence being by way of Clement of Alexandria, who of course had abundant direct access to Stoic thought. Philo and Clement, Jew and Christian, both assimilated considerable amounts of Stoic philosophy and by their example of openness to and engagement with that tradition they passed on a great deal of Stoicism in a form from which later ancient philosophers could learn.

The importance of Stoicism for later ancient philosophers is difficult to assess with confidence, in part because the philosophical works in Greek of the most influential Stoics have been lost; in fact, it is precisely the interest of non-Stoic philosophers of later antiquity which makes possible much of our knowledge

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[29] One would like to know more about what Porphyry meant when he referred to a certain Tryphon as a 'Stoic and Platonist' (*Life of Plotinus* 17), but on its own the remark indicates the persistent sense that Stoicism and Platonism shared a great deal and could be thought of as compatible at some, presumably fairly deep level.

of Stoic thought. Four philosophers deserve particular attention as indicators of the level and type of engagement with Stoicism in our period. First and foremost among these is the Platonist Plutarch of Chaeronea, whose *Moralia* include several major works written with Stoicism in mind as the primary opponent. A partial list includes *De communibus notitiis*, *De Stoicorum repugnantiis*, *De virtute morali*, and *De tranquillitate animi*. Beyond these, we need only note that the standard collection of evidence for early Stoicism, von Arnim's *Stoicorum veterum fragmenta*, lists more than thirty-five works by Plutarch (not including his biographies) as sources.

Second, we return to Alexander of Aphrodisias, the greatest and most influential interpreter of Aristotelian philosophy in antiquity. The entire discourse entitled *On Fate*, a public address for the emperor, is motivated by his disagreement with Stoic determinism;[30] we have alluded to this work already as evidence for Stoic philosophical activity in the early centuries CE, since it is clearly aimed in part at a version of Stoicism associated with Philopator who probably worked in the second century CE. But Alexander also devoted a special treatise to the nitty gritty of the Stoic theory of matter, the *On Mixture*.[31] This is an invaluable source for the reconstruction of Stoic doctrine, but it also reveals that in Alexander's day a serious natural philosopher still had to engage with Stoic materialism on its own terms. As subsequent chapters of this book will show, as late as Porphyry and Simplicius parts of Stoicism provide important competition for what had become the main stream of ancient philosophy. In ethics[32] and logic as well Alexander's works show the ongoing importance of Stoic doctrine. The various essays in the *Quaestiones* often tackle Stoic issues, as does the *Mantissa*; von Arnim lists dozens of passages from Alexander's commentaries on the *Analytics* and *Topics* as sources for Stoicism. In no part of his philosophical work did Alexander ever set aside Stoic doctrine. Even if only to be rejected, it was always taken into account.

The philosophical doctor Galen, whose sympathies were unmistakably Platonic but whose doctrinal commitments often reveal a refreshing open-mindedness, provides yet another index of Stoicism's ongoing vitality in later ancient philosophy. Most familiar is his massive work *On the Doctrines of Plato and Hippocrates*, extensive parts of which (especially books 3–5) are little more than anti-Stoic argumentation. No history of Stoic psychology or ethics, no account of Posidonius or Chrysippus, could begin to be written without Galen. But many other aspects of Stoicism are also worked into dozens of Galen's works – citations from Galen bulk almost as large as those from Plutarch in the index to

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[30] See Sharples 1983.   [31] See Todd 1976.
[32] There is an excellent translation with notes in Sharples 1990.

von Arnim. Stoic metaphysics and theory of matter are matters of grave concern in the *On Incorporeal Qualities*, just as they were for Alexander in his *On Mixture*.

Finally, although it is not so clearly recognizable nor so significant for our understanding of Stoicism, the *Handbook of Platonic Philosophy* compiled by Alcinous is perhaps even more clearly indicative of the pervasive influence of Stoic thought in the centuries during which the foundations for later ancient philosophy were being laid. Anyone reading through the *Handbook*, especially with the assistance of John Dillon's excellent commentary,[33] cannot fail to see how thoroughly but subtly key aspects of Stoicism are woven into its contents: some in epistemology, some in ethics, some in physics, a great deal in logic and theology. There is also much in this fascinating pedagogical treatise which presupposes reliance on Peripatetic doctrines and Alcinous' openness to certain Pythagoreanizing tendencies and even some non-Greek doctrines are noteworthy, perhaps even typical of the Platonism of his day and later. With regard to Stoicism, though, what ought to draw our attention is that the author seems unaware of (or at least not interested in) the features of his work that came from that source. Whereas Plutarch, Galen and Alexander take aim at Stoic doctrines and argue against Stoic opponents, both contemporary and historical, Alcinous is perhaps more representative of philosophical teachers in his day. That the common conceptions, the physical immanence of *logos* in the world, the creative power of a distinctive kind of fire, the salience of determinism as an issue, or the particulars of a providential and demiurgic god might have come from a Stoic source is not of interest to him; indeed, he is perhaps not even aware of the Stoic origins. He sees these doctrines quite straightforwardly as being part of Plato's intellectual legacy and so as part of the truth.

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Stoicism as an intellectual system sprang ultimately from the very sources which inspired the Platonists and Aristotelians of later antiquity. During most of the Hellenistic period it carried forward the Platonic and Aristotelian philosophical projects in a distinctive new way and so altered the menu of philosophical possibilities that were available when later ancient philosophers revivified what they thought of as the legacy of Plato and Aristotle. At the same time, Stoicism itself was inevitably affected in the later Hellenistic and early imperial periods by the nascent revival of Platonism and the gradual revitalization of Aristotelianism. Eventually, the revival of those schools eclipsed Stoicism, which was already in a process of decline when Plotinus responded to, learned from, and ultimately

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[33] Dillon 1993.

argued against so many aspects of it.[34] One result of that decline is that it is impossible to reconstruct Stoicism independently of the evidence provided by the complex reception of it in late antiquity. There is always, then, a risk of some circularity if one attempts to provide an account of the reaction of some later thinker to Stoicism when the work of that later thinker is inevitably part of the evidence we use to reconstruct Stoicism. The best solution we have is to work on a case-by-case basis to develop a deeper scholarly understanding of those later texts we use; for that is ultimately the only method which will yield durable results. For most later ancient philosophers, the demanding detailed work that needs to be done is under way, but far from complete. In this rapid sketch of the history of Stoicism in the relevant period I have been most concerned to encourage an awareness of how widespread, well rounded and vital Stoicism remained in the period between the dissolution of the Athenian school and the early years of the third century CE. This will inevitably complicate the history of the period – something we are already accustomed to when considering 'middle Platonism' – but it will also, I hope, encourage a view of how philosophical debate and interchange proceeded in the early centuries CE. There was, I suggest, far more live (and lively) debate and far less reliance on texts that were already centuries old. This is not, of course, to deny that over time the basic mode of philosophical activity became bookish, focusing on the philosophical exegesis of the masterworks of times gone by as the commonest vehicle for intellectual expression. But if it ever came to pass that philosophy ceased to rely substantially on live, face-to-face debate between proponents of different traditions and on polemical exchanges between contemporary authors whose main mission was to establish their own views over those of their misguided competitors (a sad development if it ever came), it should be clear that this final turn to bookishness was taken long after the period under consideration here. The story of engagement between Stoicism and the revived schools of Plato and Aristotle was to the end, I maintain, a real-life story of living debate. Perhaps, indeed, it was only when there were no longer any Stoics and Aristotelians around as living interlocutors that the final, most bookish but ultimately inward-looking phase of pagan philosophy began. No wonder, then, that in the end they found new interlocutors among the newly empowered Christian intellectuals of the late Empire. No philosophical school can thrive without an opponent to debate, and when Platonism's victory over all other pagan schools was complete, there was no place else to turn.

[34] See Graeser 1972.

8

PERIPATETICS

ROBERT W. SHARPLES

Knowledge of Peripatetic[1] philosophy between 100 BCE and 200 CE has both increased and become more accessible in the last forty years. The three volumes of Moraux's magisterial *Der Aristotelismus bei den Griechen* appeared in 1973, 1984 and (posthumously) in 2001. Those writings of Alexander of Aphrodisias that survive only in Arabic, and which provide information not only about Alexander but in many cases about his predecessors too, have become more easily available in translations into European languages,[2] and some of the works that survive in Greek are now available in annotated English translations.[3] Fragments of Alexander's *Physics* commentary have been identified in scholia in a Paris MS[4] and have provided further evidence, if such were needed, of the tendentiousness with which Simplicius treated the earlier commentator.[5] Fragments of a previously unknown commentary on the *Categories* have been identified in the Archimedes palimpsest.[6] An inscription has given us Alexander's full name as a Roman citizen – Titus Aurelius Alexander – and the first solid evidence that the teaching post to which he was appointed by the emperors[7] was indeed located

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[1] I use this term rather than 'Aristotelian', because the latter is ambiguous between views in the Aristotelian tradition and the views of Aristotle himself. The distinction is indeed one which would not have been accepted by the Peripatetics of our period, who saw themselves as spelling out Aristotle's views even when the result was at best only implicit in his writings and was sometimes arguably a misinterpretation.

[2] To mention just some examples, *On the Principles of the Universe* in Genequand 2001; *On Providence* in Ruland 1976 and in Fazzo and Zonta 1998; two, or possibly three, treatises *On the Differentia* in Rashed 2007a; fragments of the commentary on *On Coming-to-Be and Passing Away* 2 in Gannagé 2005.

[3] Notably, in the *Ancient Commentators on Aristotle* series edited by Richard Sorabji.

[4] Rashed 2010.   [5] Rashed 1997, esp. 186.

[6] See, at the time of writing, http://www.archimedespalimpsest.org/ From internal evidence the commentary, as Marwan Rashed has noted, appears not to be by a Platonist. It may be a fragment of the commentary by Alexander of Aphrodisias, lost except for reports in later sources, but at the time of writing this is uncertain.

[7] The treatise *On Fate* is dedicated to Septimius Severus and Caracalla in gratitude for this, but does not give the location.

in Athens, and that he used the title 'successor' (of Aristotle).[8] It has become increasingly clear that debates among Peripatetics in our period are significant not only as the background against which later Platonists were subsequently to read Aristotle's works, but also in highlighting issues in the interpretation of Aristotle for contemporary scholarship. Some long-standing errors, such as the attribution to Aristocles of a pantheistic theory of intellect which in fact has nothing to do with him, have been laid to rest.[9]

Aristotle's immediate colleagues and successors in the Lyceum in the fourth and third centuries BCE were 'Peripatetics' in the sense that they contributed to and continued Aristotle's approach to inquiry, without accepting all of Aristotle's views or devoting attention equally to all the areas with which he himself was concerned. However, although Theophrastus and Eudemus produced works of their own with titles similar to and covering areas similar to some of Aristotle's own, they do not seem to have regarded Aristotle's own writings as in any sense canonical.[10] That was to come later, as part of a general trend in later ancient Greek culture generally and in philosophy in particular.[11]

From the first century BCE onwards Aristotle's 'esoteric' or unpublished works – those which we still possess[12] – became a focus of interpretation and debate, and not only among those who regarded themselves as Peripatetics. In the Hellenistic period, and even for Cicero, Aristotle was known primarily by his 'exoteric' or published works, of which we now possess only fragments, and through the medium of more or less (often less) accurate summaries in reference books. Ancient sources inform us that the change was due to the rediscovery of the esoteric works which had previously been lost, and that at some point in the first century BCE Andronicus of Rhodes produced a new edition of them. The first claim seems highly questionable – it may rather be that the difficulty and unattractiveness of the esoteric works had caused them to be neglected[13] – and the second seems to be a half-truth, in that while Andronicus seems to have

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[8] See Fazzo 2005: 283–95; Sharples 2005b and further references there.   [9] Below, n. 51.

[10] Eudemus may be the partial exception; his *Physics* was a reworking of Aristotle's own treatise to improve its organization and accessibility (see Sharples 2002c). But even here what was 'canonical' may have been not so much Aristotle's text as the area of inquiry he defined.

[11] See Frede 1999.

[12] 'Esoteric' refers to their being intended for use within the Lyceum, and not to any notion of arcane or hidden wisdom – though later ancient commentators did regularly explain the difficulties of the text as indicating a desire to exclude the ignorant.

[13] The Aristotelian tradition had also been anomalous from the start in seeing different areas of inquiry as relatively independent and as important for their own sake, rather than regarding ethics and how to live as the central concern of philosophy. The biological inquiries of Aristotle and Theophrastus were rapidly transformed into quarries for information of an essentially literary nature; see Lennox 1994 and Sharples 1995: 34–7. Andronicus' date is disputed; see Barnes 1997: 21–3, favouring a date later rather than earlier in the first century BCE.

established a list and order of Aristotle's works (one that did indeed undergo subsequent modification and debate) there is little evidence that he stabilized a canonical text in terms of selection between variant readings.[14]

Already in the Hellenistic period Peripatetics were responding to issues raised by the new philosophical schools, and in the process developing distinctive positions on a range of topics. Even Lyco, the fourth head of the Lyceum, commonly dismissed as more concerned with partying than with philosophy (Lyco, fr. 8 Stork 2004), sought a formulation of the goal of life in contrast to those of the Stoics and Epicureans;[15] and Critolaus in the second century BCE adopted a range of positions directly opposed to some of the most distinctive Stoic views[16] – bodily and external goods are not just necessary for happiness (which the Stoics denied) but are actually *parts* of it,[17] though goods of the soul far outweigh them (Critolaus fr. 21 Wehrli 1969); divine providence governs the heavens, but does not extend to the terrestrial region[18] (for the Stoics it governs the entire world); the world is eternal (Critolaus frs. 12 and 13; for orthodox Stoics, at least, it was converted to divine fire in the periodic conflagration); the soul is immortal (Critolaus fr. 17; for the Stoics the souls of the virtuous survive the death of the body longer than others, but not beyond the next conflagration); the Stoic distinction between fear (a *pathos* or bad 'passion') and 'caution' (a *eupatheia* or 'good passion') is to be rejected (Critolaus fr. 24).

Hellenistic accounts of Aristotle's views on the nature of soul sometimes (Aëtius 4.2.6) repeat his formal definition (*De anima* 2.1, 412a27–b1), though one may wonder with how much understanding; more often they regard the soul in un-Aristotelian corporeal terms, influenced possibly by Aristotle's exoteric works but also by the analogy between *pneuma* and the substance of the heavens in *GA* 2.3, 736b38 and by the role of *pneuma* in contemporary medical theories.[19] Cratippus, who taught Cicero's son in Athens in 45–44 BCE and was described by Cicero as the chief of all the Peripatetics he had ever heard,[20] explained divination by holding that the human mind comes in part from the divine mind outside (possibly, as Moraux 1973: 231 suggested, an allusion to

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[14] See Barnes 1997: 28–31.   [15] White 2004.   [16] See Sharples 2006: 323–4.
[17] Stob. *Ecl.* 2.7.3b, 46.10–17 Wachsmuth = Critolaus, fr. 19 Wehrli 1969; Clem. *Strom.* 2.21, 129.10 = Critolaus, fr. 20. Similarly the summary of Aristotle's views in D. L. 5.30, which in various respects seems to have close affinities with the thought of Critolaus.
[18] Critolaus fr. 15. Cf. D. L. 5.32 (who denies providence for the sublunary region, but says that it is governed by *sympathy* with the heavens).
[19] Tert. *An.* 5.2 (= Critolaus, fr. 17); Cic. *Ac.* 1.26, *Tusc.* 1.22, 1.65–6; Macr. *Somn. Scip.* 1.14.20 (Critolaus, fr. 18). Cf. Moraux 1963: 1206 and 1229–30; Easterling 1964; Gottschalk 1980: 106–7; Mueller 1994: 154. See Sharples (forthcoming).
[20] Cic. *Tim.* 1; similarly, but of philosophers generally and not just Peripatetics, *Off.* 1.2, 3.5. Gottschalk 1987: 1096 and n. 88.

GA 2.3, 736b27–8, a passage that will concern us later) and that its purely intellectual functioning is most effective when apart from the body.[21]

Antiochus of Ascalon (c. 130–69/68 BCE), who claimed to be reviving the genuine Platonic tradition but 'if one changed a few things, was a most genuine Stoic' (Cicero, *Ac.* 2.132), regarded Plato and his immediate successors, Aristotle and his Peripatetic followers, and the Stoics as sharing in a common tradition, though criticizing the Peripatetics for weakening this tradition (Cicero, *Ac.* 1.33–4). Antiochus' view, previously denounced for syncretism and compromise,[22] is not implausible from his own perspective; Platonists, Peripatetics and Stoics *did* have much in common – belief in the possibility of achieving knowledge, belief in a single world more or less completely governed by divine providence, and belief that the goal of life had virtue as at least its most important part, rather than pleasure – especially when contrasted with Sceptics (on the first point) and Epicureans (on the second and third). Antiochus did not regard himself as a Peripatetic; but his most distinctive ethical doctrine, that virtue is sufficient for happiness but bodily and external goods make one even happier, can be seen, whether by coincidence or not, as implied by Aristotle's use of the terms 'happiness' and 'blessedness' (if we do not regard these as mere stylistic variants) in *EN* 1.10, 1101a6–8.[23] (Aristotle also seems to allow, at 1.9, 1109b26, that blessedness may admit of degrees; on this passage see further below.) And two of Antiochus' pupils, Cratippus and Ariston of Alexandria, left his school and became Peripatetics, possibly responding to the Peripatetic elements already present in Antiochus' synthesis.[24]

The Stoics accounted for the natural behaviour of animals and the ethical development of human beings by the principle of *oikeiōsis* or 'appropriation',[25] the process by which we come to recognize certain things as ones for which we have an affinity – initially our own selves, then bodily and external 'goods' (in Stoic terms, 'preferred indifferents') and other human beings more and then less closely connected with us, and eventually right reason and virtue (which in Stoic terms are synonymous). Attempts have been made in the past to argue that the early Stoics derived this doctrine from Aristotle's immediate followers, but it seems clear that, even though occasional references to what is 'appropriate' do occur in their writings, they do not have the same significance in terms of a central ethical and psychological doctrine that *oikeiōsis* came to have for the Stoics.

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[21] Cic. *Div.* 1.70. Cf. Moraux 1973: 229–56; Sharples 2001: 169–71.
[22] 'More like an arbitrator in an industrial dispute than a true philosopher', Dillon 1977: 74.
[23] Annas 1993: 415–18.   [24] Karamanolis 2006: 81.
[25] It is significant, and depressing, that contemporary English has the term 'alienation' but nothing in common usage to express its opposite.

Stobaeus' anthology preserves, in its second book, three summaries of ethical doctrines; the first ('Doxography A') thematic and not confined to a specific school, the second ('Doxography B') Stoic and the third ('Doxography C') announcing itself as Aristotelian. Doxography C, or at least part of it, can be connected via a parallel later in Stobaeus with an author named Didymus. Eusebius refers to a philosophical writer named Arius Didymus; and on the strength of this both Doxography B and Doxography C, which may indeed be by the same author, or rather compiler, have been attributed to a (Stoic) courtier of the emperor Augustus named Arius.[26] Doxography C presents Aristotelian ethics in a way that is influenced by Stoicism both in terminology and in approach. It begins with material on the link between 'ethics' and 'habit' and the parts of the soul which echoes Aristotle closely enough, but then proceeds to an exposition of *oikeiōsis* which puts the Stoic doctrine in a distinctively Peripatetic dress, distinguishing between *oikeiōsis* to the body and to the soul,[27] and speaking of appropriate selection not among indifferents, as in Stoicism, but among the three types of goods and evils, those of the soul, those of the body, and those that are external. The approach to moral virtue familiar from Aristotle's own writings, in terms of a mean disposition in respect of affections in the irrational soul, appears only much later in the discussion (Stobaeus, *Ecl.* 2.7.20, 137.14ff. Wachsmuth), and does so in a way that, like much else in Doxography C, is closer to the *Magna Moralia* (1.5) and the *Eudemian Ethics* than to the *Nicomachean*. Against Critolaus, both Doxography A (Stob. *Ecl.* 2.7.3b, 46.10–17) and Doxography C (Stob. *Ecl.* 2.7.14, 126.18–127.2; 2.7.17, 129.19–130.12) insist that bodily and external goods are not *parts* of happiness, but *instruments* that are used in virtuous action; they also deny that virtue alone is sufficient for happiness, and do not observe the distinction between happiness and blessedness that makes it possible to argue that virtue is sufficient for the former though not for the latter (Stob. *Ecl.* 2.7.3d, 48.6–11; 2.7.18, 132.8–12 and 133.7–134.1).

The concluding section of Doxography C, on economics and politics, follows the theoretical parts of Aristotle's *Politics* (and not the *Economics*) relatively closely, though in a very abbreviated form. The list of causes of civil strife (151.9–13), which partly reflects *Pol.* 5.2, classifies the causes under *logos* – reason, or perhaps proportion, since what is at issue, as in *Pol.* 5.2, 1302a24–31, is unfair distribution of goods – and *pathos*, which here seems to have a wider sense

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[26] The identification, and a date as early as the first century BCE for Antiochus, have both been questioned by Göransson 1995.

[27] Which, as Inwood 1983: 192–3 notes, was characteristic of Antiochus and used by him, and others, to criticize the Stoic doctrine of virtue for neglecting the body in favour of the soul.

than just 'emotion', including honour, love of power, profit and wealth.[28] The political section follows Aristotle so closely that it gives little indication that political systems had changed since the fourth century BCE.

The discussion of *oikeiōsis* seems to combine material from Antiochus with a more strictly Peripatetic source or sources.[29] Phrases from Aristotle's ethical works are quoted in Doxography C, and in the latter, more Aristotelian part it is possible to identify which treatise is being followed, directly or indirectly, at specific points; but even if Arius consulted Aristotle's own works directly, it appears that he did not regard them as his primary source, however strange this may seem to us, and that he drew primarily on late Hellenistic Peripatetic sources.[30] Hahm has noted the way in which both Doxography B and Doxography C use classification or division as a means of evaluative analysis and exposition;[31] the Aristotelian ideas are there, but one has the impression that they are struggling to be heard through a manner of exposition which is that of the text-book and is not suited to the development of complex arguments. Also attributed to Arius Didymus are a series of reports in Stobaeus' first book on physical, metaphysical and psychological doctrines in Plato, Aristotle and the Stoics;[32] here, while some of the Aristotelian reports are typical doxographical summaries, others appear to make first-hand use of the esoteric works and in particular the *Meteorology*.[33]

A later essay by Alexander reports and criticizes various attempts to state what according to Aristotle is 'the first appropriate thing' for us – in other words, to give Aristotle's answer to a question posed in Hellenistic philosophy. The Epicureans said that it was pleasure; the Stoics that it was ourselves – i.e., that the primary animal instinct is for self-preservation – and Alexander reports that the same view was attributed to Aristotle by Xenarchus and by Andronicus' pupil Boethus, both in the second half of the first century BCE. They, according to Alexander, supported this view by appealing to passages from the *Nicomachean Ethics* which do not actually seem to support their case

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[28] It may indeed be that the emotional aspect was originally explicit in all four cases, not just the second, and that a second stage of summarizing (by Stobaeus?) has obscured this.

[29] Inwood 1983: 193.   [30] Cf. Moraux 1973: 435–6; Gottschalk 1987: 1128–9.

[31] Hahm 1983, esp. 25.

[32] The one passage on Plato and one of those on the Stoics (Arius fr. phys. 36 Diels) correspond (in the latter case only partially, but cf. Mansfeld and Runia 1997: 261–2) with material attributed, respectively, to Didymus and to Arius Didymus by Eusebius. See Mansfeld and Runia 1997: 238–65, who accept the Aristotelian material too as coming from the same source, and indeed, in revising Diels' division of material in Stobaeus between Aëtius and Arius Didymus as sources, transfer (249–57, especially 253) six more fragments on Aristotle from the former to the latter.

[33] Diels 1879: 75, 77; Gottschalk 1987: 1126. However, Mansfeld and Runia 1997: 245 n. 154 indicate that the question requires further examination.

all that well.[34] Doxography C in Stobaeus says (*Ecl.* 2.7.13, 118.11–17) that our initial appetition is for being, and hence for what is natural, giving the examples of health, pleasure and life. Sosicrates (either a pupil of the Academic Sceptic Carneades, or a writer of philosophical 'successions') and Verginius Rufus (possibly the guardian of the younger Pliny, and, significantly, someone with a *Roman* rather than a Greek or partly Greek name) argued rather more plausibly that 'the first appropriate thing' according to Aristotle was perfection and actuality, identified as unhindered activity (Alex. *Mant.* 17.151.30–152.10).

Xenarchus is, however, chiefly notable for his arguments against the Aristotelian doctrine that the heavens are made from a body distinct from the four simple bodies found in the region extending from the earth to the moon: earth, water, air and fire. This view was unique to Aristotle and (probably) Theophrastus; it was not shared either by the Platonists or by the Stoics, and had already been rejected by the third head of Aristotle's school, Strato.

Chrysippus, the third head of the Stoic school, had interpreted 'passions' – extreme or undesirable emotions – as mistaken judgements. Anger, for example, is the mistaken belief that someone has caused harm – mistaken, because for the Stoics the only bad thing is wickedness, and no one else can make one wicked – plus the belief that it is right to react in a certain way. Andronicus and Boethus both attempted to produce Peripatetic definitions of passions; but, as with 'the first appropriate thing', so here too their definitions, though clearly attempting to move away from Stoicism, were still influenced by it, at least in the judgement of Aspasius, who wrote a commentary on the *Ethics* in the first half of the second century CE.[35] Andronicus defined passion as 'an irrational movement of the soul through a supposition (*hupolēpsis*) of harm or good'; Aspasius (*In EN* 44.21–4) comments that by 'irrational' Andronicus did not mean *wrong* reasoning, as the Stoics did, but was rather referring to the *non*-reasoning part of the soul. Boethus repeated the first part of Andronicus' definition, but dropped the reference to supposition, and added that to count as a passion the movement must have a certain magnitude (Aspasius, *In EN* 44.24–8). Aspasius rejects the latter restriction (*In EN* 44.29–33) and, commenting that Andronicus was wrong (he might have said; too much influenced by the Stoics) in linking all passions with supposition, as some follow mere appearances, suggests (*In EN* 44.33–45.16) that they might be better defined as responses to pleasure and pain. Clearly, Andronicus was attempting to move away from the Stoic position, but did not go far enough in doing so for Aspasius. Aspasius

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[34] Alex. *Mant.* 17, 151.3–13; Gottschalk 1987: 1117.
[35] On the general character of Aspasius' commentary, which was relatively elementary, and on its bearing on the history of the *Nicomachean* and the *Eudemian Ethics* and the placing of the books common to both (*Nicomachean* 5–7 = *Eudemian* 4–6) see Barnes 1999.

shares with the ethical summaries in Stobaeus the views that bodily and external goods are only instruments, not parts, of happiness (Aspasius, *In EN* 24.3–9) and that virtue is not on its own sufficient for happiness (24.24–25.2). Aristotle's remark at *EN* 1.7, 1097b16–20 that happiness does not enter into the same reckoning as other goods is interpreted by Aspasius (17.12–17) as a denial that happiness can be increased by the addition of other goods;[36] he explains away Aristotle's seeming to allow degrees of blessedness (*EN* 1.9, 1099b2–6) by saying that external goods are like an extra adornment and nothing more (30.13–18).

Whereas the Stoics taught that all passions were erroneous and to be avoided, the Peripatetic school became associated with the doctrine of *metriopatheia*, moderation of the passions.[37] This was indeed an accurate reflection of Aristotle's own views; for Aristotle the virtues are means between extremes, and to feel less anger than is appropriate in a situation is as much a fault as to feel too much.[38] In the second century CE the anonymous commentator on the *Nicomachean Ethics* (127.5–9) criticizes the attribution of *apatheia* to Plato by Platonists whom Karamanolis 2006: 189 identifies with Atticus.

The new interest in Aristotle's esoteric works from Andronicus onwards was expressed in the form of debates about the details of their interpretation. This involved both Peripatetics and others – Stoics and Platonists – and took the form both of commentaries and of discussions of specific issues. We also have a strange attempt to put Aristotle's doctrine into a Pythagorean form, falsely attributed to the fourth-century BCE Pythagorean Archytas as Aristotle's putative source. The author saw significance in the fact that Aristotle in the *Categories* lists ten categories (though the number varies elsewhere in his works), ten being a sacred number for the Pythagoreans. The commentaries could take the form either of sentence-by-sentence interpretation or of interpretative paraphrase; both Andronicus and Boethus wrote commentaries on Aristotle's *Categories*, and according to Simplicius (*In Cat.* 30.1–5) Andronicus' was of the first type, Boethus' of the second.

Why the *Categories* aroused as much interest as it did in this period is something of a mystery. The custom eventually developed of placing it at the start of Aristotle's works, because it was seen as the start of a natural sequence, the *Categories* dealing with single terms and/or the things signified by them – which of these was correct was a topic of debate down to the time of Porphyry

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[36] Cf. White 1990: 138–40; Sharples 1999: 88–90.

[37] Attributed to Aristotle by D. L. 5.31. Karamanolis 2006: 79 suggests that the term *metriopatheia* may have been coined by Antiochus. For the good person's passions cf., against the Stoics, Aspasius, *In EN* 44.15.

[38] Arist. *EN* 2.7, 1108a8; Phld. *De ira* 31.31–9 Wilke; Cic. *Tusc.* 4.43–4. Cf. Moraux 1984: 282–3.

in the third century CE[39] – the *De interpretatione* with simple sentences, and
the rest of the *Organon* with arguments made up of these. Whether this was
already Andronicus' arrangement is open to question, because he regarded the
De interpretatione as spurious.

The placing of the *Categories* at the start of Aristotle's works, both in terms
of their standard arrangement and in terms of teaching, had incalculable con-
sequences for the subsequent history both of philosophy in general and of the
interpretation of Aristotle in particular. Because it was chiefly the *Organon* that
was available in Latin in the early Middle Ages, thanks to the translations of
Boethius, philosophical discussion focused on the issues raised by consideration
of the *Categories*, the relation between language and what it signifies and the
nature and status of universals. Within the Aristotelian tradition itself, the effect
of discussion focusing on the *Categories* is apparent in two ways. Aristotle's imme-
diate successors had shown little interest in the ontological questions relating to
form, matter and substance; notoriously, these do not appear in the *Categories*
either, but the attempt to relate the *Categories* to Aristotle's other works made
questions of ontology central for medieval and modern interpreters of Aristo-
tle's text. Interpreters of Aristotle have, until very recently, read him in a way
that emphasizes the more Platonist aspects of his thought, such as the notion of
forms which, though existing in physical things rather than separate from them,
are identical in all their instances and so provide eternal and unvarying objects
for knowledge, rather than the more flexible notions required by biological
inquiry. Platonist interpreters of Aristotle in later antiquity emphasized these
aspects, even though simultaneously holding that Aristotle's philosophy gives an
account only of the lower levels of reality. This indeed is hardly surprising; but
the reading of Aristotle in this way does not start with the late Platonists – it is
already present in, and its subsequent development owed much to the influence
of, Alexander.

None of this, however, explains why the *Categories* aroused such interest in
the first place. The answer may in part be that it connected with themes already
familiar in the Hellenistic period, of philosophy of language and technique of
argument (for the doctrine of the categories is important in Aristotle's *Topics* too,
and the title 'Preliminaries to the *Topics*' was suggested for the *Categories:* Simp.
In Cat. 15.27–16.4, 379.6–10), but was intriguingly and challengingly different
from related discussions both in Stoicism and also in Platonism (the contrast
between *per se* and relative in *Sophist* 255c). Simplicius (*In Cat.* 63.22–6) couples

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[39] Boethus' view that the work was concerned with words as signifying things eventually prevailed:
Porph., *In Cat.* 59.17; Simp. *In Cat.* 11.23, 13.13. Moraux 1973: 150; Gottschalk 1987: 1104 n.
126.

Andronicus with Xenocrates, in the Old Academy, in including everything in the two categories of *per se* and relative,[40] and compares others, unnamed and with no indication of date, who regarded substance alone as *per se* and everything else as accidents of substance. Simplicius, *In Cat.* 373.7–32 presents Boethus as disagreeing with the Stoic view that Aristotle's category of 'having' should be included in what is disposed.

For the Stoics, only what is bodily exists, and the physical, corporeal world is a single unified whole produced by the action of a bodily Active Principle, God, on a Passive Principle, unqualified matter, also itself bodily, the former penetrating, being present in and fashioning every part of the latter. Individual things, such as human beings, have being as parts of this substratum, but owe their individuality to their being parts that are 'individually qualified'. In other words, an individual human being is a part of the whole that has the quality of being a particular human. For Plato too, at least on one reading of the *Timaeus*, physical objects are nothing more than parts of the Receptacle where certain qualities are present.

For Aristotle in the *Categories* an individual human being such as Socrates is a primary substance. He will have in him various qualities, such as being literate and snub-nosed. But in the sentence 'Socrates is a human being' the 'human being' that is 'said of' Socrates is not a quality, but a secondary *substance*. Even the differentia, in an analysis of genus into species such as 'human being is a two-footed rational animal', is not to be regarded as a quality (Arist. *Cat.* 5, 3a21).

Individual substances, such as Socrates, are for Aristotle compounds of form and matter, and in the case of living beings the form is the soul. The *Categories* itself, however, makes no reference to form; so the question naturally arose how form and soul were to be fitted into the doctrine of the categories. Against the general Stoic background, it is hardly surprising that Boethus, as reported by Simplicius, *In Cat.* 78.17–20, and possibly Andronicus too, supposed that form and soul were to be placed in quality or quantity or some other category.[41] The implication is that Socrates is a thing which has, among its qualities, and no doubt as one of the most important qualities, that of being a human being; Socrates' soul will simply be this quality. One immediate consequence is that it is difficult to see how Socrates' soul can be immortal; there are two texts (Ps.-Simplicius, *In DA* 247.23–26; Porphyry, *Against Boethus on the Soul* fr. 243F

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[40] Moraux 1973: 103, followed by Gottschalk 1987: 1105 held that Andronicus distinguished substance on the one hand from all the other categories on the other; Tarán 1981: 741 suggests that Andronicus was distinguishing the relative in the narrow sense of the term from all other categories and was influenced by the Stoics in this.

[41] Reinhardt 2007: 524–5 argues that the disjunction is an inclusive one; any given form may include elements from more than one of the non-substance categories.

Smith = Eusebius, *PE* 11.28.6–10) that appear to attribute to Boethus the view
that the soul is immortal, but it seems that in the first text this is only a possibility
envisaged *ad hominem* in the course of an objection – essentially repeating one of
Strato's – to the final argument for the immortality of the soul in Plato's *Phaedo*.
As for the second text, Gottschalk argues that this is selective quotation by
Porphyry; Boethus went on to argue nonetheless that the soul is *not* immortal,
but Porphyry uses Boethus' concession here to argue the opposite.[42] To be
sure, whether Aristotle himself accepted any immortality for individual human
souls is a moot point. Xenarchus, according to Aëtius 4.3.10, identified soul for
Aristotle as 'the perfection and actuality according to the form', and insisted
that it existed *per se* while being united with the body; this seems to indicate
that, while agreeing with Boethus that soul could not exist apart from body, he
insists against him that form and soul are substance rather than quality.

   Plato in the *Phaedo* had made Socrates argue against the claim that the soul
was simply an attunement (*harmonia*) of the elements of which the body is
composed, one of Socrates' arguments being that the soul controls the body
(*Phaedo* 94be). Aristotle too rejects the *harmonia* theory in *De anima* 1.4. This
did not prevent – or was perhaps a response to – two of Aristotle's associates,
Aristoxenus and Dicaearchus, adopting this view. Andronicus, according to
Galen, *QAM* 4, 44.12–20 Müller, held that the soul was either the mixture of
the bodily elements or a power (*dunamis*) resulting from this mixture. Galen
himself makes it clear that he prefers the former option. That Andronicus
himself preferred the latter is at least suggested by a report (Themistius, *In DA*
32.22–31) that he approved the Platonist Xenocrates' definition of soul as 'self-
moving number' and compared this to the notion of a self-tuning attunement,
adding, and presumably endorsing, the view that 'the soul itself is the cause
of the blending and the formula and the mixture of the primary elements'.
Andronicus can thus be seen as giving the soul some degree of priority over
body, even if there is a tension between this, his possible treatment of soul as
quality (above), and the view that substance is prior to quality.

   While these debates were going on among scholars of Aristotle's text, the
more popular or popularizing activity also continued – though we should
perhaps be wary of drawing too sharp a boundary between the two. Nicolaus
of Damascus, commonly identified with a courtier of Herod the Great though
this has been called into question,[43] produced a summary of Aristotle's esoteric
works, which now survives only in a summary of the summary in Syriac, with

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[42] Gottschalk 1986: 246–8; 1987: 1117–18.
[43] Fazzo 2005: 288–9 n. 52 has drawn renewed attention to the report by Sophronios (*FGrH* 90
   T2), quoted by Drossaart-Lulofs 1969: 5 (cf. 44), that Herod's courtier had no less than twelve
   philosophical descendants also named Nicolaus, any of whom might be the author of the summary.

one exception, the material on plants which may or may not derive from an original work by Aristotle now lost. This was translated via Arabic into Latin, and then, in the sixteenth century, translated back from Latin into Greek in order to fill a gap in Aristotle's works; we know it now as pseudo-Aristotle *On Plants*.

Probably from the time of Augustus is a treatise *On Philosophy* by the Peripatetic Aristocles of Messene, of which we possess fragments preserved chiefly by Eusebius. The surviving material consists mainly of criticisms of the epistemology of rival schools; indeed Aristocles is a major source for our knowledge of early Pyrrhonian Scepticism. What survives on Aristotle himself and his school is only a rebuttal of various criticisms of his personal life; what survives on Plato and on the Stoics is reporting of their doctrines rather than criticism.[44]

Also probably from the second half of the first century BCE or the first half of the first century CE is the treatise, purporting to be dedicated by Aristotle to Alexander the Great and surviving in Greek, *On the Cosmos* (*De mundo*), which is an account of the world culminating in a description of how it is governed by divine providence, but remotely and by delegation, God being compared in this respect to the king of Persia. The emphasis on divine transcendence is opposed to Stoic pantheism, and is reminiscent of Critolaus; however, in the *De mundo* Critolaus' insistence on the separation between the heavens which are governed by providence and a sublunary region which is not is modified, for the divine *power* is said to penetrate the world even though (contrary to the Stoic view) God himself does not.[45] The *De mundo* forms part of a long-standing Peripatetic tradition of regarding the world as a system which is more ordered at its higher levels than at its lower ones (again to be contrasted with the Stoic view in which even the most minute details are part of the single cosmic order); this view is present in the last chapter of Aristotle's own *Metaphysics* Lambda and in Theophrastus' *Metaphysics*, and we shall encounter it again in Alexander.

Some Platonists in the early imperial period were ready to accommodate Aristotelian ideas – sometimes with far-reaching consequences: Susanne Bobzien has shown how the development of a concept first of responsibility and then of free choice as antithetical to determinism may have its source in Platonist adaptation of Peripatetic discussion of Aristotle's treatment of contingency.[46] Alcinous' identification of the highest Platonist principle as a self-thinking intellect, too, derives from Aristotle, *Metaphysics* Lambda.[47] But not all Platonists were as accommodating. The one most opposed to Aristotelian doctrines

[44] On Aristocles see Chiesara 2001.
[45] Ps.-Arist. *Mund.* 6, 398b8 (*diēkein*); cf. 397b33 (*diikneisthai*).   [46] Bobzien 1998: 146–56.
[47] Alcin. 10.

was Atticus, who is particularly significant because in two areas in particular we can trace the reactions of Peripatetics to his attacks.[48]

In *Generation of Animals* 2.3, 736b21–9 Aristotle says that, while other soul faculties are transmitted to the embryo in the father's seed, intellect, having no bodily organ, comes 'from outside' and is divine (above, at n. 21). Atticus objected to this that an incorporeal intellect cannot move spatially. To this an unidentified Aristotelian (let us call him X)[49] responded by arguing that divine intellect – identified with the productive intellect of Aristotle, *De anima* 3.5 – is present everywhere, but operates in a different way when it has a human intellect as a suitable instrument. Alexander, who is our source for this doctrine, criticizes it because in it our individual intellect ceases to be really *ours*, and for what he sees as its Stoic-like pantheistic implications; the theory is not, however, one that would have been acceptable to the Stoics, for it is quite clear that according to it the divine intellect is incorporeal. His own answer (*Mant.* 2, 113.18–24) is that intellect 'comes from outside' not by spatial movement but when we think of it.

Another Peripatetic, possibly one of Alexander's teachers (let us call him Y),[50] interpreted Aristotle's reference to a productive intellect in *De anima* 3.5 in a different way, arguing that the divine intellect is responsible for actualizing individual human intellects. Alexander takes this over, and develops it into the theory that the divine productive intellect brings the individual's potential or material intellect to a condition in which it is able to perform the characteristic activity of intellect, abstracting enmattered forms from the matter in which they exist, a condition in which it is described, from the Greek term for 'condition', as *nous en hexei*, Latinized as intellect *in habitu*. Xenarchus had drawn an analogy between intellect and prime matter,[51] though it is unclear whether this was

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[48] On Peripatetic reactions to Atticus cf. more generally Karamanolis 2006: 156.

[49] Alexander's account of this theory begins at *Mant.* 112.5, where its proponent is unidentified – possibly because, as Accattino 2001: 14–15 has argued, this part of the *Mantissa* (which had an independent *fortuna* in Arabic and in Latin as the treatise *On Intellect*) is made up of several originally separate discussions from early in Alexander's career which have been strung together. Contrary to what some have argued, the proponent of the theory in 112.5–113.6 is not likely to be the same as that of the theory in 110.5–25, whose identity is in any case uncertain. Moraux 1967 argued that the reference at 110.4 is to Aristoteles of Mytilene, a Peripatetic of the second century CE, but it may rather be to Aristotle himself. See Opsomer and Sharples 2000; Sharples 2004: 38–9 n. 92. The theory of 112.5–113.6 has in the past been attributed to Aristocles (e.g., by Merlan 1967: 117) on the basis of an unwarranted emendation of 110.4 by Zeller, but it is now generally accepted that neither the theory at 110.5–25 nor that at 112.5–113.6 has anything to do with Aristocles; see Chiesara 2001: xiv–xvi.

[50] If we take 'I heard' at 110.4 (see the previous note) as implying this. Alexander's known teachers include Herminus, Sosigenes and Aristoteles of Mytilene (the last-mentioned confirmed by Alex. *Metaph.* 166.19–29, however we interpret *Mant.* 2, 110.4 itself).

[51] Alexander apud Philop. *In DA* 3 (preserved only in Latin) 15.65–9 Verbeke; Moraux 1973: 207–8.

intended as a serious point – both being completely receptive with no character of their own to impede – or a *reductio ad absurdum*; Alexander is at pains to distance his own notion of potential intellect from that of matter (Alex. *Mant.* 2, 106.20–1). The divine intellect, or rather intellects, identified with the Unmoved Movers of *Metaphysics* Lambda, is for Alexander pure form without matter (Alex. *Quaest.* 1.25, 39.9) – a point which Aristotle does not himself make in these terms in Lambda, speaking rather of *actuality*.[52]

What needs further explanation, however, is exactly *how* the divine intellect brings individual human intellects to actuality. We have two accounts of this from Alexander. That which is apparently earlier, in the *Mantissa* – though the relative date of the two accounts is hotly disputed – seems to suggest that the immaterial divine intellect provides a paradigm of immaterial form by reference to which we can abstract other forms from their matter. This, however, seems to have the frankly implausible implication that our thought of God is the model for, and chronologically precedes, all our other abstract thinking. This is perhaps a more natural assumption for someone familiar with X's theory; indeed, our thinking of the divine intellect is already involved, with no suggestion that it is unusual or difficult, in Alexander's own alternative answer to Atticus (Alex. *Mant.* 2, 113.18–24, above). In his probably later treatise *De anima*, Alexander argues that the divine intellect is the cause of our thinking in virtue of the principle that what possesses any feature – in this case intelligibility – in the highest degree is the cause of other things' possessing it, and also because, as the cause of the being of all things, it is also the cause of their intelligibility. The former reason has been criticized as Platonic (Moraux 1942: 90–2). However, as Lloyd 1976: 150 pointed out, Alexander is not constructing an argument on Platonic lines *for the existence* of a supreme intelligible; rather, given that there are other arguments to show that there is an Unmoved Mover and that it is both intellect and intelligible, he is constructing an argument to show that it is the cause of all other intelligibility. What neither of the arguments in *De anima* gives us, however, is an account of a mechanism by which the productive intellect affects our individual intellects to bring about the development from potential or material intellect to intellect *in habitu*.[53] If we were to suppose that for Alexander – as for Aristotle, according to some – the divine intellect thinks eternal truths, including the nature of the forms of enmattered beings, we would have something approaching the Plotinian notion of Intellect, and the way would be open for a Platonizing argument that in apprehending enmattered

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[52] Burnyeat 2001: 76 n. 155, 130 n. 8.

[53] Is it possible that Alexander in his *De anima* is beginning to move away from the idea that it is on the potential intellect that the active intellect acts? The production for which Aristotle's productive intellect is responsible does not *have* to be interpreted in this way; Wedin 1988: 220–9.

forms we are actually apprehending the contents of the divine intellect; but there is no indication of such a theory in Alexander's *De anima* or in the *Mantissa*.[54] This does not, however, mean that Plotinus may not have found hints of it there.[55]

Alexander does say in *De anima* (89.21–90.2) that our intellects, if they think of the divine intellect – doing so being presented here as the *culmination* of intellectual and philosophical activity – in a way *become* it for as long as they do so, this being a consequence of the principle that intellect and its object are identical where immaterial things are concerned. We can thus achieve a temporary immortality. He is insistent, however, that what is involved is the presence of the divine intellect in us, not a becoming immortal of our own intellect (90.23–91.5). To some this doctrine has seemed to involve mysticism;[56] it may rather be that Alexander has been led to it by following to their limit the logical implications of an attempt to interpret the Aristotelian texts – which, again, does not mean that his ideas may not have influenced those whose interests *were* mystical.

The second topic on which Peripatetics responded to Atticus' attacks was that of divine providence. Atticus adopts the interpretation of Aristotle as confining providence to the heavens, which we have already seen in Critolaus,[57] and attacks Aristotle for adopting a half-hearted version of Epicureanism; since on both Aristotle's supposed view and on Epicurus' there is no divine providence that is relevant to *us*, it would have been better if Aristotle, like Epicurus, had simply denied divine providence altogether. And, whereas for Plato the entire world is organized by the World Soul, for Aristotle different parts of it are governed by a whole series of principles (Atticus, fr. 8.2 Des Places). In effect, though he does not use the actual term, Atticus is turning against Aristotle Aristotle's own criticism (*Met.* 12.10, 1075b37–1076a3) of the Platonist Speusippus for making the world 'episodic', like a drama lacking the required unity of plot.

Apparently in response to Atticus – and also against the Stoics – Alexander invokes the idea, which we have already seen as characteristically Peripatetic,

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[54] See, however, below, n. 67.

[55] Porphyry tells us that Alexander's commentaries on Aristotle were among those read in Plotinus' school. Accattino and Donini 1996: vii–viii have suggested that Alexander's treatise *De anima* is an abridgement by him, leaving out detailed discussion of individual passages, of his full commentary, now lost, on Aristotle's *De anima*.

[56] Notably Merlan 1963: 16 and 35ff.

[57] Because of the handbook tradition, and in spite of Alexander's efforts (below), this interpretation persisted, being found for example in Epiphanius, *De fide* 9.35 (= Diels, *Dox.* 592.9–14), for whom the sublunary is according to Aristotle governed by *chance*, and Hippolytus, *Ref.* 7.19.2, for whom it is subject to its own *nature*.

that the whole world does not have the same degree of order and organization. On the specific issue of providence he tries to find middle ground between the Epicurean denial of providence on the one hand and, on the other, the view that everything is governed by divine providence down to the smallest detail, which he attributes to the Stoics but also says was 'according to some' the view of Plato;[58] the latter view, he objects, is demeaning to the dignity of the divine.[59] Whereas some Peripatetics seem to have argued that divine concern for the heavens had an *accidental* effect on the sublunary region as well,[60] Alexander rejects the notion of a providence that is purely accidental,[61] and argues, in a philosophical dialogue which was apparently never completed, that there are three ways in which human forethought about something can be neither a primary concern nor yet totally accidental, the implication being that these may be relevant to divine providence too: forethought can be neither primary nor accidental ((a) 67.10–22) if the agent is aware of the benefit in question even though it is not a primary aim; ((b) 67.30–68.4) if caring for something else is to one's own benefit; ((c) 68.5–11) if the individual benefits from care for the universal. It seems likely that he does intend all three to apply to divine concern for the sublunary: (b) the movement of the heavens causes the continued existence of the sublunary elements, which is in the interests of the divine heavens themselves as giving them a centre round which to rotate (Alex. *Quaest.* 1.23, 36.22–3, 1.25, 40.30–41.2; *Princ.* §58); (c) through the movement of the heavens, divine providence ensures the continued existence of sublunary *species* (Alex. *Prov.* 87.5–91.4; *Quaest.* 1.25, 41.2–4, 15–19), which depends on (some) individuals having offspring; and, it seems, (a) the divine is aware of its effects on the sublunary,[62] though how this is to be related to Alexander's view of the content of the divine intellect's thinking is unclear.

The idea that not every individual detail is part of an ordered system is also present in Alexander's theory of fate. For the Stoics fate was inexorable and admitted of no exceptions. Interpretations of Aristotle's view on this

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[58] *Laws* 10.902d–903a certainly indicates concern for details; but such concern was often interpreted as implying that this was delegated to inferior *daimones*, and *Laws* 10.903e–904c, too, could be taken to imply that the divine cares for individuals by caring for the generalities.

[59] Alex. *Prov.* 25.1–19; *Mant.* 2, 113.12–14 (against a theory of providence which he either found explicitly present in, or saw as implied by, the pantheistic account of intellect discussed at n. 51 above); *Mixt.* 11–12 226.24–30 (against the Stoics).

[60] This at least is how the point is put by Aëtius, reporting Aristotle, at 2.3.4.

[61] Alex. *Prov.* 63.2ff.; also *Quaest.* 2.21, 65.25–66.2, but here *not* because there is anything particularly self-contradictory about *providence* being accidental, but because quite generally what is only accidentally F is not F; cf. *Mant.* 22, 170.10–15, citing Arist. *Met.* 6.2, 1026b13ff.

[62] Alex. *Prov.* 65.9–16, *Princ.* §§114 and 120 (but on the question of the authenticity of the latter two passages cf. Genequand 2001: 17 and 162–3).

varied.[63] It seems likely that already before Alexander someone had identi-
fied fate for Aristotle with nature, which applies for the most part but admits
of exceptions. Alexander seems to have taken this doctrine, which originally
applied to the way in which an individual's character affected their actions, and
to have applied it to the nature of the *species*. He also counters the Stoic view that
the unity of the cosmos requires that every individual event be predetermined,
by arguing that it is the movement of the heavens that unifies the cosmos, even if
there are exceptions to this order in the details of sublunary events (Alex. *Fat.* 25,
195.8–18, 196.7–12). Sarah Broadie has argued that the treatment of the world
as a single teleological system jeopardizes the metaphysical status of Aristotelian
natural substances;[64] it may seem strange that Alexander, who as we shall see
asserts the status of natural substances against Boethus, nevertheless regards the
world as a single system. The answer would seem to be that he resisted Sto-
icizing tendencies on the former issue more completely than on the latter;
indeed, the fact that he (and the *De mundo*), like the Stoics, sees the unity of the
world in terms of efficient rather than final causation (see below) supports this.[65]

   In appealing, in his discussion of providence, to the role of the motion of the
heavens in ensuring the continuity in species of sublunary things – both living
creatures and the simple bodies – Alexander is taking an idea already present
in Aristotle and applying it in a new context, though with one important dif-
ference, as we will see. It may be questioned, however, how effective this is
as a reply to Atticus. For the influence of the heavens on the sublunary may
seem to be purely mechanical, and thus the antithesis of providential concern.
If, however, the heavens are aware of their effect, as they seem to be (above,
n. 57), it can be replied that for Aristotle quite generally mechanical causation
and purpose are not mutually exclusive. To be sure, Alexander's divine provi-
dence is not of the sort that will intervene in the course of events; but then it
is not concerned with that sort of detail anyway.[66]

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[63] Anon. *In EN* 150.2–4, on 3.3, 1112a31, remarks 'Fate too would be said to be placed under nature
according to these men. For what is fated is neither inevitable nor necessary.' But 'these men'
are unidentified, and the remark looks suspiciously like a marginal gloss by someone not himself
a Peripatetic. Aëtius 1.29.2 says that fate attaches to the ordered things that belong to necessity,
having previously *distinguished* nature and necessity. Atticus, fr. 8.2 Des Places represents Aristotle
as connecting nature with the sublunary and fate with the *heavens* 'which are always in the same
state and condition'; Theodoret, *Gr. aff. cur.* 5.47 and 6.7 links fate for Aristotle with the *sublunary*,
and yet in the second of these two passages puts the point in terms of the *necessity* of fate.

[64] Broadie 2007: 91.

[65] Broadie indeed recognizes (2007: 98 n.19) that the idea of the world as a single system is adumbrated
in Aristotle, *Met.* 12.10, 1075a16–25. But it is there presented rather in terms of final causation (*eis
to koinon, eis to holon*, 1075a21–2, 24–5). See also Furley 2003.

[66] Nemesius may have Alexander in mind when he objects that providence cannot care for species
without caring for individuals: *Nat. hom.* 43, 130.15ff. Morani.

Aristotle explains the movement of the heavens by their desire for the Unmoved Mover or Movers. What he does not make clear is what exactly this desire amounts to, and why it should result in circular movement – the latter already being questioned by Theophrastus (*Metaph.* 9, 5b7–10). An answer that suggests itself is that the heavens desire to come as close to the unchanging condition of the Unmoved Mover as they possibly can, and that, given the stuff of which they are made whose nature is such as to move in a circle, everlasting regular circular motion is the closest they can come to this. After all, Aristotle regards both the transformation of the sublunary bodies into one another, ensuring their perpetuity as kinds, and the reproduction of mortal living creatures as ways of achieving perpetuity as far as possible (*GC* 2.10, 336b26–337a7, *De an.* 2.4, 415a26–b7; cf. *Met.* 9.8, 1050b28–30). Alexander adopts this explanation of the movement of the heavens, and expresses it in terms of the heavens *imitating* the Unmoved Mover,[67] a way of putting the point that was enormously influential,[68] but which has been criticized as an erroneous and excessively Platonic reading of Aristotle.[69]

Emphasis on the species rather than the individual is also prominent in Alexander's ontology. Against Boethus, and in what is surely a more accurate interpretation of Aristotle, he insists that form and soul are not present in bodies as in subjects; a human being is not a body that has the feature of being human, for without the presence of the form or soul there would not be a body at all, only a collection of ingredients.[70] It is the soul that is the cause of there being a body of a certain sort, not the reverse, even if the nature of each can be *inferred* from that of the other.[71] To what has become known as 'Ackrill's paradox' – Aristotle's definition of soul as the first actuality of an organic body is circular, for organic body itself requires, and has to be explained in terms of, the presence of soul – Alexander's response (in *Quaest.* 2.8) seems to be the correct one that the circularity can be broken if the way of life of the living creature in question is defined independently and the nature of its body explained in terms of this.

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[67] *Quaest.* 1.25, 40.17–23; cf. 1.1, 4.3, 2.18, 62.28–30, 2.19, 63.20, *Princ.* §23 and §76; cf. Genequand 1984: 38–9.

[68] Cf., e.g., Plotinus 2.2 [14] 1.1.

[69] Already by Themistius, *In Met.* 12.7.13 Brague 1999 = 20.11–23 Landauer (cf. Brague 1999: 141). Cf. also Broadie 1993: 379; Berti 1997: 64, 2000a, and 2000b: 201; Laks 2000: 221 n. 37.

[70] *Mant.* 5.120.9–17; cf. also *Quaest.* 1.8, 18.24–30, 1.17, 30.7–9, 1.26, 42.22–5. Plotinus sides with Boethus, as far as the sensible world is concerned: 6.3 [44] 8. Reinhardt 2007: 528 n. 34; Karamanolis 2006: 235–6.

[71] To take Aristotle's example from the *Posterior Analytics* (1.13, 78a28ff.), it is equally true that if the planets do not twinkle, they are nearer than the stars, and that if the planets are nearer than the stars, they do not twinkle; but it is their being near that is the *reason* for their not twinkling, not their not twinkling that is the reason for their *being* near, though it is the reason for us *inferring* that they are near.

Alexander, however (*De an.* 24.21–3), defines soul as the power resulting from, or supervening on, the mixture of the bodily elements – the second of the two definitions which Galen attributed to Andronicus. To many interpreters, ancient and modern, this has seemed to embrace materialism and to reduce soul to a mere epiphenomenon – criticisms which have been made especially by conscious or unconscious Platonists, for whom the denial of a radical soul-body dualism and the denial of the immortality of the individual soul are both anathema (which does not mean that they are not accurate interpretation of Aristotle's own views). However, it has been rightly pointed out, notably by Donini 1971 (see also Caston 1997), that Alexander, far from introducing a materialist reading of Aristotle, is in fact, as his treatment of form and soul as substance rather than quality would suggest, trying to move *away* from such a position and to reinstate the priority of soul over body. The statement that soul is the power resulting from the mixture of the bodily elements comes after a lengthy discussion, occupying nearly a quarter of his treatise *De anima*, in which he asserts that the compound of form and matter is substance because both form and matter are themselves substance (6.4–5). He is concerned to argue both against body-soul dualism, whether of a corporealist Stoic or an incorporealist Platonic type, and also against the view that soul is just a quality. Those who interpret him as a reductive materialist have emphasized the facts that he chooses to construct his argument by starting from the simple bodies and working his way upwards through more complex compounds until he arrives at living creatures, and that he introduces the idea that complex forms are combinations of simpler forms; but it is not clear that either of these points rules out the view that, when one *has* a complex being such as a living creature, it is primarily in terms of its own form that its structure is to be explained.

Similar issues arise in connection with Alexander's treatment of form as universal. Here too he has been criticized both by ancient Platonists and by modern interpreters of Aristotle who incline to Platonism; he fails to satisfy them because he denies the existence of separate, transcendent Platonic forms prior to and existing independently of their physical instantiations.[72] In this, however, he is simply interpreting Aristotle accurately.

From the perspective of such critics, it is surprising that there are a number of passages indicating that the universal is prior to the individual, passages that

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[72] Both Dexippus, *In Cat.* 45.12 and Simplicius, *In Cat.* 82.14 say that Alexander made universals posterior to particulars, and Dexippus couples him with *Boethus* in this. From a Platonist point of view the disagreements between Alexander and Boethus over the status of form count for little; indeed, where the sensible world is concerned Boethus' view is closer to Plato's as well as to Plotinus'.

have worried more sympathetic interpreters of Alexander too.[73] However, these passages both fit into a consistent picture of Alexander's views and form part of what seems a plausible interpretation on his part of Aristotle's ontology in the *Categories* and the *Metaphysics*. For Alexander, individuals are primarily instances of the species to which they belong. Socrates is differentiated from other human individuals by accidents which are due to his matter; the object of definition, and of knowledge in the strict sense of the term, is the form or soul, which includes only those features common to human beings in general. It is, however, no part of that *definition* that the form is present in more than one instance; the definition and the nature of the form itself would be the same even if there were only one instance. That the form is in fact present in many instances is, as far as the nature of the form itself is concerned, an accident.

The species-form could not exist if there were not at least one embodied instance of it. The individual is therefore prior to the species, and the species similarly prior to the genus. However, there is no *particular* individual of whom it can be said that his or her existence is necessary for the existence of the species; so the species is prior to *each* individual taken singly, and the genus to *each* species. It is in this way that the passages making the universal prior to the individual should be understood.

This ontology clearly fits Alexander's theories of providence and of fate, both of which emphasize the species and its nature rather than the particular individual. However, there are at least two respects in which Alexander's interpretation of Aristotle in this way can be seen as emphasizing the Platonic elements in Aristotle's own thought – which are real enough; we are not dealing with simple misinterpretation. The first is the interpretation of Aristotelian enmattered form as including only those features which are common to members of a species in general. This certainly solves the problem of how knowledge and definition can be of the universal, as *Met.* 7.10, 1036a2–9 and 7.15, 1039b27–30, 1040a33–b2 require; as Aristotle himself says (*Met.* 13.10, 1087a10–25), knowledge is potentially of the universal but actually of an individual in every case, and Alexander in effect, and correctly, takes this to mean of an individual stripped of all but its universal features. However, the restricted notion of form which this reading requires runs into difficulties when we consider Aristotle's zoological works and in particular his explanation of heredity by the action of form on matter. The focus of Alexander's interest is on the works of Aristotle that are concerned with logic and with general physical and metaphysical theory, and, as Madigan 1994: 90 has well pointed out, he reads the *Metaphysics* in the light of the *Categories*

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[73] Alexander, *Quaest.* 1.11, 22.14–20 with Lloyd 1981: 51 (though there are still problems in the way Alexander expresses his point here; Sharples 2005a: 51–4); Alexander fr. 22 Freudenthal 1885, with Genequand 1984: 129 n. 124.

rather than vice versa. It is only very recently in the history of Aristotelian studies that attention has focused on the zoological works and the type of reading adopted by Alexander has been challenged. It would be an exaggeration to suggest that the predominant ways of reading Aristotle in the intervening millennium-and-three-quarters were simply the result of Alexander's approach; the influence of Platonism tended to favour some aspects of Aristotle's thought rather than others, as did the emphasis on the *Categories* and its place in the curriculum.

Second, as Rashed 2007a: 238 has noted, Alexander's language suggests a greater degree of reification of the nature of the species as such than we find in Aristotle himself. Whereas Aristotle speaks of mortal living creatures achieving eternity *in kind*, Alexander speaks of the *kind itself* as eternal. These eternal kinds satisfy the Platonist demand for objects of knowledge that are not only universal but – what may be just another way of saying the same thing – unchanging and eternal.

Alexander regularly contrasts enmattered forms with immaterial ones (the Unmoved Movers). The former have to be abstracted by intellect from the material accidents that accompany them. Alexander indeed sometimes speaks as if intellect *produces* the forms by this process (*De an.* 90.2–8); but, given the role of the perpetuation of species in his theory of providence, it is difficult to believe that he regards enmattered forms as simply constructs of human intellect, rather than objective realities which human intellect can recognize.[74] The problem would disappear, indeed, if the forms of material things were thought by the divine *active* intellect; but, as already indicated, there is no indication that Alexander took this final step into Platonism.

What, finally, did later ancient philosophy take from the Peripatetic tradition? The answer must be, in the first instance, interpretations of Aristotle's text, since some of his works continued to be part of the standard Platonist philosophical curriculum. But beyond that, the philosophical agenda continued to be influenced by the issues that concerned the Peripatetics discussed in this chapter; and they provided later thinkers with ideas to incorporate (as with the notion of the divine intellect making use of our intellects),[75] or to react against (as with arguments for the mortality of the human soul).

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[74] For an attempt to interpret the *De anima* passage in such a way as to eliminate the troublesome implication see Sharples 2005a: 43–50.

[75] The idea that our individual intellects are *parts* of the divine intellect is indeed Stoic. But Armstrong 1960: 406–8 sees a particular link between Plotinus' use of the analogy of the craftsman and his tools (1.4 [46] 16.20–9) and the theory reported at Alexander, *Mant.* 112.24–30 (above, at n. 51). See further Sharples 1987: 1220–3. On the question how far Philoponus used Xenarchus' arguments against the distinct heavenly element see Wildberg 1988: 109–11.

THE *CHALDAEAN ORACLES*

JOHN F. FINAMORE AND SARAH ILES JOHNSTON

1 BACKGROUND

'*Chaldaean Oracles*' is a term used to refer to Greek dactylic hexameter poems, believed to have been spoken by the gods (especially Hecate), either directly to a figure known as Julian the Chaldaean or through a divinely possessed medium – perhaps Julian's son, who later became known as Julian the Theurgist. The elder was reputed to have lived at the time of Trajan and the younger was said to have accompanied Marcus Aurelius on campaign, aiding him in battle by creating a mask that threw thunderbolts at the enemy, splitting stones by magical command, and conjuring up a rainstorm to save the army from dying of thirst.[1] According to another legend, the younger Julian competed with Apuleius and Apollonius of Tyana to save Rome from a plague; Julian won by stopping it with a single word (St. Anast. Sinai, *PG* 89 col. 252ab).

Although the *Oracles* date to the late second or early third century CE, the term 'Chaldaean' is not applied to them until several centuries later (e.g., Proc. *In Parm*. 800.19) probably as an attempt to associate the poems and their messages with the much esteemed wisdom of the East. Earlier authors who quoted the *Oracles* generally referred to them as *ta hiera logia* or simply *ta logia*.[2] The *Oracles* survive now only in approximately 226 fragments quoted by these later authors, including Proclus, Damascius and Michael Psellus (scholars disagree on whether all 226 fragments are genuinely from the *Oracles* or not). Porphyry, Iamblichus and Proclus also wrote commentaries on the *Oracles*, but these are lost; Iamblichus refers to the *Oracles* and probably even paraphrases them in his treatise *Concerning the Mysteries*.[3] It can be difficult at times to sort out from these sources the words, doctrines and practices that are genuinely to be traced to the *Oracles* and those that have been contributed by their later interpreters and critics.

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[1] *Suda* s.v. 'Iulianus' 433 and 434; Psell. *Script. Min.* 1.446.28, Sozomen, *Hist. Eccl.* 1.18.7.
[2] Lewy 1978: 443–7.   [3] Des Places 1971: 18–57; Lewy 1978: 449–56; Cremer 1969.

The doctrines and rituals presented by the *Oracles* were vital to those who called themselves theurgists. These include cosmogonical, metaphysical and theological information, and instructions for rituals that would help the theurgists to learn more about the cosmos and the gods, and to purify their souls, eventually causing them to rise to the heavens. Philosophically, the doctrines are heavily indebted to Middle Platonism, as we will discuss below. The rites grew organically out of the philosophical doctrines, insofar as they attempt to put the theurgist's understanding of the cosmos into practice. Nonetheless, in most of their specifics the rites are similar to those of contemporary magic and religion, relying on the manipulation of substances and the speaking of sacred words, for example. Theurgy also shares close affinities with certain strands of Gnosticism and Hermeticism; indeed, attempts to discriminate between theurgy and Hermeticism in particular are probably misguided, as Garth Fowden has argued.[4]

2 THE CHALDAEAN PHILOSOPHICAL SYSTEM

The Chaldaean metaphysical hierarchy is a variation of the Middle-Platonic schema. There is not yet a transcendent One-beyond-Being (as will be found in Plotinus and later Platonists). The Intellect is the highest god. Without a transcendent One over the Intellect, the Intellect itself must play a double role in the Chaldaean system, being both separated from the world below but also connected to and responsible for it. As in other Pythagorean/Platonic writers such as Numenius, Intellect is not simple but exists as a triad, as we shall see.[5] Below these Intellects are the World Soul, a host of gods and lesser divinities, individual souls and nature.

The highest god in the Chaldaean canon is described in fr. 3: 'The Father carried himself away without enclosing his own fire in his own Intellectual Power.' The Father, dwelling in the intelligible or Empyrean World above the cosmos, is described in the act of separating himself totally from the lower intelligibles (about which we will speak shortly). His 'fire' is his ultimate essence,

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[4] Fowden 1986.
[5] It is useful here to compare the systems of Moderatus, Nicomachus and Numenius. As Dillon 1977: 344–79 shows, there are common features as well as specific differences among these authors concerning the intelligible realm, and these underscore the range of possibilities among Middle-Platonic authors. Moderatus posits a triad of a god beyond Being, a second god at the level of Being that has a dyadic nature and therefore may be seen as the Demiurge in the system, and a third god that is Soul. Nicomachus prefers a simple Demiurge as the highest god in his system. Numenius envisions a triad of gods: the first (equivalent to the Good of Plato's *Republic*, but still conceived as an Intellect) sits above the others and communes with himself (frs. 11–16), the second and third are two aspects of the Demiurge proper, the second in his higher non-divided aspect and the third in his lower divided aspect; thus it is the lowest Demiurge who interacts with matter. It will become clear that the *Oracles* work in this Platonic tradition but create their own niche.

that aspect of him that is fully transcendent and unknowable. A central feature of Middle-Platonic speculations about the highest god was a tension between his transcendence from the world below him and his immanence in it. The highest god somehow possessed both qualities, since he was both responsible for the world's existence and also necessarily removed from it.[6]

In the *Oracles*, his connection with the rest of the Intelligible realm is made clearer in frs. 4–8. The intelligible realm is triadic, made up of the Father, a Power that emanates from him, and a Second Intellect that issues forth from the two. Thus, the activities of the Father that have an impact on the world below issue from his Power.[7] This Power is very closely associated with the Father: it is with (*sun*) him, whereas the second Intellect is from (*apo*) him (fr. 4). In fr. 6, we learn that this Power, acting like a girdling membrane (*hupezōkōs humēn*), divides the first from the second fire. Although the two fires are clearly the first and second Intellects, the context of the quotation from Simplicius shows that he referred the term to the intelligible and sensible realms. Scholars have mainly followed him and therefore connected the 'girdling membrane' with Hecate as World Soul.[8] Once we understand that the Power is not the Intellectual World Soul but rather an intelligible entity, we can see that the correct interpretation of fr. 6 is that this is an intelligible intermediary and separates the two Intellects. In such a position it is necessarily closer to the Father than the second Intellect is. Power is the actualized emanation from the Father, which at once helps preserve his transcendence while insuring a conduit to the world below.

We are introduced to the second Intellect in fr. 5, where we read that the Father acts on matter not through Power but through Intellect. The Demiurge of the cosmos is this second Intellect which comes from the Father; he is 'Intellect of Intellect' (*nou noos*). The Father perfects all things and hands them on to the Demiurge, whom human beings mistakenly call the first god (fr. 7).[9] This second Intellect is a dyad, i.e., it has two functions: from the Father it

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[6] For the tension in Apuleius, which is in many ways reflective of the problem throughout the period and here in the *Oracles*, see Finamore 2006.

[7] For the feminine nature of this Power and its relation to Gnostic texts, see Majercik 1989: 4 and 7.

[8] Des Places 1971: 124–5; Majercik 1989: 143–4; Lewy 1978: 92. Van den Berg 2001: 252–6, however, has the correct interpretation. Majercik, like Turner 1991: 221–32, associates the Power with Hecate and then distinguishes a second, lower Hecate that separates the second Intellect from the lower realms, acting as a World Soul. Cf. Dillon 1977: 394. For more on Hecate and her role in the *Oracles*, see below.

[9] It is impossible to determine whether Numenius is dependent on the *Oracles* for his similar remark that the Intellect that we mere humans place first is not first (fr. 16 Des Places) or whether the *Oracles* are dependent upon him or whether there is an independent third source that both Numenius and the *Oracles* are copying. For a summary of the various positions taken see Majercik 1989: 144–5. Athanassiadi 1999: 153–6 argues that Apamea and its temple of Bel (Adad) provides a connection between the *Oracles* and Numenius and that the Julians and Numenius may have been part of the same social network in the city.

possesses the Forms within itself and he uses these to bring form to the world of matter (fr. 8). Thus, the Father is further separated from the world below by the second Intellect which inherits the Forms as his own thoughts and uses them for the ordering of the cosmos. It is easy to see why human beings think this second Intellect is the primary god, for it is of him that we have the most direct evidence. The *Oracles*, however, make clear that there is a higher Intellect, though hidden and 'carried away' from our realm.[10]

The relationship between the two Intellects is made clearer in other fragments. We have already seen that the second Intellect is a dyad (fr. 8) in the sense that it looks in two directions: upward to the Father and downward toward Nature. The *Oracles* also called the first Intellect 'once transcendent' (*hapax epekeina*, fr. 169) and the second 'twice transcendent' (*dis epekeina*, fr. 125).[11] These terms again distinguish the monadic first god from his dyadic counterpart, and they point to the roles they each play in the system: the first god aloof and separate, the second involved in all the realms below him.[12]

The longest of the fragments (fr. 37) further articulates the roles of the two gods. The source of the Platonic Forms is the Father, but at his level these Forms remain unified. The Forms become divided at the level of the second Intellect. Once divided into individual Forms, they descend into our world through the World Soul. These Forms, the *Oracle* tells us, are the thoughts of the Father. We see again a kind of outpouring that begins in a fully unified, intelligible fashion at the level of Father and becomes more individuated at the level of the second Intellect. This notion of greater division and diversity the farther down the system one proceeds is clearly Platonic in conception. Further, the Father remains aloof and sends the Forms via his will (fr. 37.1), which appears to be not a separate hypostasis from him but rather another type of potentiality that emanates from him (while he himself remains above) and allows the Forms to become more than his unified thoughts as they move further downward in the system.[13]

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[10] Some of the Sethian Gnostic treatises from Nag Hammadi also introduce a 'Triple Powered One' which they locate between the Highest God and the Demiurge. This seems to be another use of the feminized intermediate potentiality, which bridges the distance between first and second gods in the Middle-Platonic systems. See Turner 1991; cf. Majercik 1989: 7–8.

[11] The term *dis epekeina* appears in the introductory remarks before the oracle itself in fr. 125. The term is nonetheless certainly Chaldaean. See Majercik 1989: 295, des Places 1971: 147, and Lewy 1978: 77–8 note 43.

[12] For the highest god as the Monad before the triad see frs. 26 and 27. (He is termed *hapax epekeina* in Lydus' introduction to fr. 26.)

[13] Majercik 1989: 157 says that the Will 'functions as a hypostasized faculty of the Highest God'. Lewy 1978: 79 calls the Will and similar paternal functions 'faculties who in their virtuality are identical with the Supreme Being, but acquire in the state of actuality a particular existence'. He rightly associates Will with the Chaldaean concept of the Father's transcendence (80–1). The Will is a link between the transcendent Father and the second Intellect, allowing the Father immanence while safeguarding his transcendence. Two other such entities that spring from the Father and then

Below the second Intellect is the World Soul, described in frs. 50–6. It is usually held that the World Soul is the goddess Hecate in the *Oracles*. Such an interpretation runs into problems. First, there is fr. 50: 'The centre of Hecate is carried in the middle of the Fathers.' Although the most obvious meaning of these words is that Hecate is an intelligible goddess whose place is between the Father and the second Intellect (placing her in the intermediary position assigned to the feminine Power principle in fr. 6), Lewy[14] interpreted it as saying that Hecate (as the Moon) is being identified 'with the "midmost" of the three "Fathers", that is to say with the Ruler of the Sun'. This interpretation allowed Lewy to argue that Hecate was equivalent to the World Soul. Although there is now consensus that the Fathers in fr. 50 are the First and Second Intellects, most scholars have still assumed that Hecate is the World Soul.[15] Brisson,[16] on the other hand, argues that she is placed too high in the system to be the World Soul. Van den Berg,[17] making use of Proclus' writings, argues that Hecate is double in both the Chaldaean and the Proclean systems: one at the highest levels above the Demiurge and the other in the realm below the Demiurge (i.e., among the Intellectual and the Hypercosmic gods in Proclus' system).[18] The concept of the same god or goddess appearing at different levels is common in Platonic authors from Iamblichus onwards. Although there is natural hesitation about assigning a full-blown theory of *seirai* ('chains') of gods to Middle-Platonic authors, there is sufficient evidence to suggest divine reappearance at various levels. Both Dillon and Majercik have suggested that this sort of doubling is possible in the *Oracles*.[19]

There is an obstacle to designating even this lower Hecate the World Soul. As van den Berg points out, frs. 51 and 52 show that Hecate is the cause of

play specified roles within the cosmos are the Aion and Eros. See Majercik 1989: 14–16. We agree with Majercik and Dodds 1961: 266 that Aion is not simply to be equated with time (*chronos*), as Lewy 1978 suggests. Aion, like Eternity in the *Timaeus*, is a higher entity. On the role of the Father generally within the cosmos, see fr. 21, where the Father 'is all things but intelligibly'. He is therefore the transcendent source of all that exists throughout the system whose potencies spring from him and interact more directly below.

[14] Lewy 1978: 142 n. 283; 137–9 and n. 270; 455–6.

[15] Des Places 1971: 124–5; Majercik 1989: 163; Johnston 1990: 153–63 and *passim*; Dillon 1977: 394–5. At the time that this article was written, Johnston had been persuaded by the arguments of Brisson and others that the connection between Hecate and Soul was not as direct as she had suggested in 1990. She is largely in agreement with Finamore's sketch of Hecate's place in the ontological schema as presented in this chapter.

[16] Brisson 2000: 139; 147 n. 93; 151. Cf. van den Berg 2001: 254 and 256.

[17] Van den Berg 2001: 252–9.

[18] See van den Berg 2001: 40, Brisson 2000: 161–2, and Lewy 1978: 483–4.

[19] Dillon 1977: 394, where he cites Speusippus, Philo and Plutarch as envisioning the reappearance of the female principle at various levels; Majercik 1989: 7–8, where she cites Gnostic and Hermetic texts, as well as the later Victorinus and Synesius; cf. 144. For the appearance of the same-named gods at different levels in Apuleius, see Finamore 2006: 47–8 n. 48, where again the evidence is not strong enough to call the phenomenon a *seira*.

soul, not the World Soul itself.[20] Fr. 51 states simply that 'primal soul' (*psuchē archigenethlos*) gushes forth from Hecate's right flank. Fr. 52 names Hecate, from whose left flank Virtue springs.[21] Thus, it would seem, in accordance with Proclus' interpretation as well, there is a life-giving principle (= Hecate) from which Soul emerges. Further, if we are correct that Hecate is another feminine *dunamis*-figure at a lower level, then she should be representing the potentiality latent in the higher god (the Demiurge) and brought to fulfilment in the lower god (the World Soul), the sort of role that the higher *dunamis*-figure played between the Father and the Demiurge in fr. 6. Virtue, as Lewy says, 'must signify a cosmic power', which he applies to the Moon.[22] Virtue then is a power emanating ultimately from the Father through the Intelligible *dunamis* to the Demiurge and from him through the Life-Giving Power that is Hecate to the cosmos below. Hecate as 'the source (*pēgē*) of Virtue' remains and does not proceed, but Virtue's effects are felt in the planetary spheres (fr. 52).[23] Thus, it would seem that Hecate reappears among the planetary gods as the Moon, an intermediary between the cosmic gods and nature, which lowest sphere fr. 54 reports is supported on Hecate's back. Indeed, this overarching power of the female goddess at various levels can be glimpsed in fr. 56 as well:

Rhea is the source and outpouring of the blessed Intellectuals, for she first in Power (*dunamei*), having received in her marvellous wombs the offspring of all things as they rush forth, pours them into the universe.

Rhea is the female Power in its highest form, the 'Mother of the Gods' between the two Fathers.[24] She is therefore 'first in *dunamis*' and she has wombs, as does the lower Hecate (frs. 32, 35, 96). Rhea receives Intellectual realities (Intellectual Forms, Souls, etc.) from the Father and transmits them below. It is easy to imagine the transfer taking place through the Intellectual Life-Principle Hecate.

The result of this schema is a well-organized, Platonic system with the highest entities connected to the lowest through a series of intermediaries. Such a system is conducive to bringing souls in the lower realms back into contact with their gods and *vice versa*, but it also exposes a differentiation between our souls and those of the gods. Human souls enmeshed in the world of matter think diachronically, moving from point to point in time. The Father's thought

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[20] Van den Berg 2001: 252 n. 2.

[21] Lewy 1978: 88–90 discusses the two fragments. He argues persuasively that the fragments refer to a cult statue of the goddess Hecate.

[22] Lewy 1978: 89.   [23] See frs. 107.10–11 and 182 along with Lewy 1978: 89 and 220–2.

[24] Lewy 1978: 83–5 mistakenly argues that the Greek term *Rheiē* in this fragment is not to be translated 'Rhea' but as the feminine of *rhadios*, 'swift'. See the discussion in Majercik 1989: 165. Van den Berg 2001: 252–4 argues that Proclus most probably equates Rhea and Hecate, as does Damascius.

is clearly different. He exists in eternity with no chronic divisions. To discover and know him is to undergo a radical change of thinking.

This conception is best brought out in fr. 1.[25] The Father is intelligible (fr. 1.3 *ti noēton*), and we cognize him by a special psychic faculty, the flower of the intellect (1.4 *noein noou anthei*). The jingling of *noēton / noein / noou* reinforces the concept. To cognize god involves a special meaning of 'cognize' and a special instrument of the soul. If one should try to cognize god as something specific (the way, say, one perceives a tree or even the Form of a living thing), no cognition will take place. God is 'a power of a strength that is visible on all sides and that flashes with Intellectual divisions' (1.5–6). These words represent the Father in two aspects, first as the monad of the intelligible Triad, which shines magnificently in the surrounding realm, and the second as the Demiurge, who receives the unified Forms from the Father and divides them. The image is of a shining unbroken light that is fragmented by the prism of the second Intellect. To know these deities, we must relax our minds using not force but 'the outspread flame of the outspread intellect that measures all things but that Intelligible [object]' (1.8–9). The cognition is viewed as calm, passive. The human intellect has the capacity to measure intelligible Forms, and this is the capacity that the intellect should use but this capacity will still not cognize the Father, who is beyond such divisions. In the end, the cognition will be indirect: 'bearing the pure eye of your soul turned away' from the Father, you should 'turn an empty intellect toward the Intelligible in order to learn the intelligible since it [i.e., the intelligible Father] exists outside of your intellect' (1.10–12). Our minds are empty of all variety, including the Forms themselves, and by not focusing the soul's eye on its object but rather by passively receiving it, we cognize the Father.

Thus, the kind of thinking that unites human beings to the Father is qualitatively different from the normal thinking we do. This distinction is, of course, central to the Platonic world view whereby the world of becoming differs from that of the Forms. Nonetheless, as is typical in other Middle Platonisms, the gap between human and divine is larger, filled with greater metaphysical space and populated by a host of intermediaries. The separation between human and divine is more difficult to bridge than it was for Plato and requires a spiritual ritual, to which we will turn momentarily.

First, we must consider a host of other, minor deities who, having a special role in magic and ritual (as we shall see in section 3), are placed within and are essential to the Chaldaean philosophical structure. These divinities include Eros, Iynges and the Connectors. All three of these agencies spring from the Paternal

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[25] On fr. 1, see Lewy 1978: 164–9; Des Places 1971: 66 and 123; Majercik 1989: 138–40.

Father and help to bind the universe together and connect human beings with the higher orders.[26]

The Father sowed 'the bond of Eros with its heavy fire' (*desmon puribrithē erōtos*; cf. fr. 39; cf. fr. 42). Eros, then, originates like the Ideas from the Father and, also like them, travels full of the intelligible fire, bringing the Paternal thoughts to the realms below. As a bond, it helps connect entities below with those above. Eros therefore performs a function in accordance with Plato's view of Eros in the *Symposium*; Eros is an intermediary, one endowed with higher powers used for our benefit.

The Iynges (frs. 76–9) are thoughts of the Father that themselves think and travel the length of the Chaldaean system. As 'transmitters' or 'mediators' (*diaporthmioi*, fr. 78; echoing Plato's description of *daimones*, particularly Eros, as ferrymen at *Symposium* 202e3), they bring Paternal thoughts to our realm and also serve as 'Intellectual Sustainers' (*noeroi anocheis*, fr. 79), which help keep the planets in motion. As Majercik (1989: 9) suggests, the Iynges descend to the planetary sphere when invoked by priests in a theurgic ritual. Damascius tells us (fr. 76) that there are a great number of Iynges and they travel from the Father to the planetary spheres.

Connectors (*sunocheis*) also originate from the Father, who is called the 'First Connector' (fr. 84). They guard the cosmos, whose authority comes from the Father who has endowed the Connectors with his own Strength (fr. 82). This theme is echoed in fr. 81, where the Connectors are assimilated with the Father's lightning bolts (i.e., the Forms) and 'serve the Father's persuasive Will (*douleuontai patros peithēnidi boulēi*)'. In fr. 83, Connectors make the Intellectual realms whole (*holopoioi*). In fr. 80, we learn that there are Hylic Connectors, i.e., the rays of the sun on which souls are uplifted.

All of these entities (Eros, Iynges and Connectors) share common features. They emanate from the Father, help conjoin and preserve the various levels of the universe, and as Intelligible beings help unite human beings to the gods in theurgic rituals. Fr. 32, which speaks specifically of the Connectors but whose point is easily extended to all of these entities, shows that the power begins with the Paternal Intellect, unfolds through Hecate, and bestows upon the Connectors 'a life-giving, highly powered fire (*zeidōroio puros mega dunamenoio*)'. Thus, these entities are an actualization of the Father's power to harmonize the universe.[27] As Intelligible entities, these active agents of the highest god provide the means for theurgy to occur. They themselves bring the initiating power of

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[26] For a good overview of these minor deities, see Lewy 1978: 126–37 and Majercik 1989: 8–16.
[27] The Teletarchs, as rulers of the three Chaldaean worlds (Empyrean, Ethereal and Material), carry on this harmonization: frs. 84–5.

the gods to us and also provide the *sacra nomina* that will connect us to them. It is time to turn to the ritual and what we know of it.

3 THE CHALDAEAN RITUAL SYSTEM

In trying to recreate rituals advocated by the *Oracles*, we are in a precarious situation: relatively few of our extant fragments explicitly discuss rituals and yet the *Oracles*' later students and commentators describe rituals that they attribute to the *Oracles*, to other works composed by the two Julians, or that they otherwise associate with theurgy, in a fair amount of detail. It is usually impossible to be certain exactly how far back any ritual – or version of a ritual – might go. Here we focus on three practices that scholars generally agree to have been central to theurgy from an early period, and that demonstrate the close interdependence between the theurgists' philosophical and ritual systems, which was a hallmark of the system through its history.

ANIMATING STATUES   The phrase *hē telestikē technē* ('the perfecting art') refers in theurgic contexts to two processes: perfecting statues and perfecting the soul of the theurgist so that it might rise above the material realm; the second of these will be discussed shortly below.[28] It is worth noting that the word *telestikē* and its cognates had long been associated closely with mystery cults in Greek religion; in using the term to describe their rituals, the theurgists suggest that they are following in – but improving upon – an old tradition of forging a special relationship between the human and the divine.

Forging such a relationship was a particular challenge for the theurgist because, as section 2 of this chapter made clear, the theurgic cosmos was strati-fied into discrete realms, each of which had its proper inhabitants. Travel across realms was not easy for either the soul that wished to ascend above the material realm, or the divinity who wished to descend into it. To ensure that the latter sort of transition could take place, the theurgist was required to prepare a recep-tacle in which the god could temporarily lodge (*hupodochē*, a word developed from Plato's *Timaeus*, e.g., 49a–51b, where it refers to the unformed substance that receives the Ideas). The *hupodochē* was fabricated from a combination of *sumbola* that bore an ontological relationship to the divinity in question (e.g., Iamblichus, *Myst.* 1.21, Proclus, *In Prm.* 847.19–29 and *In Cr.* 19.12) – later theurgic texts described these as being on the same ontological 'chain' (*seira*) as the divinity. In other words, the underlying theory in preparing statues made from material *sumbola* was 'like-to-like': if an object within the material world,

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[28] On the animation of statues, with fuller reference to ancient sources, see Johnston 2008.

however small, could be created so as to be sufficiently similar in nature to the god, then the god could more easily descend into that object. These *sumbola*, which had been 'scattered' throughout the cosmos by the Father (fr. 108, cf. Proclus, *In Tim.* 1.211.1–2), could include elements from the mineral, animal and plant worlds, as well as special names or words (the latter two of which are sometimes more specifically called *sunthēmata*, e.g., fr. 109). Proclus' *On the Hieratic Art* gives many examples of these and the 'chains' on which they belong – *sumbola* related to Helios, for example, include gold and lions. In a fragment that probably comes from the *Oracles*, Hecate instructs the theurgist to make a statue for her out of wild rue, resin, myrrh, frankincense and the kind of small lizard that dwells near the house (fr. dub. 224). This would be our earliest reference to a telestic *hupodochē*.

It might be asked why theurgists made the *hupodochai* anthropomorphic – that is, made them statues – if what really mattered was assembling the proper combination of *sumbola* so as to replicate the ontological order to which the god belonged. The Emperor Julian (*Frag. Epist.* 293b–c Wright = Bidez 89b) suggested that those who are in the body (*sōmati*), as we are, can more easily worship divinities that are similarly embodied – but in the end, we must concede that the most important, if unacknowledged, reason probably was that statues were a well-established part of traditional cult, too familiar to be abandoned.

Once the statue had been properly constructed and consecrated, the god was called into it; from here he or she could instruct the theurgist or, by simply being present, shed divine light onto his soul and thus improve it. There were alternative means of bringing gods into the material realm as well, but these were more difficult: Iamblichus makes it clear that a direct visit from a god – understood to be rare in any case – severely disturbed the terrestrial realm, bringing on earthquakes, for example. The brilliance of direct divine light, moreover, could be tolerated only briefly by human eyes and the theurgist was enfeebled and struggled to breathe while experiencing it.[29] The god might also enter into a medium to speak to the theurgist, so long as the medium had been properly purified and prepared; mediumship was, then, essentially like using telestic statues insofar as the vessel to hold the god had to be made suitable. Indeed, Proclus closely associates the purificatory preparations of mediums with those used to prepare telestic statues (*In Cr.* 100.19–25) and also tells us that mediums had to wear clothing suitable to the deity to be invoked, which was marked with appropriate *eikonismata* – a practice that again echoes the construction of statues from suitable elements (*In R.* 2.246.23; cf. Porph. fr. 350

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[29] In comprising this description, we draw on passages throughout Iamb., *Myst.* book 2; cf. frs. 146–8. Cf. Johnston 2008.

Smith). Suitable mediums were hard to find, however, and hard to maintain in a pure state; creating a telestic statue was undoubtedly an easier means of enabling a god to temporarily breach the boundary between the noetic and material worlds.

ANAGŌGĒ   If it was hard for a theurgist to prepare for a god to descend, it was even harder to get his own soul to ascend, a process called *anagōgē* ('leading upwards'). As with telestic statues, the principle underlying the ritual means of doing so was like-to-like: one's soul had to become as similar to that of the upper realms as possible. This meant making the soul, and the vehicle that surrounded it and by which it was carried upward (variously called the *pneuma* or *ochēma*),[30] as fiery and light-filled as possible, given that the upper realms and the entities within them were fiery (as expressed, e.g., at frs. 34–9 and discussed in section 2 above).[31]

He could accomplish this in several ways. The most direct was through *sustasis*, an encounter with the divine (which might be face-to-face or might be when the god was in a statue or a medium). Iamblichus tells us that during *sustasis*, the gods, 'being benevolent and propitious, shine their light upon the theurgist in generous abundance, calling their souls upward to themselves . . . ' (*Myst.* 1.12, 40.19–41.8; cf. fr. dub. 208). This process was called the 'illumination' (*ellampsis*) of the theurgist. Another way involved 'drawing in the flowering flames that descend from the Father . . . from which the soul plucks the soul-nourishing flower of the fiery fruits'. Elsewhere, we hear that 'those who drive out the soul by inhaling are set free' (frs. 130 and 124). Together, and particularly in combination with evidence from a similar anagogic rite described by the so-called Mithras Liturgy (*PGM* 4.475–829), these two fragments of the *Oracles* suggest that the theurgist was supposed to inhale sunlight – that portion of divine light that reaches down into the material world.

Anagōgē required other preparations as well: Psellus tells us that the theurgists used stones, herbs and incantations to prepare the vehicle for ascent, for example (*PG* 122, 1132a8–12). But the incorporation of fiery light into the soul and its vehicle was pre-eminent, and it is here, too, that we clearly see again the degree to which the rituals of the theurgist grew organically from his cosmology, metaphysics and ontology, however similar they might have been in many ways to non-theurgic rituals of the same era such as lychnomancy (a process of calling a god into one's presence through the flame of a lamp and then questioning

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[30] On the vehicle see Finamore 1985 and Majercik 1989: 131–2.
[31] On ascent rituals and the role played by light, with fuller references to ancient sources, see Johnston 2004.

him, which is mentioned frequently in the magical papyri of late antiquity). Lychnomancy itself, as well as most other traditional forms of divination, were rejected by the theurgists (fr. 107, cf. Iamblichus, *Myst.* 2.10, 90.7–95.14), but it is worth noting that those traditional forms that they did accept were usually justified by reference again to their metaphysical ideas: the Pythia at Delphi is said to prophesy because the divine light enters the vehicle of her soul and the prophetess at Branchidae similarly is said to be 'filled with divine radiance' when she speaks (*Myst.* 3.11, 123.11–128.11).

IYNGES   In section 2, we discussed the fact that Iynges were the thoughts of the Father that travelled throughout the various strata of the theurgic cosmos, helping to bind them together, keep the planets in motion and perform other demiurgic acts. In earlier Greek and Roman sources, however, 'iynx' referred both to a bird that could turn its head nearly all the way around and to a wheel that could be spun on a looped string to as to make a whirring noise; in either case, by manipulating the iynx, one could draw an unwilling person to one's bed. The theurgists maintained a variation of this practice even as they developed the cosmogonic functions of the Iynges. That is, theurgists used material iynges (i.e., the wheel called the iynx) to do such things as invoke divinities to earth (fr. dub. 223; cf. Damascius 2.95.15, Psellus, *PG* 122, 1133a) or draw rain from the heavens during a drought (Marinus, *Proclus* 28).[32] In other words, here again we find that metaphysical concepts and rituals are closely linked, and that earlier practices from 'mainstream' religion and magic have been revised to serve new, more soteriologically oriented roles.

SUMMATION OF THEURGIC RITUAL   In the ritual system of the theurgists, even as we have only briefly sketched it here, we see a determination to put into effect what were, for other Middle Platonists, philosophical concepts only to be thought about (and indeed, by common interpretation, this is the connotation of the word '*theurgia*': a theurgist participated in 'divine works', whereas others only spoke about the divine ['*theologia*']).

   The *Oracles* had a long life in Late Platonism. Although there is some controversy over whether Plotinus mentioned the *Oracles* in his extant writings,[33] Porphyry knew the *Oracles* and made use of them in his *Philosophy From Oracles* and *De regressu animae*. For Porphyry, the theurgy of the *Oracles* affected only the lower human soul.[34] Iamblichus on the other hand raised the importance of

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[32] Johnston 1990, ch. 7.
[33] See Dillon 1992: 131–40; Majercik 1998: 91–105; Finamore 1998: 107–10.
[34] For discussion of the role of the *Chaldaean Oracles* in Porphyry's writings, see P. Hadot 1967: 127–63, O'Meara 1969: 103–39, and Smith 1974: 128–36.

theurgy in philosophy, making theurgy necessary for the soul's salvation. In his *De mysteriis* he argues directly against Porphyry's scepticism concerning the role of theurgic ritual. Iamblichus, Proclus and Damascius wrote commentaries on the *Oracles*.[35] They believed that the teachings of the *Oracles* were in complete harmony with those of Plato. Hierocles, Hermias, Olympiodorus, Synesius, and other Platonic writers make use of the *Oracles* in their writings.

It is interesting that, even as Christianity conquered the Greek and Roman worlds and, eventually, all of Europe, the ritual system developed by the theurgists (and their close colleagues, the Hermetics) continued to fascinate intellectuals, some of whom adopted its terminology for describing Christian practices and others of whom even strove to justify its continued use in tandem with Christianity. (Pseudo-)Dionysius the Areopagite, for instance, incorporated many theurgic concepts into his exegesis of Christian worship, particularly using the doctrine of *sumbola* to discuss the Eucharist.[36] Marius Victorinus and Synesius of Cyrene also discussed the *sumbola*.[37] A first edition of the *Oracles* with commentary, heavily influenced by Psellus' work on them, was produced by Gemistus Pletho in the late fourteenth or early fifteenth century under the title *The Magical Oracles of the Magi of Zoroaster*. And from Pletho, who saw in theurgic lore the beginnings of a new, universalizing religion, theurgy and the *Oracles* passed into the Italian Renaissance. Pletho encouraged Cosimo de Medici to found a new Platonic Academy, and within that Academy, Marsilio Ficino began the work of editing and translating ancient theurgic texts.[38] From Ficino, these ideas passed onward to Cornelius Agrippa, Campanella and others.[39]

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[35] Damascius refers to the twenty-eighth book of Iamblichus' commentary in his *On First Principles* vol. 2, p. 1 Westerink-Combès. Marinus tells us that Proclus spent five years writing his commentary: *Vita Procli* 26. Damascius refers to his own commentary in his *Parmenides* commentary vol. 1, p. 9 Westerink-Combès.

[36] Shaw 1999, Struck 2001; cf. also more generally Klitenic-Wear and Dillon 2007.

[37] Des Places 1971: 29–41.

[38] Further discussion of the influences on Ficino at Copenhaver 1988 and throughout Kaske and Clark 2002.

[39] Walker 1958.

GNOSTICISM

EDWARD MOORE AND JOHN D. TURNER

INTRODUCTION

To the question 'What is Gnosticism?' there is no simple answer. The term itself is modern, coined by one Henry More in the seventeenth century, in a work on the biblical book of Revelation, where it is applied to the heresy of Thyatira (Rev. 2.18–29). The ancient term 'gnostics' (*gnōstikoi*) is attested in the Christian heresiological literature, though it is difficult to ascertain exactly to whom this label is applied. The earliest instance of the adjective *gnōstikos* is in Plato (*Statesman* 258e), where he distinguishes between the practical and theoretical sciences, both being types of knowledge (*gnōsis*). Irenaeus of Lyons, in his monumental treatise *Against Heresies* (*Adversus haereses*, c. 180 CE) refers to the 'Gnostic heresy' and condemns those who claim to possess 'knowledge (*gnōsis*) falsely so called'. The term need not be pejorative; in fact in the early third century, Clement of Alexandria, opposed the Christian Gnostic school of Valentinus, but also wrote of a true, orthodox Christian *gnōsis*, the possessors of which he called Gnostics (e.g., *Stromateis* 5.12). One thing is clear, as even scholars who have advanced the cause of abandoning the term altogether have admitted: the binding thread connecting the disparate texts so often called 'Gnostic' is the idea that, although this world is the product, not of the highest God or One, but of a lower entity of lesser power, it is possible for humans to transcend this world through the insight (*gnōsis*) from which the divine human self originates, and can reassimilate itself to the highest God. This is admittedly a broad criterion for categorization, especially since we find such a concept in mainstream Hellenic philosophical texts, especially in the Platonic tradition (cf. Plato, *Laws* 10.896e, *Theaetetus* 176b).

Scholars of Gnosticism have been fortunate. Sources have been greatly expanded since the discovery, at Nag Hammadi, Egypt, in 1945, of a cache of fifty-two Coptic texts, in twelve papyrus codices and part of a thirteenth, translated from Greek originals, containing numerous examples of Gnostic literature, as well as some texts that are patently non-Gnostic, such as a loose

translation of a section of Plato's *Republic.* This find, now known as the Nag Hammadi Codices (abbreviated NHC) or Library, is our single most important source for Gnostic ideas. Until this discovery, scholars had to rely solely upon the accounts of Christian heresiologists, and the polemical treatises of Plotinus, Porphyry and a few other primary sources like the Bruce and Askew Codices and the Manichaean codices from Medinet Mahdi. This collection of original sources has recently been amplified – with some duplications – by the 2006 publication of the fourth-century Tchacos Codex.

Scholars have not decided if Gnosticism is a religion, a school of philosophy, a mystical 'eclectic' practice, or what have you. The best we can do is delve into the texts, and with the aid of scholars who began work on the Nag Hammadi treatises in the latter half of the twentieth century. What this scholarship reveals is that, at least, Gnostic thought was demonstrably nuanced by Greek, especially Platonic, metaphysics.

When we consider, however, the likely *purpose* for which the earliest Gnostic writings were composed, it is not hard to arrive at the conclusion that they were intended to correct or revise the cosmogony of the Hebrew Bible, i.e., Genesis. For this, among other reasons, scholars generally agree that Gnosticism arose out of a Hellenistic Jewish milieu, and eventually evolved into a distinct religion. The critique of the biblical account of creation with the aid of Hellenic, especially Platonic and Stoic, philosophy, eventually spawned the earliest Gnostic 'school' of which we know something: the Sethian Gnostics, so called because they gave a special place to Seth, the authentic son of Adam, in their revelations. Certain elements of the Sethian texts of the Nag Hammadi Codices are almost certainly pre- or non-Christian in origin, though many display signs of later Christianization.

Although there is no historical record of any group, Gnostic or otherwise, who actually called themselves 'Sethians', during the period 175–475 CE, various early Christian heresiologists referred to certain 'Gnostic' doctrines, ritual practices, persons and groups that either they or their later interpreters called 'Sethian': the anonymous 'multitude of gnostics' described by Irenaeus of Lyons, (*Against Heresies* 1.29–31, c. 180 CE) become known as 'Sethians' or 'Ophites' or 'Barbeloites' by Irenaeus' later epitomators Pseudo-Tertullian (*Against all Heresies* 2.7, c. 210 CE, based on Irenaeus and Hippolytus of Rome's lost *Syntagma*), Epiphanius of Salamis (*Against Heresies* 26; 39–40, c. 375 CE), Filastrius of Brescia (*Various Heresies* 3, c. 385 CE), and Theodoret of Cyrrhus (*Compendium of Heretical Fables* 1.14, c. 450 CE). Evidently the term 'Sethian' was originally prompted by equivocation between the archetypal heavenly figures of Seth and Jesus Christ as saviours and bearers of the true image of God. Since the publication of the Nag Hammadi Library, the name 'Sethian' has

become a typological category applied by modern scholars to the authors and users of a distinctive group of eleven distinct treatises from the Nag Hammadi Codices.[1] Many of these refer to a special segment of humanity called 'the great generation', 'strangers', 'of another kind (*allogenēs*)', 'the incorruptible/ undominated/unshakeable race', 'the (holy) seed/children of Seth', and 'those who are worthy'. The terms 'generation/race' (*genos*, *genea*) 'seed' and 'strangers' are all plays on the tradition of Seth's birth as 'another seed' (σπέρμα ἕτερον) instead of Abel (Gen. 4.25, J source), born in the likeness and image of Adam (Gen. 5.3, P source), who was himself born male and female in the image of God (Gen. 1.26–7).

Christian contact with the Sethian Gnostics must have occurred rather early, for by 125 CE we find Basilides of Alexandria expounding a sophisticated and completely Christian Gnostic theological system. His younger contemporary, Valentinus, likewise developed a wholly Christian Gnostic theology, which reached a high level of sophistication in the work of his pupil Ptolemaeus. These thinkers emphasized the absolute, unknowable transcendence of the highest principle, surrounded by a limit or boundary (*horos*) beyond which even the second intelligible principle could not pass.

SETHIAN GNOSTICISM

One of the first things to strike a reader of Gnostic literature is the vast number of metaphysical entities (aeons, angels, archons, not to mention 'first' principles). One such is the *Apocryphon (Secret Book) of John*, containing an elaborate noetic cosmogony based upon a standard Middle Platonic-Neopythagorean triad of first principles personified as 'Father-Mother-Child' (cf. Plato, *Timaeus* 52d), but expanding and embellishing it to create a complex structure of divine and semi-divine beings who eventually produce this cosmos, including humanity, and the resultant drama of fall and redemption. The *Apocryphon of John* (hereafter *Ap. John*) is an early example of what may be called classic Sethian Gnosticism. It appears to have been the Sethian revelation *par excellence*, existing in no less than four versions, two shorter (Berlin Gnostic Codex 8502, 2 and NHC III, 1) and two longer (NHC IV, 1 and NHC II, 1), the last of which is here summarized.

Irenaeus of Lyons, writing around 180, provides an account of a Gnostic theogonical and cosmogonical myth almost identical to the first half of this text (*Adv. Haer.* 1.29.1–4), the main contents of which are not overtly Christian,

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[1] The *Apocryphon of John*, the *Trimorphic Protennoia*, the *Apocalypse of Adam*, the *Hypostasis of the Archons*, *Thought of Norea*, *Melchizedek*, and the *Gospel of the Egyptians*, *Zostrianos*, *Allogenes*, the *Three Steles of Seth*, and *Marsanes*.

though our version includes a Christian 'frame story' in the form of a dialogue between Jesus and John son of Zebedee that is more than likely a later addition. In any case, the content of *Ap. John* lends itself easily to Christian use, especially when the third member of its supreme trinity of Father–Mother–Child, the self-generated Child, is identified with Christ.

Beginning with a hyper-transcendent One or Invisible Spirit, the 'Father of the All' (2.25) described in terms of a negative theology,[2] *Ap. John* goes on to describe the hypostatization of the One's self-reflection or thought (*ennoia*) – poetically expressed as its image reflected in the luminescent 'living' water radiating from the One – as 'Forethought/Providence' (*pronoia*), the first power that precedes everything (4.19). In other words, the One, which is beyond Being, emanates Being by thinking or reflecting upon its own spontaneous effulgence. This Being or 'first emanation of the Father' is called *Barbēlō*, possibly a derivation from a Hebrew term *b'arb'a 'el(ōth)* meaning 'in four is God' (cf. the tetragrammaton, YHWH), and is described in terms both feminine and androgynous, e.g., 'universal womb' and 'Mother-Father' (5.6), also referred to as 'the first human, the image of the Invisible Spirit [i.e., the One, the Father]' (6.2).

After her initial emanation, *Barbēlō* requests further powers from the invisible Father: 'Foreknowledge' (*prognōsis*), 'Incorruptibility' (*aphtharsia*), 'Eternal Life' (*zōē*) (anomalously supplemented by 'Truth', *alētheia* to form a divine pentad uniting *Barbēlō* with these four powers or noetic qualities). Together with *Barbēlō*, these 'androgynous aeons' (6.9) comprise the first instance of determinate Being, essentially the living divine Intellect.[3]

Ap. John in fact offers a contemplative protology in which *Barbēlō* 'gazes into' the Father's luminescence (NHC II, 1 anomalously has the Father 'gaze into' *Barbēlō*), causing her to conceive a self-generated 'Child of Light' (6.10). This union of a superior active and limiting masculine principle with a second passive and limited feminine principle is a common theme in Middle Platonic and Neopythagorean thought, and is here given a mytho-poetic rendering of subtle beauty. Rather like the Late Platonic sequence of productive phases of procession and reversion, the Child comes forth and, once it glorifies the One and Forethought as its parental source, comes to stand as an independent being in the presence of the Father, whereupon it requests to be given Mind (*nous*)

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[2] E.g., Alcinous, *Didaskalikos* 10.3–4, Aristides, *Apologia* 1.3, and Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 5.12.81–2, but also in Gnostic sources such as Basilides, apud Hippolytus, *Ref.* 7, 20.2–21.1, *Eugnostos the Blessed* (NHC III, 71.13–72.6), *Allogenes* (NHC XI, 62.28–63.25), and the Valentinian *Tripartite Tractate* (NHC I, 51.28–55.14).

[3] At this point, Plotinus would be puzzled at Forethought's need to request these four extra powers from the One. For Plotinus, 'Intellect is as it is, always the same, resting in a static activity' (*Ennead* 2.9.1.30, tr. Armstrong, although according to *Ennead* 6.7.12 it is teeming with life).

'as a companion to work with' (6.33). At this point, more or less, the Father-Mother-Child triad is complete, though obviously greatly embellished and extended. But the story has really only just begun. There follows an elaborate account of the error and fall of Sophia, the generation of the Demiurge and the creation of the physical cosmos, in which Platonic metaphysics becomes entwined with the biblical creation narrative in a cosmological myth of epic proportions.

The general outline is as follows. The divine Child produced 'Four Luminaries' consisting of three 'aeons' each, a total of twelve (7.30–8.28), and together with the Father and *Barbēlō* brought to expression the primal man or 'perfect human', called Pigeradamas (or Geradamas, perhaps Heb. *gēr Adamas* = 'Strange Adam' or Gk. *geras Adamas*, 'ancient Adam') who goes on to glorify his source and appoint his son, Seth, to rule over the 'second eternal realm' (8.28–9.24). We are now in the realm of the Fullness (*plērōma*), in which a series of intellectual couplings occurs betwixt the various aeons, each producing in its turn a new aeon. The rule is that no single aeon can produce without its consort; to do so is to break the chain of perfection, in which the male supplies the form and the female substance of any subsequent offspring. This is precisely what Sophia (Wisdom), the last of the initial twelve aeons, does. We read:

[Sophia] wanted to bring forth something like herself, without the consent of the Spirit [i.e., the Father, or One], who had not given approval, without her partner and without his consideration. The male did not give approval. She did not find her partner, and she considered this without the Spirit's consent and without the knowledge of her partner. Nonetheless, she gave birth. And because of the invincible power within her, her thought was not an idle thought. Something came out of her that was imperfect and different in appearance from her, for she had produced it without her partner. (*Ap. John* NHC II, 1: 9.28–10.6, tr. M. Meyer)

This offspring is the formless Yaldabaoth, the creator of the material cosmos, a parody of both the biblical creator God and the Demiurge of Plato's *Timaeus*. Unlike Plato's good *dēmiourgos*, who looked to the Forms for his model, wishing every created thing to be as like himself as possible, the Gnostic Demiurge is ignorant of the highest realm, and instead looks downward, seeing only a borrowed image of the Pleroma reflected back at him in the waters of the abyss below. The resultant cosmos is as flawed as Yaldabaoth: a weaker image of a weak reflection, processed by an arrogant mind who boasts 'I am a jealous God, and there is no other god apart from me' (13.8; cf. 11.20 with Deut. 32.39; Isa. 45.5, 22; 46.9 and *Timaeus* 41a), and ultimately, a product not of divine planning, but of divine error.

Sophia's offspring, Yaldabaoth, did not remain idle, but set about crafting a cosmos; however, unlike Plato's good craftsman, he was not imitating the realm of the Forms, but rather responding, unconsciously, to a creative impulse inherited from his mother.

Yaldabaoth organized everything after the pattern of the first aeons that had come into being, so that he might create everything in an incorruptible form. Not that he had seen the incorruptible ones. Rather, the power that is in him, that he had taken from his mother, produced in him the pattern for the world order. (*Ap. John* NHC II, 1: 12.33–13.4, tr. M. Meyer)

After completing his creation, Yaldabaoth declared: 'I am a jealous god and there is no other god beside me' (cf. Isaiah 45.5–6). Upon hearing this, his angels or archons (the rulers of the material realm, often identified by scholars with the stellar and planetary divinities) reasoned that this statement implied another god, or else, 'of whom would he be jealous?' (13.8–12).

As if to confirm the suspicions of Yaldabaoth's archons, the voice of Barbēlō, 'the complete Forethought comes forth to announce the existence of the archetypal Human and his Child' (14.13–34). After seeing the image of this perfect human being reflected in the waters below, Yaldabaoth decides to create his own version of a human being, after the image of the One, but following the pattern of his own likeness, which is not identical to that of the intelligible realm. The earthly Adam is created, with the aid of 360 (the days in the Egyptian year) angels, each contributing a body part to the physical construct.

This physical construct, being form without life, did not move as it laid upon the earth, a figure devoid of self-motion. So the crafting angels requested help from Yaldabaoth, who breathed into the face of this golem, causing it to stand upright (Gen. 2.7). But Yaldabaoth did not know that his breath was infused with the power of the life-giving aeon Sophia, his mother, who had received it from the great unknowable source, the Mother-Father, i.e., *Barbēlō* in her productive aspect. The unconquerable ignorance of Yaldabaoth did not permit him to recognize the source of his productive power, the actualization of which came forth as the divine Epinoia, a lower double of *Barbēlō*, as Adam's helper (Gen. 2.18) to remind him of his divine affiliation. However, Adam never was permitted awareness of his august origin, for the Demiurge (Yaldabaoth) took it upon himself to enslave Adam, and all his 'posterity', i.e., his offspring, humanity, in a mortal body, the 'tomb' of the soul and 'the fetter of forgetfulness', which is 'fate' (20.28–22.28). Yaldabaoth was no fool. He realized he'd been tricked, and so began a programme of rebellion, eventually leading to the defiling of Eve, who as 'mother of the living' was the earthly manifestation of *Barbēlō*'s

divine Epinoia or Life (*zōē*), a principle of life-in-becoming that could not be allowed to persist, lest it endanger the chaotic realm of Yaldabaoth, giving as it did a tiny reminder to all souls of the divine Fullness (Pleroma) far above the material image.

Human souls, having their origin from the Pleroma, were ingeniously entrapped by Yaldabaoth, but they remained somehow vaguely aware of their true provenance. Unlike Plotinus, who wrote of an immediate reversion or 'about-face' (*epistrophē*) (*Enn.* 4.8.4) occurring whenever a soul turns its highest part (the intellect) to contemplation of the ultimate source (the One), the Gnostics explained the origin of the soul's salvation by way of a long process of education reminiscent of the *Phaedo* (81c–82e), painfully undertaken in this material realm.

After the soul leaves the body, she is handed over to the authorities [archons] who have come into being through the archon [Yaldabaoth]. They bind her [the soul] with chains and throw her into prison [i.e., reincarnation, another body]. They go around with her until she awakens from forgetfulness and acquires knowledge. This is how she attains perfection and is saved. (*Ap. John* NHC II, 1.27, tr. M. Meyer)

The legendary 'elitism' of the Gnostics (saved by nature and all that) is not verified by this passage. All must undergo paideutic rebirth, struggle and eventual apotheosis, to arrive at the realm of the perfect, as suggested in Plato's *Phaedrus* 248c–e. The division of souls into pneumatics ('spirituals'), psychics (those living according to the created soul), and hylics (*hulikoi*, 'materials', those living according to base matter), became a convenient way for Valentinians to categorize various responses to the human condition; but a close reading of original Valentinian sources does not support a hierarchical or caste-like division of humanity into three classes (see, for example, the Valentinian *Tripartite Tractate* NHC I, 5). Rather, the burden is upon the *mind*. The human being who exercises his or her mind (the highest part of the soul) will discover the true Gnosis and be saved. Only those who receive but later abandon the true Gnosis will be left in the dark, a prey to Yaldabaoth and his archons.

Perhaps the greatest compliment one philosopher can pay to another is to compose a refutation of that other's work. At the very least, it shows that someone was paying attention. In the case of the Gnostics, we have a refutation from the pen of one of antiquity's greatest minds, Plotinus. Referring to his own elegantly simple metaphysical system of three primal principles or hypostases – One, Intellect and World Soul – Plotinus writes:

[W]e must not go after other first principles but put this [the One] first, and then after it Intellect, that which primarily thinks, and then Soul after Intellect (for this is the order

which corresponds to the nature of things): and we must not posit more principles than these in the intelligible world, or fewer. (*Ennead* 2.9.1.12–16, tr. Armstrong)

The appeal to the 'nature of things' underscores the fundamental difference between traditional Hellenism, of which Plotinus considered himself a faithful representative, and the views of the Gnostics, who did not see nature (*phusis*) as the best possible image of the intelligible order, but as a fallen realm governed by an array of hostile powers.

While Plotinus clearly disapproved of the Gnostic tendency – so clearly displayed in *Ap. John*, though present in many other Nag Hammadi texts – to multiply intelligible principles, his gravest reservation about Gnostic thought was their refusal to view this cosmos as the most perfect of all things that have come into being from the best of all causes, but rather to see it as a prison of souls, shackled with 'chains of fate' (*heimarmenē*) by a tyrannical Demiurge. Indeed, *Ennead* 2.9, the conclusion of Plotinus' great polemical work, the so-called '*Großschrift*',[4] is given two titles by Porphyry (*VPlot.* 16): 'Against the Gnostics', and an alternate, more descriptive of the contents, 'Against those who say that the maker of the universe is evil and the universe is evil'. Elaborate cosmologies could be attacked on purely philosophical grounds, while to deride the beauty and order of the visible world, which the classical Hellenic tradition held to be divine, was considered blasphemous. The rupture in the unity of the Pleroma, so believed the Gnostics, was mirrored here in the material realm, in Yaldabaoth's faulty creation. But Plotinus reminded his opponents:

If, being an image, [the material world] is not that intelligible world, this is precisely what is natural to it; if it was the intelligible world, it would not be an image of it. But it is false to say that the image is unlike the original; for nothing has been left out which it was possible for a fine natural image to have. (*Enn.* 2.9.8.17–20, tr. Armstrong)

The cosmos, for Plotinus as for Plato, reflects the perfection of the intelligible realm completely and as perfectly as possible.

THE PLATONIZING SETHIAN TREATISES   Another set of texts are the four so-called 'Platonizing Sethian' treatises, *Zostrianos*, *Allogenes* (both mentioned by Porphyry in *VPlot.* 16), the *Three Steles of Seth* and *Marsanes*.[5] While in the Sethian treatises of mid to later second century – the *Apocryphon of John*, the *Trimorphic Protennoia*, the *Hypostasis of the Archons* and the *Gospel of the Egyptians* – saving enlightenment concerning the nature and reality of the upper world is conferred through a biblically inspired horizontal sequence of temporally

[4] An originally continuous treatise that included *Enneads* 3.8 [30], 5.8 [31], 5.5 [32], and 2.9 [33].
[5] On the Platonizing Sethian treatises, see especially Turner 2001.

successive earthly *descents* of a heavenly saviour/revealer, the Platonizing Sethian treatises conceive saving enlightenment to be achieved through a Platonically inspired self-actualized *ascent* of a visionary through a succession of supramundane realms and mental states, during which one becomes assimilated to ever higher levels of being and insight.[6] While the former group of treatises uses the cosmology of the *Timaeus* as an exegetical template to interpret the protology of Genesis 1–9, the Platonizing Sethian treatises of the third century abandon all interest in the Genesis protology in favour of a theology of transcendental generation and visionary ascent. In these treatises the principal dialogues of reference have become the *Symposium* and the *Parmenides*, which respectively serve as the models for their technique of contemplative ascent and for their metaphysical theology, especially in negative theologies of the supreme unknowable One beyond being and the means by which it gives rise to the realm of determinate being known as the Barbēlō Aeon.

The Sethian Platonizing treatises are notable for containing ideas similar to those assailed by Plotinus in *Ennead* 2.9 and elsewhere, and represent a form of Gnosticism virtually devoid of Christian influence. Not only does Porphyry's *Life of Plotinus* 16 tell us that *Zostrianos* and *Allogenes* (and perhaps also a version of *Marsanes*) circulated in Plotinus' Roman seminar sometime during the years 263–8 CE, but also that *Zostrianos* in particular was scrupulously critiqued by Plotinus, Amelius and perhaps himself. The record of Plotinus' own debates with the proponents of these treatises is contained in his *Großschrift*, whose last section contains Plotinus' most explicit antignostic critique, several of whose details are clearly directed at *Zostrianos*. Indeed, in *Ennead* 2.9.10 Plotinus actually cites about eleven lines from *Zostrianos* (*Ennead* 2.9.10, 19–33 ≈ NHC VIII, 9.17–10.20).[7]

Although Plotinus' critique of the Gnostics does not seem to attack the emanative metaphysics or the practice of visionary/contemplative ascent offered in *Zostrianos* and *Allogenes*, he does object to certain specific elements to be found especially in *Zostrianos*: (1) the unnecessary multiplication of hypostases, perhaps aimed especially at the Sethian doctrine of the supreme One's Triple Power; (2) the notion of a defective divine Wisdom distinct from Intellect;[8]

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[6] Ultimately inspired by a combination of *Theaetetus* 176b with the vision of absolute Beauty in Plato's *Symposium* 210a–212a and of the true light in the parable of the cave in *Republic* 7.514a–517a, and perhaps even the vision of Parmenides (*Fragmente der Vorsokratiker* 227–46 Diels–Kranz).

[7] Tardieu 2005.

[8] E.g., the idea that *Sophia* is derivative and alien (*Zostrianos* VIII, 9–10; cf. *Ennead* 5.8 [31] 5, 'primal wisdom is neither a derivative nor a stranger in something strange to it, but is identical with true being and thus Intellect itself'), or that Soul or *Sophia* declined and put on human bodies (cf. *Zostrianos* VIII, 27.9–12), or that *Sophia* or the mother did not decline but merely illumined the darkness, producing an image in matter, which in turn produces an image of the image (*Zostrianos* VIII, 9.17–10.20, which is actually cited in *Ennead* 2.9 (33) 10.19–33; cf. 11.14–30); cf. however, Plotinus' own version of this in 2.9 [13] 3.

(3) the idea of a demiurge revolting from its mother and whose activity gives rise to 'repentances', 'copies' and 'transmigrations' (see *Zostrianos* VIII, 5.10–29; 8.9–16; 12.4–21); (4) the strong partitioning of Intellect, perhaps reflecting the Sethian tripartitioning of the *Barbēlō* Aeon into three subaeons; and (5) the use of various magical incantations. In general, Plotinus' objections to Gnostic cosmogonies are based on his perception that they feature entities (such as Sophia or a world creator) that produce inferior products by failing to adequately contemplate superior entities, thereby introducing discontinuities into what ought to be a continuous ontological hierarchy.

The metaphysical hierarchy of the Platonizing Sethian treatises is headed by a supreme and pre-existent Unknowable One who, as in Plotinus, is clearly beyond being.[9] Below the supreme One, at the level of determinate being, is the *Barbēlō* Aeon, a Middle Platonic tri-level divine Intellect, rather like Numenius' three gods or intellects. It contains three ontological levels, conceived as sub-intellects or aeons: one that is contemplated called Kalyptos or 'hidden'; one that contemplates, called Protophanes or 'first manifesting'; and one that is discursive and demiurgic, called Autogenes or 'self-generated'. Kalyptos contains the paradigmatic ideas or authentic existents; Protophanes contains the contemplated ideas that are united with the minds that contemplate them, and Autogenes is a demiurgic mind who contains individual souls and ideas by which he shapes the realm of Nature below him according to the forms contemplated by Protophanes. Originally, these three names probably represented three phases in the unfolding of determinate being within the *Barbēlō* Aeon: initial latency or potential existence, initial manifestation and determinate, self-generated instantiation. Such terminology may have originated in connection with the Orphic myth of Phanes emerging from the cosmic egg.

Mediating between the Unknowable One and the threefold Aeon of *Barbēlō* is the Triple Powered One, an intermediary agent endowed with the three powers of Existence, Vitality and Mentality (or Blessedness). The Triple Powered One is the emanative means by which the supreme One generates the Aeon of *Barbēlō* in three phases. (1) In its initial phase as a purely infinitival Existence (*huparxis* or *ontotēs*), it is latent within and identical with the supreme One; (2) in its emanative phase it is an indeterminate Vitality (*zōotēs*) that proceeds forth from the One; and (3) in its final phase it is a Mentality (*nootēs*) that contemplates its source in the supreme One and, thereby delimited, takes on the character of determinate being as the intellectual Aeon of *Barbēlō*.

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[9] In fact *Marsanes* posits a One even higher than the first hyper-transcendent One or 'Invisible Spirit' of classic Sethian Gnosticism, a feature found also in the developed metaphysics of Iamblichus of Chalcis.

The closest contemporarily attested non-Sethian parallel to this sequence of emanative phases, Existence, Life and Intellect, is apparently to be found in the anonymous Turin *Commentary on the Parmenides*. According to the sixth fragment of the *Commentary*, there are two 'Ones', a first One whom the *Parmenides*' first hypothesis describes as altogether beyond the realm of determinate being, and a second One, the prototype of all true, determinate being, to be identified with the 'One-who-is' of the second Parmenidean hypothesis. This second One – conceived as a divine Intellect – is said to originate by unfolding from the absolute infinitival existence of the supreme One in three successive phases or activities. First, as a pure infinitival Existence (*einai* or *huparchis*), the second One is a purely potential Intellect prefigured in the absolute being of the supreme first One. In the final phase, it has become identical with the determinate or participial being (*to on*) of Intellect proper, the second hypostasis; it has now become the hypostatic instantiation of its idea, the absolute being (*to einai*) of its prefiguration in the first One. The transitional phase between the first and final phases of Intellect in effect constitutes a median phase in which Intellect proceeds forth from the first One as an indeterminate Life. Even Plotinus himself had occasionally employed this noetic triad to designate the three phases by which Intellect emanates from the One: a trace of indeterminate Life emitted from the one halts its procession, turns back to see its prefigurative self, and becomes at once determinate Being and Intellect (cf. *Ennead* 6.7 [38] 17, 6–43). But just as the Sethians confined the Kalyptos-Protophanes–Autogenes triad to their second hypostasis *Barbēlō*, Plotinus mostly confined the function of the Being–Life–Mind triad to his second hypostasis, Intellect, where it is used to argue that Intellect is not merely a realm of static being, but is instead living and thinking Being (on the basis of Plato, *Sophist* 248e–249b).

Michel Tardieu[10] has observed that the fourth fragment of the anonymous *Parmenides Commentary* contains a statement[11] that depends upon *both* the *Chaldaean Oracles*[12] and a negative and positive theological source that at several points is shared almost word-for-word between book 1-b of Marius Victorinus' *Adversus Arium* (1.49.9–50.21) and the Sethian Platonizing treatise *Zostrianos* (NHC VIII, 64.13–68.13; 74.17–75.21), to the effect that the supreme One's 'power

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[10] Tardieu 1996: 7–114.

[11] *In Parm.* 9.1–8: 'Others (the authors of the *Chaldaean Oracles*), although they affirm that He has robbed himself of all that which is his, nevertheless concede that *his power and intellect are co-unified in his simplicity*.'

[12] *Chaldaean Oracles* fr. 3: 'the Father snatched himself away and did not enclose his own fire in his intellectual Power' (Majercik) and 4: 'For power is with him (for the commentator, the Father), but intellect is from him' (Majercik).

and intellect are co-unified in his simplicity'.[13] Moreover, a similar – if not the same – source may have been available also to the author of *Allogenes*, since Victorinus' *Adversus Arium* (1.49.17–18) and *Allogenes* (NHC XI, 61.36–7) both hold that the One is 'without existence, life, or intellect' and that the One's power of existence contains the 'powers of life and blessedness' (*Adv. Arium* 1.50.12–15; NHC XI, 49.26–37). Given that Porphyry's *Life of Plotinus* 16 tells us that *Zostrianos* and its sister treatise *Allogenes* circulated in Plotinus' philosophical seminar in Rome sometime during the years 263–8 CE, one may reasonably infer first, that *Zostrianos* and perhaps *Allogenes* were already written before the Gnostics appeared in Plotinus' circle during those years, and second, that the common source used by *Zostrianos*, *Allogenes*, and Victorinus would predate, not only *Zostrianos*, but also the anonymous *Parmenides* Commentary itself. If the *Commentary* was read in Plotinus' circle, it may have influenced the schemes of contemplative self-generation and Being-Life-Mind triads in the Platonizing Sethian treatises and in Plotinus' later treatises. But this still would not account for widespread instances of this scheme, not only in Plotinus' earlier treatises, but also in other and perhaps earlier Gnostic systems, such as is found in *Eugnostos the Blessed* (NHC III, 3 and V, I) and in Valentinian sources. But if it was the anonymous *Parmenides Commentary* that informed so many disparate early Gnostic systems including the Platonizing Sethian treatises, then why has it left no trace of its doctrine in other pre-Plotinian Neopythagorean or Middle Platonic sources, none of which employ such a process of contemplative self-generation? The alternative seems to be that the anonymous *Parmenides Commentary* is itself somehow dependent upon an already existing doctrine of contemplative self-generation found in Gnostic sources such as *Zostrianos*, as a way of explaining the relationship between the Ones of the first two hypotheses of the *Parmenides*.

CHRISTIAN GNOSTICISM

Basilides

The Christian philosopher and earliest commentator on early Christian writings Basilides of Alexandria (*fl.* c. 117–35) was, in the words of Hegel, 'one of the most distinguished Gnostics'.[14] Yet, as with so many of the losers in the doctrinal contests of the early Christian era, we know very little of his life, and our knowledge of his teachings derives from fragments and paraphrases preserved by later

[13] Cf. *Zost.* VIII, 66.14–20 'For they are [triple] powers of his [unity: complete] Existence, Life and Blessedness. In Existence he exists [as] a simple unity' with *Adversus Arium* 1.50.10: 'Since he is one in his simplicity, containing three powers: all Existence, all Life, and Blessedness'.
[14] Hegel 1995: 397.

writers.[15] Two conflicting, philosophically incompatible accounts of Basilides'
system are preserved for us by St Irenaeus of Lyon (perhaps dependent on Justin's
lost mid-second century *Syntagma*) and St Hippolytus of Rome, supplemented
by eight fragments cited by St Clement of Alexandria. Scholars remain divided
over which account represents the actual teaching of Basilides, but recent opin-
ion continues to favour Irenaeus' short summary[16] which, as Layton writes,
'parallels almost the full extent of the gnostic myth'.[17] The ongoing debate
over the usefulness and accuracy of the terms 'gnostic' and 'gnosticism',[18] how-
ever, has called Layton's positing of a 'classic gnostic myth' into question; and
this should probably include a preference for Irenaeus' account over that of
Hippolytus – a preference resting largely on the assumption (going back to the
nineteenth century) that the more dualistic form of the supposed 'classic' Gnos-
tic cosmogonic myth is necessarily earlier than the monistic system attributed to
Basilides, as reported by Hippolytus.[19] According to Irenaeus, Basilides held as
first principles an unengendered Father who emanated a pentad of his hypostat-
ized attributes, although the Nag Hammadi treatise *Testimony of Truth* (NHC
IX, 3: 56.1–3) and Clement (*Stromateis* 4.25.162.1) testify that he taught the
emanation of a primal ogdoad of powers, to yield a metaphysics rather similar
to that of the Nag Hammadi treatise *Eugnostos the Blessed* (NHC III, 3 / V, 1).
Layton, Rudolph and Filoramo, for example, agree that Hippolytus' account
likely represents a later, developed stage of Basilidean thought (perhaps in the
work of his son, Isidore);[20] but this is an assumption based on the acceptance

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[15] Eusebius (*Historia ecclesiastica* 4.7.6–8) mentions what was likely a detailed refutation of Basilides by
one Agrippa Castor; unfortunately, this work is lost. According to Eusebius, the points on which
Agrippa attacked Basilides include the latter's supposed teaching that renouncing the faith in times
of persecution is a matter of 'indifference', and his imposition of a five-year period of silence upon
his followers, after the manner of Pythagoras.

[16] Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 1.24.3–7, existing only in a Latin version. A summary of Irenaeus' account
is preserved in Greek by Theodoret of Cyrrhus, *Compendium* 4, and we have another summary,
also in Greek, by St Epiphanius of Salamis, *Against Heresies* 24.1.1–24.10.8.

[17] *The Gnostic Scriptures* (Layton) 1987: 420.   [18] See Williams 1996, and King 2003.

[19] An earlier assumption that Hippolytus relied upon a source-text composed by an unknown Gnostic
author seems to have thankfully lost currency. It is, however, enshrined on the internet (www.
1911encyclopedia.org/Basilides) with the eleventh edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1911)
entry on Basilides: 'An essentially different account, with a pronounced monistic tendency, is
presented by the so-called *Philosophumena* of Hippolytus' (vii. 20–27; x. 14). Whether this last
account, or that given by Irenaeus in the lost *Syntagma* of Hippolytus, represents the original
system of Basilides, has been the subject of a long controversy. (See Hilgenfeld 1884: 205, note
337.) The most recent opinion tends to decide against the *Philosophumena*; for, in its composition,
Hippolytus appears to have used as his principal source the compendium of a Gnostic author who
has introduced most of the systems treated by him, in addition to the employment of older
sources, his own opinions or those of his sect. The *Philosophumena*, therefore, cannot be taken into
account in describing the teaching of Basilides.

[20] See Rudolph 1984: 309–13, which asserts that the idea of a development from an originally monistic
system to one that is more dualistic is 'unthinkable', yet gives no compelling reason why it should
be considered such.

of the notion of development away from a more 'primitive' dualistic system toward one that is more 'optimistic' and 'universalist'.[21] Such a 'general tendency' of development, as Filoramo puts it, is based on a conception of the history of Platonism that would find in Plotinus, for example, the culmination of a linear progression away from the often dualistic 'eclecticism' of Middle Platonism,[22] toward the monistic and essentially 'world-affirming' metaphysics of the later Platonists. Such a synthetic construct does not sufficiently account for the vibrant diversity of philosophical systems in the place and time in which Basilides was working.

In the twenty-third book of his *hoi hechēgētikōn* ('Interpretations') Basilides discusses the nature of human suffering and its purpose in the divine plan. He eschews what was for his time the standard interpretation of the suffering of Christians (martyrdom) as signs of the end times[23] in favour of a view of suffering as purification (*katharsis*) for sins committed in past lives, as well as for the inherent sinfulness of humanity. Discussing those who suffer punishment as martyrs, Basilides writes:

I believe that all who experience the so-called 'tribulations' [*thlipsesin*] must have committed sins other than what they realize, and so have been brought to this good end. Through the kindness of that which leads each of them about [i.e., providence], they are actually accused of an extraneous set of charges so they might not have to suffer as confessed criminals, nor be reviled as adulterers or murderers, but rather might suffer because they are disposed by nature to be Christian. And this encourages them to think that they are not suffering.[24]

As St Clement explains, Basilides is here referring to sins committed in past lives, for which purification is still required. 'Excellent souls', he writes, 'are punished honourably, by martyrdom; other kinds are purified by some other appropriate punishment' (*Stromateis* 4.12.83.2). Since the taint of sin is present even in one who has yet to commit any outwardly evil actions (such as an infant),[25] suffering is introduced by God's providence or forethought (*pronoia*) for the purpose of purifying the sinful nature, and leading the human being back to a divine existence. 'A newborn baby, then', writes Basilides, 'has never sinned before; or more precisely, it has not actually committed any sins, but within

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[21] Filoramo 1990: 161.

[22] The idea of a divided (rational and irrational) second god, World Soul, or 'sublunary demiurge' can be traced back to Plato (*Laws* 10.896e–897a), and is found in Plutarch, Albinus (Alcinous), Numenius and others; see Dillon 1977.

[23] See, for example, *The Letter of Polycarp to the Philippians* 8–9; *The Letter of Ignatius to Polycarp* 2:2–3, 3, 6:2.

[24] Clement, *Stromateis* 4.12.81.2–4.12.81.3, tr. Layton (1987) – unless otherwise noted, all translations of this text are by Layton.

[25] However, as Plato observed, infants may be too young to show love, but they are not too young to hate (*Lysis* 213a).

itself it has the activity of sinning. Whenever it experiences suffering, it receives benefit, profiting by many unpleasant experiences' (*Stromateis* 4.12.82.1). As Layton has observed, suffering, according to Basilides, 'in the long run can even have educational value'.[26] This paideutic view of suffering became a centrepiece of the theology of Origen of Alexandria, an opponent of Gnosticism, but not uninfluenced by it.

Valentinus and his school

The great Christian teacher and philosopher Valentinus (c. 100–175 CE) spent his formative years in Alexandria, where he probably came into contact with Basilides. Valentinus later went to Rome, where he began his public teaching career, which was so successful that he actually had a serious chance of being elected Bishop of Rome. He lost the election, however, and with it Gnosticism lost the chance of becoming synonymous with Christianity, and hence a world religion. This is not to say that Valentinus failed to influence the development of Christian theology – he most certainly did, as we shall see below. It was through Valentinus, perhaps more than any other Christian thinker of his time save possibly Basilides, that Platonic philosophy, rhetorical elegance, and a deep, interpretative knowledge of scripture became introduced together into the realm of Christian theology. The achievement of Valentinus remained unmatched for nearly a century, until the incomparable Origen came on the scene. Yet even then, it may not be amiss to suggest that Origen never would have 'happened' had it not been for the example of Valentinus. According to Irenaeus' *Against Heresies* 1.11.1, the cosmology of Valentinus began with a primal duality, a *dyad*, composed of two entities called 'the Ineffable' and 'Silence', while Hippolytus (*Refutations* 6.29.2) claims that this pair emanated from an even higher Monad named Bythos ('Depth'), a view that seems confirmed by Irenaeus' subsequent statement that the unitary and utterly transcendent Bythos was separated from the rest of the Pleroma by a firm boundary ('Horos'). The term *buthos* appears as an epithet of the first god, also called the Father and Monad, in the *Chaldaean Oracles*, fragment 18 of which speaks of the *patrikos buthos*. From these initial beings a second dyad of 'Father' and 'Truth' was generated. These beings finally engendered a quaternity of 'Word' (*logos*), 'Life' (*zōē*), 'Human Being' (*anthrōpos*), and 'Church' (*ekklēsia*). Valentinus refers to this divine collectivity as the 'first octet' (Irenaeus 1.11.1). From word and Life come a decade of aeons and from Human and Church another duodecad of aeons, one of which

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[26] Layton 1987: 440.

revolted or 'turned away', as Irenaeus tells us, and set in motion the divine drama that would eventually produce the cosmos.[27]

According to Irenaeus, who was writing only about five years after the death of Valentinus, and in whose treatise *Against Heresies* the outline of Valentinus' cosmology is preserved, the entity responsible for initiating the drama is referred to simply as 'the mother', by which is probably meant *Sophia* (Wisdom). From this 'mother' both matter (*hulē*) and the saviour, Christ, were generated. The realm of matter is described as a 'shadow', produced from the 'mother', and from which Christ distanced himself and 'hastened up into the fullness' (Irenaeus 1.11.1; cf. *Poimandres* 5). At this point the 'mother' produced another 'child', the 'craftsman' (*dēmiourgos*) responsible for the creation of the cosmos. In the account preserved by Irenaeus, we are told nothing of any cosmic drama in which 'divine sparks' are trapped in fleshly bodies through the designs of the Demiurge. However, it is to be assumed that Valentinus did expound an anthropology similar to that of the classical Sophia myth (as represented, for example, in the *Apocryphon of John*; cf. also *The Hypostasis of the Archons*, NHC II, 4), especially since his school, as represented most significantly by his star pupil Ptolemy (see below), came to develop a highly complex anthropological myth that must have grown out of a simpler model provided by Valentinus himself. The account preserved in Irenaeus ends with a description of a somewhat confused doctrine of a heavenly Christ who came forth and returned to the Pleroma, sending forth Jesus as earthly saviour, and a brief passage on the role of the Holy Spirit (Irenaeus 1.11.1). From this one gets the idea that Valentinus was flirting with a primitive doctrine of the Trinity. Indeed, according to the fourth-century theologian Marcellus of Ancyra, Valentinus was 'the first to devise the notion of three subsistent entities (hypostases), in a work that he entitled *On the Three Natures*' (Valentinus, Fragment B, Layton).

Valentinus was certainly the most overtly Christian of the Gnostic philosophers of his era. While the thought of Basilides was pervaded by a Stoicizing tendency, and Marcion felt the need to go beyond scripture to posit an 'alien' redeemer God, the speculations of Valentinus seems to have been informed primarily by Jewish and Christian scripture and exegesis, and only secondarily by 'pagan' philosophy, particularly Platonism. This is most pronounced in his particular version of the familiar theological notion of 'election' or 'predestination', in which it is declared (following Paul in Romans 8.29) that God

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[27] While the Nag Hammadi *Testimony of Truth* (NHC IX, 3) also credits Valentinus with an octet of aeons, Tertullian says that these aeons were not external to the Father, but internal attributes, a view supported by one of his psalms (Layton fragment B) and the Nag Hammadi *Gospel of Truth* (NHC I, 3).

chose certain individuals, before the beginning of time, for salvation. Valentinus writes, in what is probably a remnant of a sermon:

From the beginning you [the 'elect' or Gnostic Christians] have been immortal, and you are children of eternal life. And you wanted death to be allocated to yourselves so that you might spend it and use it up, and that death might die in you and through you. For when you nullify the world and are not yourselves annihilated, you are lord over creation and all corruption. (Valentinus, fr. F Layton)

This seems to be Valentinus' response to the dilemma of the permanence of salvation: since Sophia or the divine 'mother', a member of the Pleroma, had fallen into error, how can we be sure that we will not make the same or a similar mistake after we have reached the fullness? By declaring that it is the role and task of the 'elect' or Gnostic Christian to use up death and nullify the world, Valentinus is making clear his position that these elite souls are fellow saviours of the world, along with Jesus, who was the first to take on the sin and corruption inherent in the material realm (cf. Irenaeus 1.11.1; and Layton 1987: 240). Therefore, since 'the wages of sin is death' (Romans 6.23), any being who is capable of destroying death must be incapable of sin. For Valentinus, then, the individual who is predestined for salvation is also predestined for a sort of divine stewardship that involves an active hand in history, and not a mere repose with God, or even a blissful existence of loving creation, as Basilides held. Like Paul, Valentinus demanded that his hearers recognize their createdness. However, unlike Paul, they recognized their creator as the 'Ineffable Father', and not as the God of the Hebrew Scriptures. The task of Christian hermeneutics after Valentinus was to prove the continuity of the Old and New Testament. In this regard, as well as in the general spirituality of his teaching – not to mention his primitive trinitarian doctrine – Valentinus had an incalculable impact on the development of Christianity.

The system of Ptolemy

Ptolemy (or Ptolemaeus, *fl.* 140 CE) was described by St Irenaeus as 'the blossom of Valentinus' school' (Layton 1987: 276). We know next to nothing about his life, except the two writings that have come down to us: the elaborate Valentinian philosophical myth preserved in Irenaeus, and Ptolemy's *Epistle to Flora*, preserved verbatim by St Epiphanius (*Heresies* 33.3.1–7.10). In the former we are met with a grand elaboration, by Ptolemy, of Valentinus' own system, which contains a complex anthropological myth centring around the passion of Sophia. We also find, in both the myth and the *Epistle*, Ptolemy making an attempt to bring Hebrew Scripture into line with Gnostic teaching and

New Testament allegorization in a manner heretofore unprecedented among the Gnostics.

In the system of Ptolemy we are explicitly told that the cause of Sophia's fall was her desire to know the ineffable Father. Since the purpose of the Father's generating of the Aeons (of which Sophia was the last) was to 'elevate all of them into thought' (Irenaeus 1.2.1) it was not permitted for any Aeon to attain a full knowledge of the Father. The purpose of the Pleroma was to exist as a living, collective expression of the intellectual magnitude of the Father, and if any single being within the Pleroma were to attain to the Father, all life would cease. This idea is based on an essentially positive attitude toward existence – that is, existence understood in the sense of striving, not for a reposeful end, but for an ever-increasing degree of creative or 'constitutive' insight. The goal, on this view, is to produce through wisdom, and not simply to attain wisdom as an *object* or end in itself. Such an existence is not characterized by desire for an object, but rather by desire for the ability to persist in creative, constitutive engagement with/in one's own 'circumstance' (= circumscribed *stance* or individual arena). When Sophia desired to know the Father, then, what she was desiring was her own dissolution in favour of an envelopment in that which made her existence possible in the first place. This amounted to a rejection of the gift of the Father – i.e., of the gift of individual existence and life. It is for this reason that Sophia was not permitted to know the Father, but was turned back by the 'boundary' (*horos*) that separates the Pleroma from the 'ineffable magnitude' of the Father (Irenaeus 1.2.2).

The remainder of Ptolemy's account is concerned with the production of the material cosmos out of the hypostatized 'passions' of Sophia, and the activity of the Saviour (Jesus Christ) in arranging these initially chaotic passions into a structured hierarchy of existents (Irenaeus 1.4.5 ff., and cf. Colossians 1.16). As Einar Thomassen has shown,[28] by describing the passion of Sophia as producing an extension into indefiniteness (Iren. *Haer.* 1.2.2; 3.3), the Valentinians cast the Neopythagorean theory of the derivation of plurality from the Monad through the Indefinite Dyad into the form of a tragic myth. According to Neopythagorean theory (Numenius, fr. 52.15–19 Des Places, the Pythagorean *Hypomnemata* quoted by Alexander Polyhistor, Eudorus of Alexandria, Moderatus of Gades, Nicomachus of Gerasa, and the report in Sextus Empiricus *M.* 10.248ff.), matter, the material from which the sensible bodies of the cosmos are made, is not derived directly from the first principle (called the Monad, or the One), but from the material principle, the (Indefinite) Dyad, which in turn originates in the first principle. For the Valentinians, the passion experienced by Sophia

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[28] Thomassen 2000.

is inherent in the notion of projection itself, in the coming into being of the duality of the Pythagorean-Platonist Dyad: as John Lydus says, the Monad represents impassibility and rationality, and the Dyad passion: 'The rational comes from the Monad, . . . the passible and passion from the Dyad' (*De mensibus* 1.11). On the one hand derivational projection has a negative aspect, insofar as duality implies infinite multiplicity and thus, in line with the nature of the Pythagorean-Platonist Dyad, inevitably produces passion and Matter. On the other hand, projection also has the positive aspect of divine manifestation; the Father graciously allows himself to be known by others through his begetting of aeonic offspring. Significantly, the *Tripartite Tractate* (NHC 1, 5) uses some terms that describe the passion of Sophia also for the generation of the Son. While the Father remains unaffected in his transcendence (64.28ff.), the Son is 'the one who extended himself and spread himself' (65.4–5). Like the Neopythagorean Dyad, the plurality of the All comes into being from the Father through the Son.

Three classes of human beings come into existence through this arrangement: the 'material' (*hulikos*), the 'animate' (*psuchikos*) and the 'spiritual' (*pneumatikos*). The 'material' humans are those who have not attained to intellectual life, and so place their hopes only upon that which is perishable – for these there is no hope of salvation. The 'animate' are those who have only a half-formed conception of the true God, and so must live a life devoted to holy works, and persistence in faith; according to Ptolemy, these are the 'ordinary' Christians. Finally, there are the 'spiritual' humans, the Gnostics, who need no faith, since they have actual knowledge (*gnōsis*) of intellectual reality, and are thus saved by nature (Irenaeus 1.6.2, 1.6.4). The Valentinian-Ptolemaic notion of salvation rests on the idea that the cosmos is the concrete manifestation or hypostatization of the desire of Sophia for knowledge of the Father, and the 'passions' her failure produced. The history of salvation, then, for human beings, has the character of an external manifestation of the three-fold process of Sophia's own redemption: recognition of her passion; her consequent 'turning back' (*epistrophē*); and finally, her act of spiritual production, whence arose Gnostic humanity (cf. Irenaeus 1.5.1). Salvation, then, in its final form, must imply a sort of spiritual creation on the part of the Gnostics who attain the Pleroma. The 'animate' humans, however, who are composed partly of corruptible matter and partly of the spiritual essence, must remain content with a simple restful existence with the craftsman of the cosmos, since no material element can enter the Pleroma (Irenaeus 1.7.1).

In his *Epistle to Flora* (in Epiphanius 33.3.1–33.7.10), which is an attempt to convert an 'ordinary' Christian woman to his brand of Valentinian Christianity,

Ptolemy clearly formulates his doctrine of the relation between the God of the Hebrew Scriptures, who is merely 'just', and the Ineffable Father, who is the Supreme Good. Rather than simply declaring these two gods to be unrelated, as did Marcion, Ptolemy develops a complex, allegorical reading of the Hebrew Scriptures in relation to the New Testament in order to establish a genealogy connecting the Pleroma, Sophia and her 'passion', the Demiurge, and the salvific activity of Jesus Christ. The scope and rigour of Ptolemy's work, and the influence it came to exercise on emerging Christian orthodoxy, qualifies him as one of the most important of the early Christian theologians, both proto-orthodox and 'heretical'.

The *Tripartite Tractate* (NHC I, 5) contains an eastern version of the Valentinian system that differs at many points from the well-known western systems reported by the Church Fathers. There is no Pleroma of thirty aeons, which are instead innumerable and nameless. Instead of the Pleroma being unfolded by means of arithmetical and geometrical derivations, the Pleroma of aeons gradually gestates within the womb-like Father until they are born as autonomous beings. As Einar Thomassen has shown,[29] instead of the complex hierarchies of aeons as found in Irenaeus and Hippolytus, the *Tripartite Tractate* portrays the transcendent world in terms of the relationships between three entities: the Father, the Son and the Church. The Son is eternally generated by the Father as his self-reflective Thought, and the Church is the multiplicity of divine qualities that inhere in this self-reflective activity. The earthly church is an image of the Pleroma. Rather than the two Sophias described by Irenaeus and Hippolytus, there is only one, who is called *Logos*. Rather than the passionless Saviour that clothes himself with the suffering and crucified 'animate Christ' when he descends into the world, in the *Tripartite Tractate* it is the Saviour himself that is incarnated in a human body, suffers, dies, and is redeemed. As Thomassen puts it, in contrast to the western Valentinianism portrayed by Irenaeus and Hippolytus, the Christology and soteriology of the *Tripartite Tractate* 'agrees with the Eastern Valentinian Theodotus, who says that the Savior himself was in need of redemption after having descended into the world of matter (*Excerpts of Theodotus* 22.7; cf. *Tripartite Tractate* 124.32–125.4). The idea that the Savior participated fully in the human condition in order for humans to share in his spiritual being (cf. *Tripartite Tractate* 115.3–11) is a distinctive Eastern Valentinian doctrinal feature. The *Tripartite Tractate* therefore seems to be the only preserved example of a complete Eastern Valentinian systematic treatise.'[30]

[29] Thomassen 2007; cf. *idem* 2006: 46–58.   [30] Thomassen 2007: 58.

Other forms of Gnostic thought

Mention must also be made of certain texts of the *Corpus Hermeticum*, a collection of writings dating from roughly the first to third centuries CE, and attributed to the legendary sage Hermes Trismegistus (Thrice Great Hermes), notably the first tractate of the collection, *Poimandres*, containing a cosmology quite similar to that of certain key Gnostic texts. The 'downward-tending shadow' of this text, and the revelation discourse that follows, may be compared with that of the Sethian Gnostic *Apocryphon of John*.

Manichaeism, the religion to which Augustine of Hippo adhered in his youth, bears many resemblances to classic Gnosticism, but is distinct, a product of a revelation disclosed in the early third century to the Parthian Jewish-Christian mystic Mani. This religion survived until at least the fourteenth century, spreading as far as China. The last mention of late-antique Gnosticism is to be found in a seventh-century Christian canon (Canon 95 of the Trullan Synod of 692) prohibiting certain sects, of which that of the Valentinians is mentioned by name.

Conclusion

The persistently the common assumption that Gnosticism is not only unphilosophical in its use of lurid mythology, but also fundamentally and irrationally nihilistic, anticosmic, pessimistic, and so on, as opposed to both Platonism and the more dominant strains of biblical religion has tended to conceal from scholarly gaze, not only the innovative nature of Gnostic thought, but also the depth of its interconnection with various philosophical traditions.

In fact, the Gnostic sources here surveyed manifest contributions from Greek philosophy, especially Platonism, at their very core. Their picture of the world and its origins often derive from an interpretation of the protology of the biblical book of Genesis in the light of the Platonic distinction between an ideal, exemplary realm of eternal stable being and its more or less deficient earthly and changeable copy. Many of them offer accounts of the origin and generation of both these realms. While their portrayal of the origin and deployment of the cosmic realm is unmistakably influenced by their readings of Plato's *Timaeus*, the accounts of the nature of the beings comprising the ideal or aeonic realm is noticeably influenced by readings of Plato's middle dialogues. In particular, the Sethian Platonizing treatises offer revelations that are modelled, no longer on the primordial history from the book of Genesis, but rather on the mythical portions of Plato's dialogues, especially the *Phaedo*, *Phaedrus*, *Republic* and *Timaeus*; their apophatic theologies are modelled on readings of the *Parmenides*

and *Sophist* and their portrayal of the soul's self-actuated contemplative ascent
and assimilation to ever higher levels of being are modelled on the ascent to the
vision of absolute beauty outlined in Plato's *Symposium*. Surely such instances
of influence and indebtedness betray more than a superficial or amateurish
involvement in the Platonic philosophical enterprise. While one would not
wish to assert *tout court* that Gnosticism is a form of Greek philosophy, nei-
ther can Gnosticism be called 'sub-philosophical' nor can it be maintained that
Greek philosophy's influence on Gnosticism was 'extraneous and for the most
part superficial'. Perhaps it would be wiser to embrace the view of the late
Philip Merlan when he wrote that 'Gnosticism is at home on the borderland
between philosophy and religion'.[31] It may be that the tendency of modern his-
torians of philosophy to dissociate Gnosticism – with its revealed metaphysics
and ritual and visionary practices – from genuine Greek philosophy may owe
to an excessively contemporary construction of ancient religion and philosophy
which restricts so-called 'genuine' philosophy to explicitly discursive reasoning
about the nature of reality, while Gnosticism is a religion that offers mytholog-
ical revelations of arbitrarily imagined realities. But both Gnostic and Platonist
thinkers actually have much in common. Both agree that there is something
deficient about the human situation in the world and are optimistic that the
divine principle behind all things has already provided for its solution, and
that this solution can be discovered and taught to whomever will listen to it
and work in a rigorous and disciplined way to realize it for themselves. Both
groups tend also to be pessimistic about the prospects for the general mass of
human kind, who do not possess sufficient reflective or Gnostic powers to take
this teaching seriously On the whole, Gnostics tend to stress the hidden but
revealed character of the solution, yet Platonists also tend to see it as apparent
only to a very few elite individuals. Both groups tend to see the human being
situated in a struggle for the self-knowledge that leads to salvation. By virtue
of their reliance upon myth, most Gnostics, but few Platonists, tend to see the
antagonist in this struggle as anterior and exterior to the psycho-physical com-
plex of the human individual. But both groups also exteriorize and 'anteriorize'
the psycho-physical complex itself into a cosmic frame that has its own soul and
body. Gnostic hostility toward the world and the body is in reality the Gnostic
perception of the hostility of the latter toward the former. Gnostics generally
have in mind proactive spiritual forces that govern world and body, rather than
its materiality as such. Platonists, on the other hand, tend to have in mind
a certain inherent and necessary intractability of the material substrate of the
physical world or certain passions of the soul which refuse complete submission

[31] Merlan 1958: 747.

to rational formation, rather than the proactive interference of hostile powers. In the final analysis, it seems that the basic difference between the two lies in a preference either for myth and dramatic personification, or for conceptual analysis and distinction as a vehicle for rendering account of basically the same human problematic. The fact that crucial aspects of both Gnostic and later Platonic doctrine derive from interpretations of Plato's thought suggests that the difference between the Gnostics and more academic Platonists had the quality of a scholastic or sectarian dispute rather than that of an absolute antithesis. Among other things, it involved a competition for the legitimate succession of Plato in which each party to the dispute attempted to distinguish themselves by an as-sharp-as-possible demarcation of what often amount to rather subtle philosophical differences among thinkers whose common metaphysical quest and assumptions generally shared more similarities than differences.

PTOLEMY

JACQUELINE FEKE AND ALEXANDER JONES

Klaudios Ptolemaios, or Ptolemy, is known today mainly for his contributions to astronomy and astrology. Following Otto Neugebauer, historians of science tend to emphasize the significance of Ptolemy's astronomical models.[1] These models clearly deserve this attention, for they served as the western world's paradigm in astronomy for approximately 1,400 years, up to the time of the Scientific Revolution. Modern astrologers, on the other hand, continue to hold Ptolemy's astrological work, the *Tetrabiblos*, in high regard. If Ptolemy is known principally for his mathematical and natural philosophical contributions, one may reasonably wonder, why does he deserve a place in this volume on philosophy in late antiquity?

The answer, put plainly, is that Ptolemy was a self-identified philosopher who examined a number of the most pressing philosophical questions of his time, commented on the (lack of) success of previous philosophical theories, appropriated the philosophical concepts of contemporary schools, and, moreover, propounded philosophical ideas unprecedented in the history of ancient Greek philosophy. Ptolemy, however, was not a typical philosopher. He neither affiliated himself with a specific school nor did he proclaim himself an eclectic, as did his contemporary Galen. Ptolemy's texts, in fact, reveal him to be a Platonic empiricist. He adopts Platonic, Aristotelian, and, to a lesser extent, Stoic ideas, but the manner in which he mixes these philosophical influences depends heavily on contemporary Platonic concerns. While Ptolemy does not identify himself as a Platonist in his texts, the ideas he promulgates reveal a substantial Platonic influence on his philosophy. He adapts these Platonic ideas to his theory of knowledge, which is best described by the anachronistic term 'empiricism', and he bases this so-called empiricism on an ontology that is distinctively Aristotelian. What proves most striking in Ptolemy's philosophy is an emphasis which results from his Platonic empiricism. This emphasis is on the role of mathematics, not only in its practice, but in its epistemic and

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[1] Neugebauer 1975.

ethical contributions as well. According to Ptolemy, only the mathematician produces knowledge and attains a virtuous state. This claim proved immensely influential, as evidenced by the subsequent work in the ancient exact sciences by Ammonius, Theon of Alexandria, Hypatia, Proclus, and Olympiodorus, among others.

1 LIFE AND WRITINGS

(i) Life

The very little of Ptolemy's life that we know derives mainly from his extant texts. His observation records in the *Almagest* place him in Alexandria and date him to the second century CE: the earliest observation that he reports as his own is from 127 CE and the latest is from 141 CE. The *Canobic Inscription*, in which Ptolemy published an early summary of his astronomical system, provides a slightly later date: 146/147 CE. This information is consistent with the statement of a scholion, which indicates that Ptolemy flourished during the reign of Hadrian and lived until the reign of Marcus Aurelius, suggesting a life span of roughly 100–170 CE.

(ii) Writings

A large fraction of Ptolemy's writings appears to be extant. Of these texts, six have significant philosophical content. The longest and arguably most influential is the *Mathematical Composition* (*mathēmatikē suntaxis*), more commonly known today by its medieval Arabic nickname, the *Almagest*. In this text, Ptolemy presents a series of astronomical models, which aim to account for the many movements of the stars and planets, including the sun and moon. Ptolemy's models are both demonstrative and predictive, since, by using his tables, an astrologer would have been able to determine the perceptible location of any heavenly body on any given date. In the introduction, Ptolemy provides one of his few citations of a philosophical predecessor, Aristotle, and affirms that philosophers are correct in distinguishing theoretical from practical philosophy.[2] He goes on to adopt Aristotle's trichotomy of the three theoretical sciences – physics, mathematics, and theology – defines their objects of study, and judges their potential to produce knowledge. Ptolemy begins and concludes *Almagest* 1.1 with a declaration of the ethical merits of studying mathematics, and astronomy in particular.

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[2] Cf. *Planetary Hypotheses* 2.4–5 (H113.31; H114.15, 26), where Ptolemy cites Plato and Aristotle.

In the *Tetrabiblos*, Ptolemy defends the possibility and usefulness of astrology and summarizes the field's principles, including the powers (*dunameis*) of celestial bodies and the effects these powers have. Ptolemy does not, however, distinguish astrology from astronomy terminologically. For Ptolemy, both of these fields have a predictive goal that they achieve by means of *astronomia*, the science which examines the quantity and quality of the heavens' movements. Nevertheless, what we call astrology today is distinct from astronomy in its subject matter. Astrology studies physical changes in the sublunary realm – including effects on human bodies and souls – which are caused by the powers emanating from celestial bodies. These powers vary in quality depending on the planets' arrangements in the zodiac, and astronomy accounts mathematically for the movements of these celestial bodies through the heavens.

Ptolemy's extant corpus contains only one text that is devoid of mathematics: *On the Kritērion and Hēgemonikon*. In this short epistemological treatise, Ptolemy outlines his criterion of truth, examines the soul's relation to the body, and determines which parts of the body and soul are the commanding parts. More than any other of Ptolemy's texts, *On the Kritērion* has produced doubt concerning its authenticity. This doubt rests on the following observations: (1) *On the Kritērion* contains no mathematics; (2) it includes no references to any other of Ptolemy's texts; (3) its arguments appear to be fairly simplistic; (4) its style, according to Gerald Toomer, is dissimilar to the style of Ptolemy's authentic texts.[3] These doubts, however, are outweighed by thematic, stylistic, and linguistic arguments. Thematically, the criterion of truth outlined in *On the Kritērion* is similar, albeit simpler, to the criterion put forward in Ptolemy's *Harmonics*. Stylistically, the text contains extremely long sentences, with numerous dependent clauses – just as do Ptolemy's other extant texts – and the author exercises Ptolemy's tendency to use the perfect passive imperative to sum up his thoughts before proceeding to the next topic. Linguistically, *On the Kritērion* contains at least three words which exist in Ptolemy's other texts but either occur nowhere else in the Greek corpus or not until late antiquity. These considerations lend support to the text's explicit ascription to Ptolemy in the manuscript tradition.

In the *Harmonics*, Ptolemy elaborates on his criterion of truth and employs it in the analysis and demonstration of harmonic principles. After completing his study of music theory in *Harmonics* 3.2, he applies harmonics to psychology, astrology and astronomy in the remaining chapters. The last three chapters, 3.14–16, are no longer extant; only their chapter titles remain.

In the *Optics*, Ptolemy advances his theory of visual perception. The eye emits a visual flux in the form of a cone, which is resolvable into a collection of

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[3] Toomer 1975: 201.

rays travelling in straight lines. This visual flux is physical in nature and, upon coming into contact with external objects, it provides sensory data that the soul's governing faculty judges. It is unknown whether Ptolemy used the terms *pneuma* or *hēgemonikon* for the visual flux and governing faculty, respectively – for the only surviving text is a twelfth-century Latin translation of a lost Arabic translation – but it is likely. In *Conspectus rerum naturalium* 4.74, Symeon Seth, an eleventh-century Byzantine writer, states that Ptolemy discusses the nature of the *optikon pneuma* in the *Optics*, and the Latin translation of the *Optics* contains several references to the *virtus regitiva*, undoubtedly a translation via the Arabic of the 'governing faculty', or *hēgemonikon* (*Optics* 79.15, 79.18, 80.14, 103.15, 103.18, 152.9). Unfortunately, the entirety of book 1 and the last part of book 5 of the *Optics* (as well as any books that may have followed book 5) are no longer extant.

Ptolemy depicts his astronomical models in physical terms in the *Planetary Hypotheses*. Each heavenly sphere, or part of a sphere, is material and has a specific thickness, distance from the earth, and location within a series of nested aethereal spheres. In addition, Ptolemy describes the planets as ensouled. Each planet contains a faculty, analogous to the faculties in human beings, and, by this faculty, a planet directs the movements of the heavenly spheres carrying it. Only a portion of the first book exists in the original Greek; the second of the two books and the rest of the first book exist only in Arabic translation, as well as a Hebrew translation from the Arabic.

In his commentary on the *De caelo*, Simplicius mentions two further books of Ptolemy which are completely lost to us. According to Simplicius, in *On the Elements* Ptolemy propounds a theory of natural motion similar to that of Xenarchus. According to both Ptolemy and Xenarchus, elements move rectilinearly only when displaced from their natural places.[4] In their natural places, they either rest or move circularly. Simplicius explains that in *On Weights* Ptolemy argues that neither air nor water have weight in their natural places. Because the subject matter of *On the Elements* and *On Weights* is so similar, it is possible that they were originally a single book, later called by two names.

Ptolemy's texts offer few clues to their chronology. In both *Tetrabiblos* 1.1 and the opening paragraph of *Planetary Hypotheses* 1, he refers to the 'mathematical syntaxis', manifestly the *Almagest*; hence, he must have completed the *Tetrabiblos* and *Planetary Hypotheses* after the *Almagest*. In *Optics* 2.26, Ptolemy expounds a theory of atmospheric refraction, which he virtually ignores in the *Almagest* but which is consistent with his account in the latter part of *Hypotheses* 1. Consequently, it is reasonable to suppose that Ptolemy completed the *Optics*, like the *Planetary Hypotheses*, after the *Almagest*. Some historians believe

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[4] Heiberg 1907: 264–5. Simplicius attributes this view to Plotinus as well. See *Enneads* 2.1–2.

that Ptolemy wrote the *Harmonics* before the *Almagest*, because the three lost chapters, 3.14–16, apparently examined the relations between musical pitches and heavenly bodies tabulated in the final section of the *Canobic Inscription*. The *Canobic Inscription*, in turn, is believed to predate the *Almagest* because it contains numerical values that Ptolemy corrects in the *Almagest*. *On the Kritērion* is typically considered one of the earliest – perhaps the earliest – of Ptolemy's extant texts for thematic reasons. The most persuasive evidence for its early dating appeals to its relation to the *Harmonics*. It is more likely that Ptolemy wrote *On the Kritērion* before the *Harmonics*, because (1) the criterion in the *Harmonics* is more developed than the criterion in *On the Kritērion*, and (2) Ptolemy merely summarizes his models of the soul in the *Harmonics*, but he deliberates on the nature and structure of the soul in *On the Kritērion*. Therefore, one can reasonably conclude that Ptolemy composed these six texts in the following order: (1) *On the Kritērion and Hēgemonikon*, (2) *Harmonics*, (3) *Almagest*, (4) *Tetrabiblos*, *Planetary Hypotheses*, and *Optics* in an indeterminate order.[5]

2 THOUGHT

(i) Criterion of truth

In the apparently very early work *On the Kritērion and Hēgemonikon*, Ptolemy examines how it is that human beings judge objects for the sake of knowing the truth (*alētheia*). His interest in this matter stems from the Hellenistic concern for establishing a criterion of truth. Ptolemy does not acknowledge the Academic and Pyrrhonian attacks on the criterion. Rather, he simply presents his own criterion, which consists of five components, analogous to the stages of adjudication in a law court:

1 That being judged, or what is (*to on*)
2 That through which it is judged, or sense perception (*aisthēsis*)
3 That which judges, or intellect (*nous*)
4 That by which it is judged, or reason (*logos*)
5 That for the sake of which it is judged, or truth (*alētheia*) (*On the Kritērion* La 4–5).

While refuting the criterion in *Adversus mathematicos* 7.35, Sextus Empiricus identifies three stages similar to Ptolemy's: the agent, that through which an object is judged, and the application.[6] In *Didaskalikos tōn Platōnos dogmatōn* 4.1, Alcinous likewise identifies three components in his criterion, two of which are identical to Ptolemy's: that which judges, that being judged, and the process

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[5] Smith argues that the *Optics* postdates the *Planetary Hypotheses* (1996: 3).
[6] For the similarity between Ptolemy's and Sextus' criteria of truth, see Long 1989: 153.

of judgement. By listing these several components in his criterion of truth, Ptolemy follows a contemporary trend.

According to Ptolemy, once the sense organs perceive an object, *phantasia* transmits sense impressions of it to the intellect.[7] Thereafter, the rational faculty uses thought (*dianoia*), or internal *logos*, to judge the object. The simple and unarticulated apprehension of the object is opinion (*doxa*); when grasped skilfully and incontrovertibly, the apprehension is knowledge (*epistēmē*) and understanding (*gnōsis*). Ptolemy's criterion, then, derives from his Platonic empiricism. The intellect requires sense impressions to make judgements, and the manner by which the intellect judges the object, whether simply or skilfully, determines whether it produces opinion or knowledge, a distinction which Ptolemy describes in Platonic terms.

In *Harmonics* 1.1, Ptolemy elaborates on this criterion. Communication between the senses and reason is no longer unidirectional. Instead, once reason has received sensory impressions, it has the ability to direct the senses towards making more precise observations. Without the aid of reason, sensory perceptions are only rough, or approximate. Reason, however, guides the senses towards making observations that are accurate and, once judged by reason, accepted. It has this ability, because, unlike the senses, it is simple and unaffected by the instability of matter. The interplay between reason and the senses produces perceptions and judgements of these perceptions which are as precise as possible and truthful. This criterion stands as the foundation of Ptolemy's scientific method, which he employs in the *Harmonics* as well as the *Almagest* in the construction of harmonic and astronomical *hupotheseis*.

(ii) Knowledge and conjecture

In the opening sentence of the *Almagest* (H4), Ptolemy proclaims, 'It seems to me that the legitimate philosophers, Syrus, were entirely right to have distinguished the theoretical part of philosophy from the practical.' With this simple statement Ptolemy positions himself as a genuine philosopher, one who is competent enough to judge who the true philosophers are and whether they are correct in adopting Aristotle's distinction between theoretical and practical philosophy.[8]

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[7] Ptolemy's description of the role of *phantasia* is heavily dependent on Aristotle's *De anima* 3.3, 427b–429a.

[8] In *Almagest* 1.1, as well as in *Harmonics* 3.6, Ptolemy does not include productive knowledge as a division of philosophy. In this choice, Ptolemy seems to follow a contemporary trend. For instance, in *Didaskalikos* 2.1, Alcinous contrasts the theoretical and practical types of life but does not mention the productive. Similarly, in his *De anima* (80.9–12), Alexander of Aphrodisias distinguishes two powers in the rational soul. He identifies several terms for each, but they include a juxtaposition of the practical and the theoretical.

While he only sparingly cites his sources, Ptolemy proceeds to call on Aristotle by name and argue that he was correct in distinguishing the three categories of theoretical philosophy: the physical, mathematical, and theological.

Ptolemy does not, however, adopt Aristotle's definitions of the three theoretical sciences in *Metaphysics* 6.1, 1026a6–32 and 11.7, 1064a28–b6. Instead, he associates each science with a set of objects existing in the cosmos. Yet, because Ptolemy's cosmology is Aristotelian, his treatment of the three sciences is Aristotelian even though his definitions are not Aristotle's. Ptolemy's choice of the sets of objects that exemplify each of the sciences rests on an empiricist criterion, which is grounded in an Aristotelian theory of perception. In *Almagest* 1.1 (H5), Ptolemy portrays physical objects as material qualities existing in the sublunary realm. His examples of these qualities are 'white', 'hot', 'sweet', and 'soft'. Each is perceptible by only one sense and, as such, is classifiable as a special-sensible in Aristotle's theory of perception (see *De anima* 2.6, 418a7–17. Cf. *On the Kritērion*, La 16). Ptolemy's mathematical objects, on the other hand, are common-sensibles, perceptible by more than one sense. He lists the subject matter of mathematics as forms and motion from place to place as well as shape, number, size, place, time, etc.[9] Unlike physical and mathematical objects, the object of theology is imperceptible. Ptolemy refers to it as 'the first cause of the first movement of the universe' (*Almagest* 1.1, H5). While he does not label this first cause the 'Prime Mover', per se, his portrayal of it as an invisible and motionless god as well as a kind of activity (*energeia*) recalls Aristotle's account of the Prime Mover in *Metaphysics* Lambda. Moreover, Ptolemy refers to it as 'that which moves first' (*quod primo mouet*) in *Optics* 2.103. This reference in the *Optics* and its description in *Almagest* 1.1 strongly suggest that Ptolemy adopted Aristotle's notion of the Prime Mover.

Having defined the objects studied by the three theoretical sciences, Ptolemy proceeds to evaluate the sciences' epistemic value. In *Almagest* 1.1, he judges whether they produce knowledge or conjecture, and, in so doing, he makes the unprecedented claim that mathematics is the only field of inquiry that produces sure and incontrovertible knowledge. Furthermore, its methods, arithmetic and geometry, are indisputable (cf. *Harmonics* 3.3, D94). Still, Ptolemy's practice of mathematics in the remainder of the *Almagest* implies a more nuanced view.

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[9] See *De anima* 2.6, 418a17–20; 3.1, 425a14–b12. Cf. *On the Kritērion*, La 1; *Optics* 2.2. Ptolemy does not explain which senses perceive which common-sensibles, but it is probable that he considered sight as perceptive of each. Concerning time, in *Timaeus* 37d–38e, Plato remarks that celestial bodies mark time through their movements. Therefore, by observing the heavens, one perceives the passage of time. In *De caelo* 1.9, 279a, Aristotle defines time as the 'number of movement' (*chronos de arithmos kinēseōs*), and in the *De anima* he labels movement a common-sensible. Ptolemy must have reasoned that if movement is a common-sensible, then its number is also a common-sensible.

He concedes that not all astronomical *hupotheseis* are completely knowable. He argues for the truth of certain aspects of his models – that the heavens consist of eccentric and epicyclic spheres – but he explains in *Almagest* 3.1 that, because observation is limited and susceptible to a degree of error, the astronomer cannot know the exact periods of celestial movements, such as the tropical year. Ptolemy's empiricist criterion, then, ultimately limits the ability of mathematics to produce knowledge.

Physics and theology, on the other hand, are merely conjectural. Ptolemy makes this claim in *Almagest* 1.1 because of his concern for differentiating knowledge from opinion. In *On the Kritērion* (La6), opinion and knowledge concern the same objects, but the manner in which the intellect judges them – whether simply or skilfully – determines whether its judgement is opinion or knowledge. In *Almagest* 1.1, the attributes of the objects under judgement determine whether the sciences examining them produce knowledge or conjecture, which Ptolemy associates with opinion in *Harmonics* 3.5 (D 96.25–6). Ptolemy's implied criteria are the perceptibility and stability of objects. Philosophers cannot have knowledge of the Prime Mover because it is imperceptible, or, as Ptolemy puts it, invisible and ungraspable. Without any perceptual impressions of the Prime Mover, philosophers can only guess at its nature. Concerning physical objects, because Ptolemy defines them as sublunary in *Almagest* 1.1, he portrays them as having an unstable and unclear nature. Their relative instability and lack of clarity prevent the skilful judgement of their sense impressions. Ptolemy reiterates this identification of physics with the study of sublunary qualities in *Tetrabiblos* 1.2, where he explains that any field of inquiry that investigates the quality of matter is conjectural (*eikastikēn*). Accordingly, Ptolemy proclaims in *Almagest* 1.1 that philosophers will never agree on the nature of either theological or physical objects.

Nevertheless, Ptolemy adds that mathematics can produce tangible results in both theology and physics. For instance, mathematics can make a good guess at the attributes of the Prime Mover, or that activity which is unmoved and separated from perceptible reality. It can make this guess because astronomy – the branch of mathematics concerned with heavenly bodies – studies objects which have attributes in common with the Prime Mover. While celestial bodies, as aethereal, are perceptible, they are also eternal and, in a way, unchanging, as the only change they experience is movement from place to place. The mathematician can make a good guess at the nature of the Prime Mover by making an inference from his observations of celestial bodies. He observes and calculates, by means of astronomy, that celestial bodies are eternal and unchanging, inasmuch as the only change they experience is periodic movement from place to place. From these observations and calculations, he infers that the

Prime Mover is also eternal and unchanging. In proposing that it is possible to infer the nature of a metaphysical object, in this case the Prime Mover, from the study of heavenly bodies, Ptolemy adheres to the tradition following *Republic* 7.527e–530c, wherein Socrates argues that the study of astronomy guides the philosopher-king towards understanding of metaphysical reality.

Ptolemy also maintains that mathematics can make a significant contribution to physics. In *Geography* 1.1, he states that mathematics reveals the physical nature of the heavens and earth. In *Almagest* 1.1, he applies geometry to the differentiation of Aristotle's five elements. Observation of an object's movements from place to place discloses its underlying nature. Whether an object moves rectilinearly or circularly indicates whether it is corruptible or incorruptible. If it moves rectilinearly, whether it moves towards or away from the centre of the cosmos demonstrates whether it is heavy or light, passive or active. In *Almagest* 1.7, Ptolemy again applies geometry to the analysis of natural motion, and in *On the Elements*, so Simplicius claims, he argues that the elements have rectilinear motion when displaced from their natural places but, when in them, they either rest or move circularly.

Ptolemy applies mathematics to the study of composite bodies in the *Harmonics* and *Tetrabiblos*. In the former, he applies harmonics, the mathematics of musical pitches, to two branches of physics: psychology and astrology. He asserts that the same harmonic ratios that describe the relations between musical pitches also exist in the relations between the parts of the human soul and between celestial bodies. In *Harmonics* 3.5, he presents a detailed analogy, which I examine below, between the relations in music and the human soul, and, in *Harmonics* 3.7, he provides empirical evidence in support of the correspondences he makes between changes experienced in music and in the human soul. Concerning astrology, Ptolemy argues in both *Harmonics* 3.8–9 and *Tetrabiblos* 1.13 and 1.16 that the principles of harmonics account for the effects of the aspects – opposition, trine, quartile, and sextile – and disjunct relations between zodiacal signs and the planets in them. Similarly, in *Tetrabiblos* 1.1, he explains that astrological predictions rely on astronomical data for the configurations of celestial bodies in the zodiac. Hence, applying geometry to element theory, harmonics to psychology and astrology, and astronomy to astrology, Ptolemy demonstrates his claim in *Almagest* 1.1 that mathematics contributes significantly to physics.

(iii) Soul and embodiment

Ptolemy depicts several models of the human soul in his texts. It is apparent that he changed and refined his models over time and, moreover, that he did not

always think it necessary to choose between alternative models. Nevertheless, while Ptolemy's models of the human soul differ in their particulars, they resemble one another in their more general aspects. For instance, in each model Ptolemy presents, the soul is tripartite. The names of the parts differ, but in general they derive from Platonic, Aristotelian, and Stoic psychology. In other words, Ptolemy adopts Aristotelian and Stoic, as well as Platonic, terms for the parts of the human soul even though the type of tripartition he propounds is distinctively Platonic. Ptolemy gives his most detailed accounts of the human soul in *On the Kritērion* and *Harmonics* 3.5. In *On the Kritērion*, he describes three faculties (*dunameis*) of the soul: the faculty of thought (*dianoētikon*), the faculty of sense perception (*aisthētikon*) – to which the souls of irrational animals are limited – and the faculty of impulse (*hormētikon*), which, in turn, consists of two parts: the appetitive (*orektikon*) and emotive (*thumikon*). Each of these faculties occupies a distinct area of the body. Undivided in substance, the faculty of thought exists in the head, in the area around the brain; the faculty of sense perception exists in the five sense organs; the faculty of impulse exists in two locations: the appetitive part resides around the stomach and abdomen, and the emotive part occupies the area around the 'inner parts' (*splankhna*) and the heart. Ptolemy's choices for the locations of the three parts of the soul in the human body reflect the model offered in *Timaeus* 69c–72d.

When examining the underlying nature of the soul, Ptolemy appropriates the materialism of Stoic psychology. Like Galen, he at first refrains from judging whether the soul is a kind of body, but he goes on to adopt a materialist view. He does not label the soul as body, per se. Rather, in both *On the Kritērion* and *Tetrabiblos* 3.11, he portrays the soul as consisting of particles, which are finer than the particles that make up body. Ptolemy's materialism is not strictly Stoic. He amalgamates Aristotle's five-element theory with Stoic physics by representing the five elements in Stoic terms. Just as the Stoics contrast air and fire – the constituents of *pneuma* – as active in comparison to earth and water, which are passive, Ptolemy contrasts air and fire with earth and water. Yet, he assigns the qualities 'active' and 'passive' to the elements differently than do the Stoics in order to apply the same terms to a system of five elements rather than four. According to Ptolemy, earth and water are still passive, but aether is active, and air and fire are passive as well as active.

Each of the soul's three faculties consists of one or more of the five elements. The faculty of thought consists of aether, the faculty of sense perception consists of earth and water, and the faculty of impulse consists of air and fire, where the appetitive part has more air in its composition and the emotive part contains more fire. Ptolemy concludes *On the Kritērion and Hēgemonikon* by addressing the contemporary concern for determining which faculty of the soul is the *hēgemonikon*, or the chief faculty. For Ptolemy, several *hēgemonika* exist in relation

to two distinct functions: living and living well. The faculty of thought is the *hēgemonikon* of both living and living well, the emotive part of the faculty of impulse is the *hēgemonikon* of living, and two senses, sight and hearing, are the secondary *hēgemonika* of living well.

Ptolemy presents three alternative models of the human soul's structure in *Harmonics* 3.5. Once again, he utilizes Platonic, Aristotelian, and Stoic terms for the three, most fundamental parts. According to his Aristotelian model, the soul consists of three parts (*merē*): the intellectual (*noeron*), perceptive (*aisthētikon*), and the part 'which maintains a state' (*hektikon*). The first two terms derive from Aristotle's *De anima*; the last term stems from the Stoic concept of *hexis*. In applying harmonics to psychology, Ptolemy asserts that each part of the soul has a number of forms, or species (*eidē*), corresponding to the number of species that characterize the harmonic homophone or concord analogous to it. Like the homophone, or octave, the intellectual part of the soul has seven species, each of which Ptolemy identifies in *On the Kritērion* (La6–7) as a component of the criterion of truth. Like the concord of the fifth, the perceptive part of the soul has four species, namely four of the five senses. While Ptolemy treats each of the five senses as distinct in *On the Kritērion*, here he considers touch as common to the other four. Like the concord of the fourth, the part 'which maintains a state' has three species: growth, maturity, and decline, each of which Aristotle lists in *De anima* 1.5, 411a30 and 3.12, 434a24–5 as a condition of life.

The second model Ptolemy presents in *Harmonics* 3.5 is Platonic. The soul, again, is tripartite, and its parts are the rational (*logistikon*), spirited (*thumikon*), and appetitive (*epithumētikon*). As in his Aristotelian model, each part of the soul has the number of species corresponding to the number for the homophone or concord associated with it. In this model, however, the parts of the soul have species of virtue. The rational part, which governs the spirited and appetitive parts, has seven species of virtue, the spirited part has four, and the appetitive part has three. In providing a list of virtues, Ptolemy follows a common Hellenistic trend, but, in associating the virtues with distinct parts of the soul, rather than the soul in its entirety, he follows what appears to be a specifically Platonic trend, evidenced in Andronicus' *De passionibus* 2.1.3, 4.4.1, and 6.1.1 and Alcinous' *Didaskalikos* 29. Furthermore, Ptolemy's choice and definitions of the virtues match the definitions provided in the pseudo-Platonic *Definitions* more than they do any other text in the ancient Greek corpus.[10] This correspondence suggests that Ptolemy used the *Definitions*, or a similar Platonic handbook, when constructing his model of the Platonic soul or that he was, at the very least, familiar with Platonic definitions of virtues, such as those included in the *Definitions*.

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[10] Franz Boll (1894: 106) and Ingemar Düring (1934: 271) discuss the textual overlap in the definitions of virtues between the *Definitions* and *Harmonics* 3.5.

In his third and final model of the human soul in *Harmonics* 3.5, Ptolemy provides a combination of his Aristotelian and Platonic models. The soul is once again tripartite and Ptolemy defines the parts in accordance with their descriptions in the previous two models. He lists the three parts as follows: the part concerned with good will (*eunoia*) and right reckoning; the part concerned with good perception and good health, or, alternatively, courage and moderation; the part concerned with things that are productive of and participate in *harmoniai*. As in *Republic* 4.444d, justice is a relation between the parts of the soul, and the best condition of the soul is a concord between the soul's parts.

Following *Timaeus* 38e–42e, Ptolemy describes celestial bodies as ensouled in book 2 of the *Planetary Hypotheses*. Each planet and star has a faculty (*qūwa*) analogous to the human faculties of vision and intelligence. For celestial bodies, this faculty is responsible for brightness and motion, and, by means of it, a planet directs the movements of the aethereal spheres and parts of spheres that carry it through the heavens. These movements are uniform, circular, and voluntary. Ptolemy draws on an analogy with animal motion to explain how a planet's soul directs its spheres' movements. Just as the soul of a bird sends an emission (*inbi'āth*) to its nerves and on to its feet and wings in order to produce movement, the soul of a planet sends emissions to the epicycle, deferent, and so on through its system of aethereal spheres. The result is the planet's perceptible movements, including its advancements, stations, and retrogradations.

(iv) Virtue and happiness

For Ptolemy, the most virtuous state is a harmonious one. The best condition of the human soul is justice, and the condition of a philosopher as a whole is analogous to the *harmonia* of the complete *sustēma* in music (*Harmonics* 3.5, D97). Each part of the human soul has a series of virtues associated with it, and a philosopher applies these virtues in two domains: the theoretical and the practical. In *Harmonics* 3.6, as in *Almagest* 1.1, Ptolemy differentiates the theoretical and the practical, but in the former he divides them both into three genera: the theoretical into the physical, mathematical, and theological, and the practical into the ethical, domestic, and political. In *Almagest* 1.1, Ptolemy emphasizes the benefits of theoretical philosophy. While the philosopher strives for a noble and disciplined disposition in practical affairs, he devotes most of his time to the contemplation and teaching of theories, especially mathematical ones.

Ultimately, Ptolemy's commitment to the study and instruction of mathematics is ethical. He explains in *Almagest* 1.1 that the mathematician's study of the divine guides his own conduct and character towards a virtuous state.

Because theological objects are imperceptible, they are ungraspable and, even with the aid of mathematics, one can merely make a good guess at their nature. Therefore, only contemplation of the visible divine, aethereal bodies, furnishes the philosopher with a divine exemplar on which to model his behaviour. Just as propounded in the *Timaeus* (47b–c; 90c–d), observation of the constancy, order, symmetry, and calm of celestial movements makes astronomers lovers of divine beauty. Analysing the harmonious motions of celestial bodies, the astronomer seeks to bring about this same harmony within his own soul. He achieves this transformation by conducting himself virtuously, according to the virtues associated with each part of the soul, thereby bringing the parts of his soul into a harmonious arrangement. Thus, not only does the practice of mathematics produce knowledge, but it also provides the astronomer with an exemplar for his ethical behaviour. Astronomy, then, is, as Ptolemy affirms in *Tetrabiblos* 1.1, desirable in itself.

3 CONCLUSION

Amidst his mathematical and natural philosophical *hupotheseis*, Ptolemy examines many of the most pressing philosophical questions of his time. While he does not affiliate himself with any particular school, he appropriates the ideas and concerns of the Platonic, Aristotelian, and, to a lesser extent, the Stoic traditions. What results from this eclecticism is a coherent philosophical position best described as Platonic empiricism. At the foundation of Ptolemy's philosophy is his criterion of truth, grounded in what later came to be labelled empiricism and designed to differentiate opinion from knowledge, a distinction which Ptolemy expresses in Platonic terms. This criterion serves as the means by which Ptolemy categorizes every object in the cosmos, determines the epistemic success of the theoretical sciences, and establishes a scientific method aimed at producing knowledge. Furthermore, this criterion led Ptolemy to make a claim unprecedented in the history of ancient Greek philosophy. In the introduction to the *Almagest*, he declares that mathematics alone yields knowledge. Accordingly, the study of mathematics has an underlying ethical motive. By observing celestial bodies, the student of astronomy aligns his soul to the harmonious structure of the heavens and attains a virtuous state. Hence, Ptolemy's ethical system is heavily influenced by Platonism, but it strays from the Platonic formulation of what knowledge is and how virtue is attained. For Ptolemy and the tradition he established, mathematics, and not theology, is productive of knowledge and virtue.

GALEN

R. J. HANKINSON

Galen is usually thought of as pre-eminently a medical man, and rightly so: he was the founder of a synthetic therapeutic and physiological doctrine of great power and elegance which was to become the dominant medical theory in the West and the Arab world for more than fifteen hundred years. But he considered himself a philosopher; indeed, for him the two vocations were indivisible. He wrote a short work entitled *The Best Doctor is Also a Philosopher* (*Opt.med.* 1.53–63 Kühn)[1] with the aim of showing how a firm grounding in all three of the canonical branches of philosophy (logic, physics, ethics) was prerequisite to the proper practice of medicine, and in which he claimed, characteristically if eccentrically, that this doctrine had been anticipated by his great predecessor and pre-eminent role-model Hippocrates. Philosophical concerns are never far from the surface of his thought, even in his more particularly medical writing, a great deal of which survives (it is the largest surviving corpus of any ancient author)[2] in the original Greek, while more is recoverable through translations into Arabic, Hebrew and Latin.[3] So, although the tradition has been relatively

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[1] Texts of Galen are usually cited by way of abbreviated forms of their Latin titles and volume and page number in the monumental edition of Kühn, even though it is inadequate and often now superseded by later critical editions; thus *Opt.med.* is also edited in Müller 1891, and Boudon-Millot, 2007. In general, I note the existence of later editions as appropriate.

[2] Galen wrote two surviving works about his own work, *On my Own Books* (*Lib.prop.* 19.9–40 Kühn, = Marquardt 1891: 91–124 = Boudon-Millot 2007: 134–73) and *On the Order of my Own Books* (*Ord.lib.prop.* 19.49–61 Kühn, = Marquardt 1891: 80–90 = Boudon-Millot 2007: 88–102); these are not complete (there are several genuine texts not mentioned in either work), but they serve to indicate Galen's enormous range and industry. They are translated into English in Singer 1997.

[3] The work of editing and recovering this material continues; as an example, in 1999, Vivian Nutton published his magisterial edition (with English translation) of Galen's last work *On my Own Opinions* (*Prop.plac.*) in which he recovered a complete text on the basis of the surviving Greek, plus a lacunose Latin translation done from the Arabic, supplemented by passages quoted in Arabic and Hebrew; but in 2005, Boudon-Millot and Petrobelli were able to publish an edition of the complete Greek text, based on a recently rediscovered and hitherto unknown Greek manuscript. The same manuscript also enabled Boudon-Millot to fill in several large lacunae in *Lib.prop.* and *Ord.lib.prop.* in her 2007 edition. For the Arabic Galen, see also Strohmeier 1981.

unkind to his specifically philosophical output (which was also considerable), it is still possible to form a comprehensive and well-founded appreciation of his philosophical affinities and abilities. It is the task of this article to sketch such an appreciation.

LIFE AND WORK

Galen was born into a wealthy family in Pergamum, in western Asia Minor, in September of 129 CE. His father, a wealthy architect, gave him the best possible liberal education, and he studied philosophy with leading representatives of all four major schools (Platonist, Peripatetic, Stoic, Epicurean). Two years later, however, moved by a dream, his father steered him towards medical studies, first in Pergamum, and later, after his father's death in 149, in Smyrna (where he also attended classes given by the famous Platonist Albinus), Corinth, and finally Alexandria, where he stayed for some years. He returned to his native city in 157, where, after giving a public display of his superior anatomical knowledge, he was appointed physician to the imperial gladiatorial school, a post he occupied (according to his own account) with great distinction for four and a half years, and which afforded him a unique opportunity to further his education in surgery and anatomy. He quit in the fall of 161, and made his way circuitously to Rome, making frequent detours in search of exotic and interesting *materia medica*, arriving early in 162, where he immediately set about making a name for himself.

This he accomplished in two principal ways. First, he carried out a series of spectacular diagnoses and cures, frequently in cases in which other doctors were at a loss;[4] and second, he gave public displays of his virtuosity in anatomy and physiology, again generally in a competitive context, pitting his skills against those of others. In his most celebrated exhibition, he demonstrated the function of the recurrent laryngeal nerve by ligaturing and releasing it on several unfortunate porcine subjects.[5] His rise was meteoric; within months he was moving in senatorial circles, and eventually came into the imperial orbit itself. In 166, however, Galen left Rome under somewhat mysterious circumstances, for Pergamum; but in 169 he returned in response to an imperial summons to

[4] Our source for this information is Galen himself, and allowances must be made for his somewhat vainglorious temperament; many of the cases are reported in his *On Prognosis* (*Praen.* 14.599–673 = Nutton 1979), which is in fact largely an account of his rise to fame in Rome; but other reports are scattered throughout his work.

[5] He gives his most detailed accounts of these performances in *On Anatomical Procedures* (*AA* 2.215–731 Kühn; the Greek text is incomplete, but the remainder survives in Arabic: Simon 1906; English translations of the Greek portion are to be found in Singer 1956; of the Arabic in Duckworth, Lyons and Towers 1962); see also Garofalo 1986, 2000.

the army's winter quarters at Aquileia, where he was immediately confronted with an outbreak of plague. He was appointed imperial physician, but managed deftly to evade an invitation to accompany the emperor (Marcus Aurelius) on his German campaign, being assigned instead special responsibility for the welfare of his son Commodus while the emperor was away (an absence, intended to be brief, which in fact lasted until 176).

Galen wrote (or rather dictated, sometimes more than one treatise at a time, to relays of educated slaves) voluminously. His earliest surviving work, *On Medical Experience* (*Med.exp.*) was written when he was barely twenty; he composed, largely for his own benefit, detailed commentaries on Aristotle's *Analytics* (in nineteen books), *Categories* (four books) and *De interpretatione* (four books), which have not survived, and which were not intended for publication, although Galen complains that many texts he wrote for private use only somehow found their way into the public domain. In the fifteen years following his first arrival in Rome, he composed, in addition to numerous smaller occasional works, *On the Doctrines of Plato and Hippocrates* (*PHP* = 5.181–805 Kühn; nine books), a text dedicated to demonstrating that in all matters of significance his two great masters were in agreement; *On the Usefulness of the Parts of the Body* (*UP* = 3.1–4.366 Kühn; seventeen books), his great treatise in functional anatomy; *On Anatomical Procedures* (fifteen books); the first six books of *On the Therapeutic Method* (*MM* = 10.1–1021 Kühn; the remaining eight were added twenty years later).[6] He also wrote his four major treatises on pulses, which he considered to be among his most original contributions to medicine: *Differences of Pulses* (*Diff.puls.* = 8.493–765 Kühn), *Diagnosis by Pulses* (*Dig.puls.* = 8.766–961); *Causes of Pulses* (*Caus.puls.* = 9.1–204 Kühn), and *Prognosis by Pulses* (*Praes.puls.* = 9.205–430 Kühn), and began work on his great series of commentaries on the works of Hippocrates. And all the time he continued to be actively engaged in clinical practice, even effecting a spectacular (by his own account) diagnosis and cure on the emperor's own person, an event which he clearly considered marked the acme of his own professional and social ascent.[7]

We know rather less about his later years, partly because our best surviving source, *On Prognosis*, was published in the late 170s, partly perhaps because Galen preferred to draw a veil over his continued imperial service to Marcus' son Commodus, who reigned for twelve increasingly deranged years until 192; but in this period he continued to write, completing *On the Therapeutic Method* and

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[6] There is no modern edition of *MM*; the first two books are translated and commented upon in Hankinson 1991b.

[7] The cure is recorded in *Praen.* = 14.657–61 Kühn; it probably took place after the emperor's return in 176; see further Hankinson 2008a.

researching and writing his great pharmacological texts *On the Powers of Simple Drugs* (*SMT* = 11.359–12.377 Kühn), *On the Composition of Drugs according to Places* (*Comp.med.loc.* = 12.378–13.361 Kühn) and *On the Composition of Drugs according to Kind* (*Comp.med.gen.* = 13.362–1058). Shortly before Commodus' assassination, a great fire destroyed the Temple of Peace, which served among other things as a library and book repository; Galen had deposited many of his own works there, all of which perished, some irretrievably. But he continued to work and to write, until well into the third century, serving the emperors Caracalla and Severus; he probably died some time around 216 CE, shortly after composing *On My Own Opinions*, his philosophical manifesto and testament.

Galen conceived of philosophy not as an intellectual exercise, but as a way of life; and this attitude was also in tune with the eclecticism of his times. But both in medicine and philosophy, Galen disavowed school allegiances, likening them to slavery; and while he adopts and adapts elements from the leading schools of the time, Stoic, Epicurean, Peripatetic and Platonist, he is no mere intellectual magpie, flitting randomly from one source to another. Rather, his concern is to extract and harmonize the best views on all matters important to philosophy and science as expressed by his great predecessors; but if his approach may often best be characterized as syncretic (as evidenced by his project of reconciling Hippocrates and Plato), it is by no means mechanically so; and he is not averse to amending, improving and on occasion simply replacing all of their views. If he is, in a general sense, a fairly typical representative of what we now call Middle Platonism, in other respects his position is unique to himself, partly for his rejection of any affiliations, but more substantially by the fact that his attitude to philosophy is profoundly informed by his understanding of what is required (and just as importantly what is not) in order to be a successful doctor.

For although he dismisses some philosophical disputes as being at best useless and at worst pernicious, he still insists in *Opt.med.* on the importance of all of the branches of philosophy to the practice of medicine. The good doctor (as opposed to the majority of his contemporaries) needs logic in order to construct correct demonstrative proofs as well as to detect and expose the fallacies of the opposition, physics in order to understand the basic underlying structures that ground the human body, and ethics to resist the meretricious lure of the fast buck and the easy reputation, and to develop the necessary habits of industriousness and human fellow-feeling that a successful doctor must embody. But while philosophy and medicine are intimately linked, it would be a mistake to suppose that for him philosophy invariably plays a purely instrumental, subsidiary role. It is this complex and multi-faceted picture which I hope to bring into focus in the remainder of this chapter, which I shall organize

around Galen's attitude and contributions to the three canonical parts of the discipline.

LOGIC

Logical theory

Galen not only believed in the value of logic, he wrote extensively on it. Some time in the 160s, he published *On Demonstration* (*Dem.*) in fifteen volumes. Although *Dem.* does not survive, much of its contents and probable structure can be reconstructed from the numerous references Galen makes to it elsewhere, and it is clear that it ranged far beyond the confines of logic narrowly construed, including discussions of epistemology and the selection of axioms for the individual sciences. He also wrote numerous particular tracts on logical issues, as well as several volumes of commentary on Aristotle, the Stoics and others, none of which survive either.[8] We do, however, possess his short *Introduction to Logic* (*Inst.log.*). It is only a handbook; but it is highly important nonetheless, for even if it does not deal with them in any detail, it gestures towards, and indicates Galen's views on, a variety of fundamental logical issues.

Firstly, though, a non-issue. There has been a tradition since the Arabic commentators, which is still sometimes repeated, of crediting Galen with the 'discovery' of the so-called fourth syllogistic figure. The fourth figure does no useful logical work, and it is a matter of mere terminology whether its moods should be accepted as being immediately valid. But it is quite clear that Galen, at least in *Inst.log.*, not only does not accept it (he explicitly recognizes only three modes of categorical syllogistic), but *could not* accept it: that is because figures are individuated for him by way of the possible combinations of terms in the premises, and there are mathematically only three of them (the fourth figure retains the ordering of the premises' terms of the first figure, and differs from it in reversing the order of terms of the conclusion). But we are also told in the indirect tradition that Galen investigated the forms of three-premissed compound arguments, cases which can be reduced to combinations of arguments in canonical syllogistic, by drawing an explicit conclusion from two of the premises as a lemma, and using it in conjunction with the third to derive the conclusion.[9] Galen was moved to investigate such structures, our source tells us, in order to be able to model particular inferences in Plato (this will be

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[8] Details to be found in *Lib.prop.* and *Ord.lib.prop.*: see Morison 2008a: 66–8 for the list and a discussion of their probable contents.

[9] E.g., AaB, BaC, CaD ⊢ AaD (derive AaC, then use with CaD).

of some importance); and he is said to have said that there were four figures for such compound arguments.[10]

Inst.log. falls into four parts, dealing with the categories, categorical and hypothetical syllogistic, and finally with the logic of relations. His presentation of the categories is orthodox – an elementary presentation of the Aristotelian ten – with one significant difference: he adds an eleventh category of his own invention, that of composition 'such as the weaving of a cloak or the construction of a net or a box, which was left out by Aristotle in his book on the predicates' (*Inst.log.* 13.11). The details are obscure; but it is clear that Galen thought being put together in a certain way is another general way of being, one previously ignored. As elsewhere, Galen adopts; but he also adapts, and adds. The presentation of categorical syllogistic is also unoriginal, and, typically of the prevalent syncretistic approach to logic, Galen holds that categorical and hypothetical logic supplement, and in many cases simply duplicate, one another. But again there is more here than a simple Middle-Platonist intellectual conciliation. For in certain cases how you present an argument makes a difference; or rather for its full, demonstrative force, an argument sometimes needs to be presented in categorical form.

Which leads me to my next point: Galen's interest, primarily, is in demonstration: the establishment of secure theorematic conclusions on the basis of sound prior principles, on the model of Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics*. That is, he is interested in constructing particular, sound arguments that meet certain epistemic criteria and which can guide and underwrite procedures in the practical sciences: he is not concerned with investigating the logical structure of valid argument as such at all. This concern for logical utility accounts for much of what is novel, as well as a good deal that is puzzling, in Galen's logic. His treatment of hypothetical syllogistic, while obviously indebted to the Stoics, takes issue with them on a number of points. Most importantly, he holds that they are wrong to individuate argument types by their form, as opposed to by their meaning. The Stoics based their logic on five argument-patterns, the so-called 'indemonstrables';[11] Galen takes issue with their formulation, roundly declaring that one, the third, is useless for demonstration, even while apparently allowing that some useful arguments can be expressed by way of it (*Inst.log.* 14.4).

Moreover his treatment of the connectives of complex sentences differs from that of the Stoics in non-trivial ways. The issues are complicated, and Galen

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[10] Combinations of first figure with first (as in n. 9 above); first with second; first with third; second with third.

[11] *Anapodeiktoi logoi*: the precise force of '*anapodeiktos*' is controversial, but this has no direct bearing on Galen's logic.

has been accused of confusion, even incompetence.[12] But the basic point is that there are only two real relations that may hold between sentences: one may be consequent upon the other, or one may conflict with the other (the latter, but not the former, relation is evidently symmetrical). The first relation is roughly that of entailment (although for Galen some of the important conditionals express causal connectedness), the second of exclusion. The former is appropriately modelled by conditional, the latter by disjunctive arguments, disjunctions being treated, as standardly in ancient logic, as exclusive: if p conflicts with q, then at most one of them can be true.

Conflict may be either 'complete' or 'incomplete'; in the former case, at least one disjunct will (necessarily) be true; in the latter, it is possible for them both to be false. Thus the proposition 'Dio is either at the Isthmus or at Athens' expresses incomplete conflict and is (in Galen's terms) a 'paradisjunction'. Suppose it is (now) true; for whatever reason these are the only two places he could be. Obviously he can't be in both: that's the conflict. But it is incomplete, since the disjunction is only contingently true – under different circumstances there are any number of other places he might have been. Such propositions can play a useful role in argument, arguments, moreover, which can be formulated by way of the third indemonstrable: it is not the case that Dio is both at the Isthmus and in Athens; he is at the Isthmus; so he's not in Athens. But in Galen's view that argument, although evidently valid (and forensically useful), is misleadingly expressed: properly speaking, it should be couched in the form of an exclusive disjunction, since that form *represents* the fact of (incomplete) conflict. Congruently, Galen thinks that properly speaking conjunctions express only the fact that two (unrelated) sentences are true: 'it is not the case that both Dio walks and Theo talks' (*Inst.log.* 14.7–8); as Galen says, if you know that, and you know a relevant minor premiss you can draw a conclusion from it ('Dio is walking; so Theo isn't talking'); but, he says, such arguments are of no use as proofs (since the only way of knowing the truth of the premises is to come to know each of the conjuncts separately; but in that case you already know the truth of the 'conclusion'; such arguments do not advance our knowledge. Hence they are of no use). Clearly, while Galen in some sense takes over the matter of hypothetical syllogistic from the Stoics, he treats it in a very different, and perhaps original, manner.

Even more original is his discovery of a third type of argument, the relational syllogism. He deals with this at *Inst.log.* 16–18, and the treatment is difficult and the text uncertain.[13] What is clear is that Galen recognized (as Alexander

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[12] Morison, 2008a: 98–100 discusses the issues sympathetically; see also Bobzien 2004.
[13] For detailed analyses, see Barnes 1993b; Hankinson 1994b; Morison 2008a: 105–13.

of Aphrodisias, for example, did not) that the logics of the schools, even if folded together into a Middle Platonist synthesis, cannot be used to model many evidently valid inferences, of a class which Galen calls 'relational'. In particular, Aristotelian syllogistic is not equipped to formalize basic inferences in geometry.[14] Galen offers a series of examples of what he has in mind; but while they all are, in a fairly clear general sense, relational, it is not obvious that they form a coherent logical class, and nor is it obvious exactly how Galen proposes to treat them (indeed his treatment appears inconsistent). He does say that they all 'have the same construction from certain axioms' (*Inst.log* 16.5), but he neither specifies precisely what these axioms are supposed to be nor spells out what their role in the construction is. In some of the examples he offers, it seems that the axioms serve as premisses for the argument; in others they apparently do not, simply lurking in the background and playing a role more like that of principles of inference. Morison (2008a: 111–13) makes a robust effort to discover a coherent Galenic picture here; but while he is right that in Galen's view there can be arguments which are formally albeit non-demonstratively valid, and which require the relevant axioms to be spelled out in order to turn them into demonstrations,[15] I am not convinced that this fact on its own will enable us to smooth out all the rough places in Galen's account. But whatever the truth of that, Galen emerges as an innovator; and even if it turns out that his only real success is to point to the inadequacy of traditional logic, that is still a major achievement, and one whose full fruits did not begin to ripen until a century ago.

Language

Galen insists on numerous occasions that he will not take issue about mere words; and he regularly diagnoses the irritating disputes of his opponents as being mere sophistical verbal quibbles. Yet such quibbles can be harmful; just as you need logical acumen to distinguish properly- from improperly-formed arguments as well as to be able to present an argument in its appropriate form, you also need to be able to diagnose ambiguities, both syntactical and semantic. And some terms for things are misleading. At *MM* 10.78–81, Galen discusses how to use terms like 'disease', 'cause' and 'symptom', and remarks (as he does on numerous other occasions) that it doesn't really matter what names you use, as long as you

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[14] For example, those involving, or relying upon, 'common notions' such as 'any two things which are equal to some third thing are equal to one another'; the details are a little complex, but suffice it to say that Galen is entirely right about this.

[15] This idea also underlies Galen's contention that categorical syllogistic is superior to hypothetical: Morison 2008a: 78–81.

do so clearly and consistently; but even so, it is better, if possible, to stick to recognized Greek usage (unfamiliar and exotic terminologies can be confusing). Even so, some names are naturally inappropriate to their *designata*, since they suggest a false account of their nature or origins. Elsewhere (*MM* 10.599–604), Galen discusses the use of the term 'ephemeral fever': this should properly indicate a fever lasting no more than twenty-four hours, and yet it can be used for longer-lasting distempers, and in a sense correctly (for these longer illnesses are sometimes examples of the same basic type of fever). The name is misleading if used for the longer illnesses, but to give them a different name would obscure the fact that they have the same underlying nature (and you should use one word for one thing). Moreover, names for illnesses sometimes derive from the (supposed) location of the disease, sometimes from its symptomology, sometimes from other sources; and all such names can be misleading: one must 'rid oneself of all additional beliefs deriving from the names, and go straight for the essence of the matter' (*MM* 10.84). And even decent etymology is no guide to what the names refer to: Galen ridicules Chrysippus for thinking that the Greek word '*egō*' indicates that the rational soul is located in the heart since the chin points downwards to the heart when it is uttered (*PHP* 5.214–18).

Epistemology

The injunction to 'go for the essence of the matter' is also ubiquitous; and Galen means it in a very strong sense. For purposes of clarity in explanation and exposition, names must be replaced with definitions which spell out the nature of the thing in question (*MM* 10.39), so that the necessary demonstrative relations that hold between the items in the domain can be fully spelled out, and the science presented in properly Aristotelian form. But in order to get there, we must start from the 'common conception' of the thing in question, which is, roughly, the nominal definition associated with the term by ordinary competent speakers of the language: thus everyone agrees that to be sick is to suffer some impediment to one of the natural functions of the body (*MM* 10.40–4). Of course, it is an altogether harder task to distinguish the various types of sickness properly, and harder still to cure them. But if the ailment is physical, it will have a physical cause; this at least can be known on the basis of 'an indemonstrable axiom agreed by all because it is plain to the intellect . . . nothing occurs without a cause' (*MM* 10.50). Galen has earlier included this among 'that class of things grasped by the intellect on their first appearance and which are indemonstrable' (*MM* 10.36), a class which includes Euclidean common notions, as well as such (allegedly) a priori metaphysical claims as this, and logical laws such as the principle of bivalence.

There are in fact two sorts of self-evident truths for Galen, the second type being incontrovertible perceptual propositions (*MM* 10.36). For, as Galen is quite well aware, if medicine, as an empirical science, is to yield demonstrative certainty, it must include among its basic propositions empirically certain truths. At *On Mixtures* (*Temp.*) 1.588–9, Galen remarks that everyone knows what hot, cold, wet and dry mean in their ordinary senses, and anyone whose sensory equipment is in working order can determine what has each of these qualities by touch. To deny this is to succumb to 'Pyrrhonian idiocy'; and while as a young man he was himself almost driven to Pyrrhonian perplexity by the apparently irresoluble disputes between the competing schools, he was saved by reflection on the certainty of geometrical proof (*Lib.prop.* 19.49–50). Nature, in fact, has given us both senses and intellect as twin 'natural criteria' with which to discern the truth, as well as a natural confidence in them (*PHP* 5.722–5). It is only captious Pyrrhonian argument that threatens to undermine such a trust.

But Galen will on occasion argue against philosophical Scepticism, in addition to heaping abusive scorn upon it. In *On the Best Method of Teaching* (*Opt.doct.* 1.40–52), attacking the Academic Scepticism of Favorinus of Arles, Galen argues in favour of the existence of such natural criteria on the grounds that if they did not exist we could never have produced such evidently successful 'artificial criteria' as compasses, rulers and scales. Moreover, what could judge the natural criteria themselves? There is nothing prior to them. We may disbelieve them if we wish, but we cannot convict them (1.48–9). This is not an isolated case. In the short text *On the Errors of the Soul* (*Pecc.dig.* 5.58–103) Galen notes the security of the results obtained by the successful calibration of sundials and waterclocks, and of accurate eclipse predictions (*Pecc.dig.* 5.68–9; cf. *Lib.prop.* 19.40). Thus, the success of the outcomes validates the methods used; and the methods rely ineliminably on the senses; thus we cannot doubt (in general, and subject to certain caveats) their veracity.

The same goes for reason properly used, which is a tool 'for distinguishing consequence and conflict and other things which pertain to them, such as division and collection, similarity and difference' (*PHP* 5.723). Galen takes issue with the fundamental claim of both Pyrrhonist philosophers and Empiricist doctors, that there is an endemic and undecidable dispute regarding all non-phenomenal propositions. Most such disputes can be resolved with sufficient care, competence and attention to detail. The arguments on either side, at least in the important, practical cases, are not equipollent. Nor does anybody uninfected by Sceptical argument really think that there is no difference in point of conviction between dream and waking experience (*Opt.doct.* 1.42). Indeed, arguments for such positions are self-refuting:

If they [sc. Sceptics] overturn what is plainly apparent through the senses, they will have no place from which to begin their demonstrations. And if they begin from premises which carry conviction (*pista*), how can they reasonably disbelieve them later, given that the starting points (*archai*) of demonstrations carry more conviction than the things demonstrated, which require the credibility derived from other premises? The *archai* of demonstrations are not only convincing in regard to themselves, but also in relation to the discovery of what is sought. (*SMT* 11.462)

Sceptics, of course, have responses to such attacks; but Galen presents the pragmatic case against Scepticism in a particularly powerful and uncompromising form. In fact, he thinks, Pyrrhonian insistence on talking exclusively in terms of appearance is mere word-play, and can have no effect on real life. In a satirical passage of *Dig.puls.* (8.782–4) he allows that one may, if one wants, replace talk of a swollen river after heavy rain destroying a bridge with the claim that an apparently swollen river after what looked like heavy rain seemed to destroy the bridge. Such a replacement makes no difference. So, it's pointless.

  In a similar vein, he thinks that the dispute between the Stoics and Academics over epistemology is at bottom merely terminological: there is no practical difference between the Stoic notion of an apprehensive impression, and the Academics' reliance on persuasive impressions which have been tested and not overturned (*PHP* 5.778). But for all that, Galen's epistemology is not absurdly over-optimistic. When he says, as he does on many occasions, that we must begin from propositions that carry conviction by themselves, he is really adverting to two very different procedures. Usually, he is talking of how we come by the basic axioms that will drive the fully finished demonstrative theory – and here the relevant starting-points are items of evident perceptual or intellectual truth: the sun is hot, or two and two make four. But these starting-points are not the axioms of the finished system. The latter, or at any rate those with empirical content, are arrived at by refining the deliverances of perceptual experience in such a way as to produce general propositions which encode true information about the real natures of things.

  The methods involved are those of division and analysis: the making of the appropriate classificatory distinctions into genus and species, and the reduction of particular propositions to more general and explanatory ones. Division (in one form) is familiar from Plato. Galen acknowledges his Platonic debts, but also recognizes that Aristotle and Theophrastus handled the matter with greater sophistication (*MM* 10.26–7: he also praises the doctor Mnesitheus for the precision of his divisions). Crucially, division is not simply a matter of isolating any applicable *differentiae* of the genera in question, but rather those which really do express what the species in question actually is. Galen's realist commitments in regard to natural kinds are at least as strong as Aristotle's.

Analysis is an interpretative can of worms. But Galen clearly views it as akin to the method (itself controversial) by which geometrical problems can be reduced to more general, and more evident, truths. The difficulty lies in seeing how such a process, however construed, can be transferred to an empirical science, in which the general axioms are not either immediately obvious facts or stipulative definitions.

For all that, Galen insists on the importance of empirical testing, *peira*, in the establishment of scientific conclusions. He regularly contrasts *peira* with *logos*, reasoning; but the contrast is not a hostile one. Both are required in order to discover and to ground science. Herein lies his dispute with the Empiricists; for he allows that Empiricists, relying only on fallible generalization from experience, can become effective, if limited, doctors (*MM* 10.122–3). Indeed, the therapies the best of them employ often do not differ from those offered by competent Rationalist doctors (*On Sects for Beginners* [*Sect*. 1.64–105 = Helmreich 1893: 1–33] 1.72–4). But they rely only on trial and error: chance suggests a possible course of action, repeated testing confirms or disconfirms its efficacy. Hence they cannot construct a properly explanatory account of health, disease and therapy. But theirs is at least a relatively safe, if cumbersome, procedure; far worse things are wrought by those who seek to go beyond mere experience, but lack the logical resources to make the proper divisions and to avoid the snares of the sophists. Still, *peira* alone is a limited tool. Some things (e.g., the cupping glass: *On Affected Parts* [*Loc.aff*.] 8.154–5) could never have been discovered simply by chance. For Galen, *peira* operates primarily as a control on therapies (indeed on physical accounts in general) suggested by abductive reasoning from experience:

As I have often said, *peira* is the judge of what is plainly apparent (*enargōs phainomena*), not reason (*logos*), which anyone can plausibly twist for himself. Reason seeks and determines the explanation of what is agreed to have occurred (for it would be absurd to assign an explanation for something which had never occurred at all as if it had) . . . I have frequently urged everyone to be mindful of this, particularly when things which have seemed plausible to them have turned out on examination to be false. (*On Hippocrates' Epidemics 6* [*Hipp.epid*.][16] 17B.61–2; cf. *MM* 10.375)

Thus *peira* provides a test for the causal accounts supplied by reason; which implies that Galen is less than entirely confident about the intrinsic certainty of the first principles of his science. The causally explanatory general principles are suggested by reasoning from experience, but cannot be firmly established thereby; which further implies that *peira* is not a matter of mere haphazard

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[16] This part of *Hipp.epid*. is edited in Wenkebach 1956.

experience. Rather, tests will be designed to assess the particular applicability of a theory. Galen's epistemology is not, after all, quite so hopelessly naïve.

PHYSICS

The structure of things

That epistemology, naïve or otherwise, is designed to establish useful basic propositions in science. And for Galen, these will include an account of the fundamental physical natures of things. His physics is of a traditional, fundamentally Aristotelian cast. But it is not entirely derivative.

Galen thinks it just evident that certain things are phenomenally hot, cold, wet and dry. But it is one thing to affirm that, quite another to claim that such qualities are in some way fundamental, and that they can really be possessed by objects that do not under all circumstances phenomenally manifest them. Yet this second claim is basic to his element theory, which is an essential part of the 'useful physics' required properly to ground medical theory and practice. A striking, yet utterly characteristic, contention of his is that the existence and identity of the elements can be demonstrated, and that moreover it had been (albeit telegraphically) by Hippocrates. Galen wrote *Elements According to Hippocrates* (*Hipp.elem.* 1.413–508 = De Lacy 1994) to vindicate this claim. Galen argues (*Hipp.elem* 1.416–23) that Hippocrates (in *Nature of Man*) shows that no monistic theory (including atomism) can account for pain, which can only occur if there is genuine alteration (as opposed to mere rearrangement) in physical bodies. To feel pain one must be sentient; and sentience involves a capacity for genuine change in a persisting subject. Thus, the elements of any such subject must themselves be capable of change, although not necessarily of sentience (since sentience may supervene on other sorts of change). But Galen does reject what I have elsewhere labelled[17] the supervenience of generically distinct properties: houses, being shaped, must be made of parts which are themselves shaped, albeit not necessarily house-shaped (1.427–32).

Whether or not this counts as a demonstration, it is obviously not a negligible argument. Monisms of any type are unacceptable, then, because for there to be alteration, the thing altering and the thing being altered must be fundamentally different in some respect: if everything were (say) fire, nothing could affect the fire in such a way as to produce anything non-fiery out of it (*Hipp.elem.* 1.433; cf. *HNH* 15.36–7; *PHP* 5.566–7). The general changeability of everything requires

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[17] E.g., in Hankinson 2008c: 213.

that things share a single material substrate, but not that they are literally made of the same stuff (*Hipp.elem*. 1.442–8). He diagnoses further terminological confusions, in particular between 'element' (*stoicheion*) and 'principle' (*archē*): the latter term is properly restricted to the fundamental qualities (hot, cold, wet and dry), the various presences of which in the substrate produce the elements (fire, earth, water and air), which are thus not conceptually basic, but are basic stuffs in that pure fire, say, cannot be shown to be a mixture of anything else (*HNH* 15.30–1). Moreover, as for Aristotle (*Gen. corr.* 2.3, 330a30–331a6), each element is composed of a pair of qualities inhering in the substrate: fire is hot and dry, water cold and moist, earth dry and cold, air moist and hot, of which the first-named quality in each case predominates (*Hipp.elem*. 1.468–70). But Galen departs from his Aristotelian (and Stoic) predecessors in making all four qualities active, although he allows that hot and cold are more dynamic than wet and dry (*On the Natural Faculties* [*Nat.fac.*] 2.7–9). Thus fire and water are the more active, but all are capable of effecting changes. Why only four elements? Here Galen's theory makes contact with the empirical. He thinks that it is just obvious that bodies which possess these four qualities are apt to affect others in contact with them, in a way that others do not. Hot things make adjacent things hot; but rough things (e.g.) do not make smooth things rough merely by touching them (*Hipp.elem*. 1.487). Why not simply rest content with the qualities and the substrate, and forget about the elements altogether? This would not be disastrous; but it is still obvious (or so Galen claims) that some bodies are naturally hotter than others, and that the hottest of these is fire. And even if, as some physicists (including Aristotle) contend, there is no such thing as purely manifested fire, this does not mean that phenomenal fire, as the fieriest of stuffs, does not merit the name 'fire' (1.460–5).

The nature of the body

As a doctor, Galen is chiefly concerned with the human body. But human bodies are physical bodies, complex composites built up of the elements and qualities. More particularly the physiological basis of animals' bodies is the four humours of the Hippocratic *Nature of Man*: blood, phlegm, yellow and black bile (*Hipp.elem*. 1.491–8), which are associated with pairs of qualities (and hence with the elements: *Causes of Diseases* [*Caus.morb.*] 7.21–2), although they are not precisely on all fours: blood (which is hot and moist) is the most natural (in some sense) of the humours, and hence is less prone to excessive distemper than the others (although it is still possible to have a superfluity of blood, hence the importance of therapeutic blood-letting, on which Galen wrote a number of treatises: see Brain 1986). And since disease consists in impediment

to function, and since one major generic type of such impediment consists in humoral imbalance, they are imbalances of the qualities and can be treated as such, by applying the Hippocratic therapeutic derivative of Galen's basic causal axiom that opposites cure opposites. Thus, anyone suffering from an ardent fever manifests an excess of the hot and dry, and needs to be cooled and moistened (there are eight distinct types of distemper, consisting in simple excesses of the four qualities, plus excesses of the pairs hot/dry, hot/moist, cold/dry and cold/moist: *Temp.* 1.510–18).

So much should be obvious to anybody. But it is not always so straightforward to determine precisely either the nature or degree of the distemper. Nor, despite Galen's claim that the phenomenal qualities are readily discernible, is it easy to determine the proper causal qualities of substances applied as medicaments (Galen devotes much of the first five books of *SMT* to the resolution of such theoretical questions). For whether or not (and to what extent) a patient is distempered is an individual matter, depending on the individual's natural constitution. It is normal for people in their prime to be hotter than those in old age, and for men to be dryer than women; but there is no particular degree of heat and dryness appropriate, say, for every twenty-five-year old man; thus the successful physician needs to know what is normal for each of his patients, and if he has no prior experience of the patient, he must be able to infer to plausible guesses as to his condition on the basis of current signs and the reported history of past symptoms (these issues are treated at length in *Temp.*, and are given a clinical context in the case histories recounted in *Praen.*).

The most important point is that not everything which is phenomenally hot (or cold, wet or dry) is naturally so. Some things are hot only accidentally, having acquired heat (thus you can heat water); but in such cases the acquired property naturally dissipates quickly (*Temp.* 1.658–60). Stuffs (especially foods and drugs) are genuinely hot if they are prone to cause heat, not if they feel hot (thus chilled wine is hot: *Temp.* 1.658–61). Even so, the existence of such properties can be discerned (given suitable controls) by phenomenal experience, at any rate with the help of reason (*Temp.* 1.598). The resulting theory is complex, and is no mere a priori fantasy, even if some aspects of it may seem ad hoc. Galen is always at pains to try and anchor his theory securely in phenomenal facts; and even where he evidently fails to succeed, the enterprise itself is honourable enough.[18]

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[18] This account is of necessity compressed; I have no space to discuss either his influential theory of natural powers, or his treatment of tissue-formation; see Hankinson 2008c, 2009, and forthcoming; Debru 2008.

Causation and theology

Science is explanatory, and explanation is causal. These are fundamental tenets for Galen. But his attitude to the types of causal category worth invoking is catholic. In a short treatise *On Antecedent Causes* (*CP = CMG* Supp. II (1937), Hankinson 1998a), Galen remarks, characteristically, that scepticism about causation as such is simply sophistry. Everyone knows the ordinary denotation of the term (*CP* 6.55–6). What matters philosophically is to get clear about the various general types of cause and their interrelations, while the scientist needs to know what actually fulfils these functions in any given case; in medicine, the doctor needs to know the cause of the ailment in order to cure it, by removing or counteracting it. *CP* is devoted in large part to establishing that there are such things as antecedent causes in the technical sense of the later Greek philosophical and medical schools: causes whose existence precedes the onset of their effects, and which are not necessarily sufficient for them.[19]

Erasistratus had argued that the only genuine causes were sufficient for and temporally tied to their effects; and contended that heat and cold and the like could not qualify as causes, since they failed to meet either of these conditions (*CP* 1.9–10; 8.96–12.161). Galen allows that there are causes which are necessary and sufficient for their effects and co-temporal with them – the Stoics' containing causes (*aitia sunektika*) – and it is important for the physician to know what they are; but they are not the only kinds of cause, or causally relevant factor. Erasistratus claims that excessive heat cannot be the cause of fever, because of a crowd of people all exposed to the same degree of heat only a few fall ill (*CP* 2.11); Galen replies that this shows that heat cannot be the *sole* cause: other causal factors will include the patient's degree of susceptibility to such pathologies, and facts about his recent regimen. But for all that, heating is not irrelevant to the outcome, and to pretend that it is is to fly in the face of evident facts (*CP* 7.96–114). All this is, of course, consistent with Galen's fundamental humoral physiology; but the philosophical taxonomization of causal categories is sophisticated, and valuable quite independently of it.

To get a sense of that sophistication, let us look briefly at a passage from *Causes of Pulses* (*Caus.puls.*) 9.1–7. Here Galen discusses the containing causes of alterations in the pulse rate, as well as the various kinds of cause that precede it, including antecedent causes. Thus he says, causes of pulses are of two kinds, of their generation and of their alteration. Of the former type are the need (*chreia*) for their existence, the efficient capacity which produces them, and the

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[19] For the characterization of such causes, see Sextus, *PH* 3.15.

instruments by which that capacity is actualized. Here Galen is self-consciously adopting and adapting the Peripatetic causal categories: final, efficient, and the later Peripatetic instrumental causes (elsewhere he is happy also to include the material cause: *CP* 6.56–7.90; he is, however, notably cool towards the Aristotelian formal cause, mentioning it only once, and then casually, at *Utility of Parts* (*UP* 3.1–4.366 = Helmreich 1907–9) 3.465–6). Of the latter type are antecedent and preceding causes, the first being the external factors that alter how the body ought to function, the second being the internal changes to its humoral structure that necessitate such alterations: thus if the body gets over-heated, it will require the vascular system to work harder to evacuate the 'smoky residues': thus the need will have been altered (increased), which will bring about a corresponding increase in the output of the pulse-causing capacity (the heart), and a consequent alteration in how the instruments of the transmission of that capacity (the arterial coats) themselves operate. The physiological details do not matter; it is the overall picture which is important.

The notion of function is central here. For Galen, the natural world is through and through teleological (this is one source of his contempt for atomism and other mechanistic systems): you simply cannot understand the complex mechanisms of animals' bodies without understanding how the various systems interrelate and what they are for. An appeal to ends is, for Galen, ineliminable, as it was for Aristotle. Indeed, Galen takes over (with acknowledgements), and expands and refines, Aristotle's picture of the functional relations of animals' parts (*UP* is devoted to this enterprise). But he differs from Aristotle in supposing that nature's finality is providential, and owed to an intelligent artificer, which he calls, in conscious imitation of Plato, the Demiurge. Only on such a supposition, Galen thinks, can we hope to make sense of the magnificently adaptive nature of animals' bodies, a nature which is revealed to the diligent anatomist. Thus, the scientifically learned can have no excuse for not believing in a providential God, although in truth, Galen thinks, God's works are obvious everywhere to everyone who has eyes to see them, and this obviously entails his existence (*Prop.plac.* 2.1–3; cf. *UP* 4.358–9). On the other hand, Galen characteristically disavows any knowledge of *what* God is, or indeed whether there are many gods; his position here is of a piece with his attitude to such questions as whether the world is generated or eternal, if there is void beyond it, and whether the world is unique or if there are many of them (*PHP* 5.766): it is idle to worry about them, since they are not susceptible to empirical testing (it would be different if we could go to the edge of the heavens and take a look: *Pecc.dig.* 5.67, 98–101). By embroiling itself in such *insolubilia* philosophy has become hopelessly speculative; for not only are such questions by their nature unsusceptible of any even plausible answer, they are irrelevant to the life well lived (*PHP* 5.780).

Here again Galen's ultimate concern with practicality resurfaces, and provides a convenient bridge to our final topics.

ETHICS, ACTION AND THE SOUL

Moral self-improvement and responsibility

Galen regularly affirms his commitment to the view that only the morally sound can hope to be successful in medicine (or indeed anything else worthwhile); but his philosophical views on ethics are not particularly interesting or original. He subscribes generally to the prevailing syncretist picture of his time: living well consists in cultivating self-control and benevolence, and in the control of the passions, particularly that of anger. His longest surviving ethical text, *On the Diagnosis and Cure of the Passions of the Soul* (*Aff.dig.* 5.1–57 = Marquardt 1884: 1–44) is fairly unremarkable, apart perhaps from its characteristic emphasis on diagnosis and cure. However, Galen does tell us that as a boy he reacted against his mother's uncontrollable temper, and was much impressed by his father's cool and equable demeanour (*Aff.dig.* 5.40–4). He emphasizes the ugliness of anger and its destructive consequences, and outlines a practical programme of psychotherapy in order to eliminate, or at least control, it (5.14–27). Equally, he takes it to be obvious that a temperate life, where the desires are kept within strict bounds, is objectively to be preferred, and again for traditional reasons: appetites indulged simply wax stronger, and the man in the grip of such desires is doomed to disappointment. This applies to all strong desires, for food, sex, fame, possessions, and money (5.45–53). Galen admits, however, that he cannot argue the insatiable out of their appetites; his purpose is solely to aid those who are already committed to living the life of virtue, but are finding it hard in practice to do so (5.34). Galen has dealt directly with the two lower parts of the tripartite Platonic soul, explicitly describing both as irrational (5.28), and calling them by their Platonic names. Equally Platonic is his insistence that reason must be secured on its throne; to be controlled by emotion and desire is a recipe for a miserable life.

Thus described, his ethics is of a fairly conventional sort. Also characteristic of his time (and of his Stoic inheritance) is his emphasis on the uselessness of feelings of loss, particularly in the case of material things. This chagrin is the necessary concomitant of insatiable material desire; and again its harmful and undesirable nature should be obvious to any rational man. Galen emphasizes his own satisfaction with relatively little (although he allows that he is perfectly comfortably off): the example of his father's moderation has made him happy with his lot (5.43–52). All of this may seem not a little self-serving; but one

episode in his life and his attitude to it is instructive. In 192, a great fire destroyed, among much else, the book depository at the Temple of Peace, and along with it much of Galen's work. He refers to the event in several places – his recently rediscovered short treatise *On Freedom from Grief* (Boudon-Millot and Petrobelli 2005) talks of the loss at some length – but never in terms of distress or grief or despair. Perhaps he really was able to bear severe material loss with equanimity.

The nature of the soul

Galen set much store, then, by moral character, We learn from the surviving Arabic epitome of his lost book of the same name (see Mattock 1972) that he greatly admired the fortitude of the slaves of the would-be regicide Perennis under judicial torture, and draws the conclusion that nobility of soul is to be found even in those who happen to have been enslaved: they behaved as befit free men. This is a theme he reiterates elsewhere, and it is of a piece with his anti-Stoic belief that people are born with different innate characters – some are naturally reprobate, and no amount of moral training will cure them (*Aff.dig.* 5.37–40). Indeed, he believes that such characteristics are derivative of the individual's physical humoral composition, and wrote a treatise *The Faculties of the Soul Follow the Mixtures of the Body* (*QAM* 4.767–822 = Mueller 1891: 32–79) dedicated to establishing this proposition. The evidence, he thinks, is clear enough: substances with physical effects (wine, for instance) evidently also affect our dispositions and rational faculties. This does not, he allows, entail that the soul is physical, but dualists like Plato at least owe us an explanation of how non-physical substances can be affected by physical ones, and Galen himself cannot see how this is to be done (*QAM* 4.772–7). On the other hand, Galen is prepared to admit the existence of mysterious and as yet inexplicable forms of causal transmission in cases where the evidence demands it: he notes that the torpedo-fish can transmit its numbing shock instantaneously (or nearly so) through a fisherman's trident, a fact which cannot be accounted for on the model of the successive material alteration of adjacent substances; nor can magnetic attraction (*Loc.aff.* 8.421–2). The same is true as regards the operations of the soul via the nerves (*PHP* 5.611–12).

Galen's physicalist leanings are most apparent in *QAM*, as is his insistence that parts of our character are innate, and the result of our particular physical mixtures; our characters can be moulded and shaped to a degree, but they cannot simply be invented.

Equally, he is drawn towards a kind of determinism of character: not everything is subject to our rational control. This raises, as he is well aware, thorny issues concerning the ascription of responsibility:

Not everyone is born either a friend or an enemy to justice; each kind comes about because of bodily mixtures; but how, they say, can one then be justly praised or blamed, loved or hated, for good or bad qualities which are not due to them but to a mixture which obviously derives from other sources? (*QAM* 4.814–15)

Galen's reply is uncompromising: evil things, humans included, are to be destroyed because of what they are, not because of any responsibility they may bear for their condition; and such actions are justified not only on the grounds of public safety and deterrence, but also because such irremediably wicked lives are not worth living: we are actually doing such people a favour (*QAM* 4.815–16).

Galen's agnosticism extends to the question of whether the soul or any part of it is immortal, and claims no knowledge as to its substance, although it is clear that it is a substance of some sort (*Prop.plac.* 7.1–5) and that it exists, since its effects in living things are evident. Indeed, a soul just is the capacity for producing various characteristic activities in particular types of thing (*Prop.plac.* 3.1–6). Moreover, Galen is quite convinced of Platonic tripartition, and indeed thinks that it can be demonstrated: a large part of *PHP* is devoted to establishing that the brain is the seat of reason and the source of voluntary motion mediated through the nervous system, the heart of the emotions, and the liver of desire (cf. *Prop.plac.* 6.1–6). Knowledge of the separation and location of the psychic functions is essential for the medical practitioner (this is why remedies for mental conditions are applied to the head: *Loc.aff.* 8.130–1, 158–61); but it is of no import to determine whether or not the soul is physical and if any part of it survives physical death.

Equally, he admits himself baffled by the nature and mode of operation of the soul which oversees the development of the foetus (*On the Formation of the Foetus* (*Foet.form*) 4.687–702 = Nickel 2001), although once again he thinks it evident that there is such a thing, and that it evinces a designing intelligence. Significantly, though, he finds himself unable to accept the view 'of one of my Platonist teachers' that the immanent World Soul itself produces all living things:

The skill and power involved would be worthy of such an entity; but I could not tolerate the conclusion that scorpions and poisonous spiders, mice and mosquitoes, vipers and worms . . . were constructed by it, for such a doctrine seemed to me to verge on blasphemy. So only this do I believe myself able to state definitely regarding the cause of construction in animals: that it involves an enormous degree of skill and intelligence, and that after this construction the entire body is managed throughout its life by three causes of motion: that from the brain through the nerves and muscles, that from the heart through the arteries, and that from the liver through the veins. I have made clear demonstrations regarding these principles – for I dare not rely on conjecture – in a

number of treatises . . . but I have nowhere presumed to pronounce on the nature of the soul; for as to whether it is wholly incorporeal or something physical, if it is eternal or if it is perishable, I have discovered no one who uses geometrical demonstrations. (*Foet.form.* 4.701–2)

GALEN'S LEGACY

That passage may be read as a fitting summary of what is distinctive and interesting in Galen's epistemology and methodology. In spite of his evident tendencies to vainglorious, self-promotional logorrhoea (Wilamowitz once dubbed him 'the great wind-bag'), Galen's attitude to what can be known, and how, is surprisingly cautious; for all his vaunted confidence in the ability of the 'logical methods' and of trained perception to establish some facts for certain in the face of scepticism, he is equally conscious, as I have tried to stress, of the limitations of human inquiry. Indeed, it is the very same detailed and painstaking anatomical investigation that is largely responsible for both attitudes. His epistemology is indeed (to borrow Tony Long's apt description of Ptolemy's very similar position: Long 1988) one for the practising scientist. And, if anything, he became more cautious with age; it is probably in response to his last work, *Prop.plac.*, that Alexander of Aphrodisias issued the tart assessment that 'he spent eighty years coming to the conclusion that he knew nothing'. Alexander and Galen were on opposite sides of several controversies. Galen wrote against the Aristotelian notions of an unmoved mover, and the idea that everything in motion must be moved by something else, and Alexander sought to refute him (Rescher and Marmurra 1965). He also took issue with the Peripatetic notion that time required change, holding that a temporally extended period of total rest was not incoherent; and again, Alexander rebutted him. There was evidently not much love lost between the two of them; but even so, Alexander generously describes Galen, along with Plato and Aristotle, as *endoxos*, worthy of being taken seriously.

Reminiscences of Galen in the century after his death are rare; but as Nutton (1984a) has shown, that is very likely a function of the capriciousness of the tradition, and need not reflect any real eclipse of Galen's star. His name crops up from time to time in the later Aristotelian commentators, always respectfully; perhaps most notably of all, he is included by the Christian bishop Nemesius in his list of important theorists of perception, along with Hipparchus, sundry geometrical opticians, Epicurus, Plato and Aristotle: exalted company indeed. His medical influence was even greater, surviving into the middle ages, albeit in an unfortunately fossilized form, as a result of his being the basis of the fourth-century imperial physician Oribasius' vast, and vastly influential, medical

encyclopaedia (a testament to his importance of a rather different type is his inclusion as one of the interlocutors, albeit a minor one, in Athenaeus' rambling *Deipnosophistae*).[20]

All of this shows that he was taken seriously indeed by his successors, even if they disagreed with him, as they frequently did. But even so, it is clear that he was less influential on his immediate posterity, at least as a philosopher, than he might have been, and perhaps deserved to be. There are, I think, two related reasons for this: the rise of a new speculative metaphysics in Platonism, and the rise of Christianity. As I have emphasized, Galen had no time at all for the former, for reasons that anticipate Hume's: neither empirical evidence nor reasonings a priori can ever yield even plausible (Hume would have said intelligible – Galen might have agreed) answers to such questions. As for the second, while Galen's endorsement of divine providence on empirical grounds would no doubt have met with episcopal approval, in many other respects, he was out of touch with the emerging temper of the times. He himself viewed Christianity as a lunatic fringe Jewish sect, unhealthily obsessed with martyrdom, whose notion of a God who literally created a world out of nothing was inconsistent with the constraints of a priori physics, and probably impious as well. He prized reason above all, and certainly above faith. He found it hard to see how the soul could be immaterial, much less immortal. Finally, the succeeding centuries showed a steadily decreasing concern with the logic that was so dear to him. Ironically, given his avowed attitude to Scepticism, he might well have found himself, at least in this regard, more in sympathy with some aspects of the renascent Pyrrhonism of the following century – although (obviously) not with all of them.

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[20] Nutton, 2008, magisterially encapsulates the later trajectory of his fame.

PART II

THE FIRST ENCOUNTER OF JUDAISM AND CHRISTIANITY WITH ANCIENT GREEK PHILOSOPHY

INTRODUCTION TO PART II

In this section, we begin the treatment of Jewish and Christian thinkers who were among the first to encounter ancient Greek philosophy in a systematic way. The relationship between Judaism and Christianity (and later, Islam) as religions, on the one hand, and their theological formulations, on the other, is an ongoing theme through this book. The Hellenized Jew Philo of Alexandria is perhaps the first to see in Greek philosophy the vocabulary and the conceptual framework for articulating Biblical revelation. The principal challenge Philo faced was how to express in the language of Greek philosophy the personal nature of the first principle of all and the relation that existed between that principle and the Jewish people. The history of ancient Greek philosophy is often characterized as having separated itself from the personalized Homeric gods in favour of more rational and so more impersonal causes. But it was not so much the personal as it was the non-rational aspects of the personal that Greek philosophical theology wished to abandon. Philo's efforts to provide a systematic allegorizing of Scripture was to be enormously influential in both Jewish and Christian attempts to commensurate the philosophical and the theological.

In Justin, Clement and Origen we have three of the earliest major thinkers to argue that Christianity was a philosophy, indeed, that it was the culmination of Greek philosophical thinking. It is already evident from the Pauline Epistles that Christianity and Greek philosophy were apt either for conflict or harmonization. This option for the latter will be reprised and also repeatedly rejected up through the Reformation and beyond. Tertullian's (c. 160–c. 220) famous query, 'What has Athens to do with Jerusalem or the Academy with the Church?' is an emblematic reaction to the more eirenic or perhaps strategic efforts of the above three. It was their approach, however, that mainly prevailed. In them, we see much of the common currency of Greek philosophical language employed in a way intended to preserve the distinctiveness of the Christian message. We also see the employment of distinctions and arguments that do not so easily

or obviously serve the new religion. The very idea of heretical thought, for example, only makes sense within a philosophical argumentative framework. It is not an exaggeration to say that these early Christian thinkers relied on Greek philosophy to discover what they actually thought about the revelation that they embraced.

PHILO OF ALEXANDRIA

DAVID WINSTON

INTRODUCTION

With the appearance of John Dillon's pioneering account of Middle Platonism (1977), a major shift occurred in the landscape of opinion that had earlier characterized the interpretation of Philo's writings. Alternating emphases on either Platonism, Stoicism, eclecticism, mystery cults, or even Gnosticism, which had marked the various efforts to identify Philo's primary extra-biblical sources of inspiration were finally eliminated by Dillon's convincing demonstration that the context that best explains his philosophical formulations is that of Middle Platonism, an approach that was then further elaborated in remarkable detail by David Runia in his landmark work *Philo and the Timaeus of Plato* (1986). Indeed it was Runia who raised Philonic studies to a new level of intellectual excitement. It is hardly unexpected, however, with a thinker such as Philo, whose primary aim was to build bridges between Judaism and Hellenism, that scholarly opinion concerning the proper evaluation of that effort should remain significantly divergent. Thus, according to Runia, following in the footsteps of V. Nikiprowetzky (1977), as a biblical exegete, Philo saw it as his task to search for the 'authentic philosophy' embodied in the Mosaic record, inasmuch as the latter constitutes 'the indispensable touchstone for determining what the highest philosophy actually is'. Virtually ignored in this assessment, however, is the unique character of Philo's allegorical/midrashic exegesis, a mode of interpretation dominated by a very special agenda. 'Midrash', as P. Alexander has correctly observed, 'is as much a means of imposing ideas upon Scripture as of deriving ideas from Scripture.' If the medieval Kabbalist could read his Platonic and Gnostic mysticism into Scripture, and the Hasidic masters of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries could convey their mystical teachings in the form of homilies on the weekly Pentateuchal portions, it is not difficult to see why Philo would wish to link his Platonist views to the biblical text in order to achieve his goal of preserving his ancestral tradition while yet filling it with a new philosophical content. In short, to see Philo primarily as an exegete of Scripture *tout*

court is quite misleading. He is a thoroughly Hellenized Jew who has clearly been intellectually seduced by Platonic philosophy, but who nevertheless remained steadfastly loyal to his Jewish faith and therefore felt compelled to bend every effort to the task of reconciling the two opposing passions that energized his spiritual existence. Since in the Judaism of his day, as noted by Scholem, it was not systematic exposition, but the commentary that was the legitimate form through which the truth could be developed, he chose to Platonize his Jewish heritage through the medium of Biblical commentary. Moreover, as I later note in my account of his mysticism, Philo's bolder philosophical reformulations of Jewish religious tradition are partially veiled by a haze of studied ambiguity.[1]

LIFE AND WORKS

Although the Church Fathers know him as Philo Judaeus (Jerome, *De viris illustribus* 11), modern scholars generally refer to him as Philo of Alexandria, to distinguish him from various pagan Greek authors of the same name. Philo's atticized Greek, which is marked by a strong Platonic colouring, is unexceptionable, and his encyclopaedic knowledge of Greek literature is quite impressive. He was evidently fully acquainted with Greek philosophical texts first hand and was in no way restricted to manuals or digests. Nonetheless, he is certainly not to be regarded as an original philosopher but rather as a highly competent student of Greek philosophy, who, like the great twelfth-century rabbinic master and fluent Aristotelian Moses Maimonides, had undertaken the difficult task of harmonizing his native faith with what he considered to be the best philosophical teachings of his age.

Philo (c. 20 BCE–c. 50 CE) belonged to a wealthy, aristocratic Jewish family (of priestly descent, if Jerome is to be credited) that was readily attracted by the glitter of the Hellenistic world. His brother Gaius Julius Alexander, a name indicating Roman citizenship, was a customs agent for the collection of dues on all goods imported into Egypt from the East, and his wealth was such that he could grant Agrippa, the grandson of Herod the Great, a loan of 200,000 drachmas, thereby establishing a connection that ultimately led to the betrothal of Agrippa's daughter Berenice to Alexander's son Marcus (Jos. *Ant.* 18.159; 19.276–7). His great wealth is further attested by his provision of silver and gold plates for nine gates of the Jerusalem Temple (*War* 5.205). His other son, Tiberius Julius Alexander, to whom Philo addressed his dialogue *On Providence* and who was described by Josephus Flavius as 'not remaining true to his

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[1] For H. Wolfson's idiosyncratic interpretation of Philo's thought see Runia 1990, article x; and Winston 1994.

ancestral practices' (*Ant.* 20.100), served as procurator of the province of Judaea (46–8 CE) and as prefect of Egypt under Nero.

Of Philo himself, aside from the fact that he headed the embassy to Gaius Caligula in 39–40 CE (*Leg. ad Gaium* 370) and had visited the Jerusalem Temple (*Prov.* 2.64), we know very little. Though silent with regard to his Jewish education, he speaks with great enthusiasm of his Greek philosophical training (*Congr.* 74–6) and with engaging melancholy of his having been torn at some point from his 'heavenly lookout', where he had consorted with divine principles and doctrines, to be hurled into the vast sea of civil cares (*Spec. leg.* 3.1–6). Philo was thus the ideal Jew to undertake the reconciliation of Judaism and Hellenism, since he was himself a living embodiment of these two cultural spheres dwelling securely together. Without the slightest trace of an apology or hint of any possible dissonance, he praises parents for providing their children with gymnastic training and instruction in the secular school studies (*Spec. leg.* 2.229–30). Similarly, he sees the Jewish Sabbath as devoted to the pursuit of the 'ancestral philosophy', a time for the theoretical study of the truths of nature (*V. Mos.* 2.215–16). Elsewhere, philosophy is for Philo God's word, constituting the royal road to the divine (*Post. C.* 101–2).

As for Philo's ability to handle Hebrew texts in the original, most scholars now deny him such access, for although the evidence for his ignorance of Hebrew is only cumulative, it is all but irresistible. Several examples will illustrate Philo's utter dependence on the Septuagint. Thus, Gooding has pointed out that in various places, Philo expounds a passage by playing on the etymology of a word in the Septuagint regardless of whether the Hebrew word that it represents has a similar etymology (*Immut.* 103). Moreover, where a Greek word had more than one meaning, Philo will sometimes select one of those meanings, regardless of whether the underlying Hebrew word can have the meaning he insists on (*Immut.* 168–71). Furthermore, one of the strongest arguments once relied on in order to demonstrate Philo's knowledge of Hebrew, namely, the many etymologies of Hebrew names adduced by him, has been effectively removed by the discovery of papyrological evidence that makes it evident that Philo, as some had already conjectured earlier, made use of Greek onomastica that provided him with the etymological information needed for that purpose.[2]

The vast Philonic corpus may be divided into three groups: exegetical, philosophical and historical/apologetic. The exegetical is subdivided into three separate Pentateuchal commentary series that form the core of the Philonic oeuvre: the Allegorical Commentary or those treatises that begin with a scriptural passage; the Exposition of the Law or those treatises whose structure is shaped by a broad theme indicated in their title (both of the above are modern

[2] See Amir 1961–2: 297; Rokeah 1968: 70–82.

designations); and *Questions and Answers on Genesis and Exodus*. The Allegorical Commentary, in twenty-one books, is a running commentary on Genesis 2.1–41.24, but constantly incorporates related texts that are in turn investigated at length, a procedure referred to by Runia as concatenation, and provided by him with a detailed analysis.[3] This commentary, which seeks to unfold the deeper philosophical meaning of the biblical text, carries the unmistakable signature of the entire Philonic enterprise. But though the adventures of the soul questing for God, which constitute its basic theme, will capture the imagination of most readers, at the same time the complex exegetical framework through which they are mediated may well try the patience of others and strike them, even if unfairly, as representing what F. H. Colson aptly described as the work of a 'rather lovable but inveterate rambler'.[4]

The Exposition of the Law, in twelve books, is a systematic presentation of the Mosaic legislation, but with an eye on the symbolic significance of cult and ritual. Of the three commentaries, as Runia has noted, it is the most systematic and thematically unified. Philo himself seems to indicate that the Exposition is based on the three-fold division of the Pentateuch into three basic themes: the cosmogony, the historical narrative that records good and bad lives, and their rewards and punishments in each generation (*Praem.* 1–3). Since it is Philo's view that Moses began his explication of the Law with an account of creation in order to indicate that the cosmos and the Law are in mutual accord, he begins his own exposition of the Law with his treatise *On the Creation of the Cosmos* (*Opif.*). He follows this up with the biographies of the three patriarchs (*Abr.*; the other two apparently lost at an early date) whom he portrays as living embodiments of natural law, and to which he adds the life of Joseph (*Jos.*), as an exemplification of the sage as statesman. Then comes the Decalogue (*Decal.*), and the four books of the particular laws (*Spec. leg.*). To these Philo appends a systematic treatment of the virtues (*Virt.*), and a treatise on Rewards and Punishments (*Praem.*).

The *Questions and Answers* or *Problems and Solutions* (*zētēmata kai luseis*), covering Gen. 2.4–28.9 and Exod. 6.2–30.10, often consist of formulaic questions and answers that provide both literal and allegorical interpretations, but, aside from Greek fragments, are extant only in a rather literal Armenian version that dates from the sixth century, and a partial ancient Latin translation that dates from the fourth century. This commentary series gives the appearance of being a rough compilation of raw material from a wide variety of sources for use in future writings. As D. Hay has observed, there seems to be little or no attempt here to evaluate the relative worth of the interpretations given.

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[3] Runia 1990, articles 4 and 5.   [4] Colson 1929: I. x–xi.

Finally, as Runia has pointed out, it should further be noted that from the very beginning of *On the Creation*, Philo assumes knowledge of the life and work of Moses, knowledge that he had himself provided in his *Life of Moses* (*V. Mos.*), and that it is that work which should actually stand at the head of all our Philo editions.

EXEGETICAL TECHNIQUE

Philo's attempt to read Greek philosophy into Mosaic Scripture was no innovation on his part. He was fully aware of the earlier and less ambitious attempts by Aristobulus (c. 175 BCE) and Pseudo-Aristeas (c. 130 BCE), though he was also undoubtedly heir to a rich body of scholastic tradition that has unfortunately vanished but to which he frequently makes allusion. He was also fully alert to the techniques employed by some Middle Platonists in their attempt to foist post-Pythagorean doctrines, including even their own, on the revered figure of Pythagoras (fifth century BCE). In a somewhat analogous manner, as Dillon has suggested, Philo put Moses forward as the greatest philosopher of all and thus ultimately the source of all that is best in Greek philosophy.

The crucial exegetical technique for Philo's vast enterprise, however, was provided by the Greek allegorical tradition, whose origins seem to go back to southern Italy towards the end of the sixth century BCE, when the first Pythagoreans became established there. According to Theagenes of Rhegium (late sixth century BCE), the first grammarian to write about Homer, the *theomachia*, or 'battle of the gods' (the title of *Il.* 20, referred to in Plato *Rep.* 2.378d), is an allegory concerning the natural elements, which are described in terms of a fundamental antagonism between three pairs of opposites: the dry and the wet, the hot and the cold, the light and the heavy. Although these elements change in their particular forms, the whole remains eternal. Similarly, while the gods are thus identified with different elements, at times they are made to represent various dispositions of the soul, e.g., Athena being reflection, Ares unreason, and Aphrodite desire (DK A1–2). Although it remains somewhat unclear whether Theagenes' allegorical interpretations of Homer already imply a consistent application of moral exegesis to the poem, this development is indeed claimed for the Ionian philosopher Anaxagoras (c. 500–428 BCE), who was said to be the first to maintain that Homer treats of virtue and vice, a thesis that was defended at greater length by his pupil or follower Metrodorus of Lampsacus (D.L. 2.11).

The outstanding characteristic of Philo's allegorical interpretations is the etymologizing of almost all the biblical names mentioned in the course of his scriptural exegesis. It involves about 170 names and covers virtually every

Pentateuchal personage or place cited in his commentaries. These names are normally introduced with one of a limited number of formulae in order to indicate that the Hebrew etymology was not just another instance of the paronomasia or word-play of which he was so fond. At times, he also gives Greek etymologies to Hebrew names, but when he does so, as Grabbe has pointed out, no interpretative formula is employed, which suggests that he did not put the Greek etymologies on the same level as his Hebrew etymologies. It seems likely that in these rare instances Philo was simply indulging in one of the more fanciful varieties of etymologizing that were occasionally employed by some of his Greek peers. Plutarch, for example, similarly provided Greek etymologies for the names of the two Egyptian deities Isis and Osiris (*De Is. et Os.* chs. 2 and 60–1).

Somewhat puzzling, however, is the relationship of Philo's extensive etymologizing to its Greek analogues. D. Sedley has correctly pointed out that etymology was very widely practised, including so sober a thinker as Aristotle, a fact that partially explains the great seriousness with which it is plied by Plato in the *Cratylus*.[5] Interestingly, we also find extensive use of etymologies in the fourth-century BCE Derveni Papyrus, which contains a philosophical allegorical interpretation of an Orphic hymnic theogony. It is thus unfortunate, in view of Philo's great affinity for Stoic philosophy, that the surviving fragments dealing with that school's allegorical interpretations are so meagre and their interpretation so controversial. A. A. Long has argued strongly and quite plausibly that the usual interpretation that the Stoics took Homer to be a strong allegorist is mistaken, and that 'it is even doubtful whether they even took themselves to be allegorizing Homer's meaning'.[6] Runia has correctly emphasized, however, that Philo's use of this exegetical tool 'shows coherence on a grand scale, being linked to a highly complex system of ethical and spiritual allegory'. Yet the fact remains that there is virtually no evidence of a parallel Stoic development of such scope and magnitude. He has therefore suggested that, short of the possible loss of such Stoic models, it is conceivable that 'Pythagorean or Platonist interpreters may have already started to develop their exegeses of Homer, and these could have served as a model for Philo and his predecessors.' However that may be, Runia is surely right to note that 'there is no denying the impressive nature of Philo's achievement'.

CENTRAL THEMES OF PHILO'S THOUGHT

Although the understanding of Judaism reflected in Philo's works is mediated through biblical exegesis, there is much in his exposition that radically revises the traditional meaning of that sacred text despite continuous efforts on his

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[5] See Sedley 1998: 140–54.   [6] See Long 1996: 58–84; 1997: 198–210.

part to disguise this fact. While there is little or no dissent concerning Philo's allegorization of the emphatic biblical doctrine of covenant (*Sacr.* 57), his clear preference is for a form of prayer that is contemplative and entirely wordless (*Fuga* 91–2), and his understanding of the Mosaic Law as rooted in the very structure of universal nature, there is no overall agreement regarding two key elements in his philosophical interpretation of Scripture, namely, his doctrine of eternal creation, and his conception of noetic prophecy with its unmistakable implications for the received doctrine of revelation. This lacuna explains why no decisive philosophical portrait of Philo has yet emerged. I shall therefore begin my exposition of Philo's thought with an analysis of these two elements, followed by a discussion of the significance of the severely limited freedom granted the human creature, and the ethical ideal in accordance with which all our passions must be converted into *eupatheiai* or rational emotions, a state that virtually transforms the human into the Divine (Epict. *Diss.* 2.19.26–7), and culminates in the intellectual mysticism that characterizes the true sage.

THEORY OF CREATION

A philosopher's theory of creation inevitably reflects his fundamental approach to the nature of the real and thus provides a crucial key for the unlocking of his world view. Unfortunately, however, this aspect of Philo's thought remains one of the most obscure areas of his writing. His description of the primordial matter that is shaped by the all-incising divine *Logos* (*logos tomeus*) into a cosmos is so vague that it is virtually impossible to ascertain whether that matter was also itself a product of God's creative act.

Although space will not permit a full discussion of Philo's theory of the origin of primordial matter, it must be noted that Wolfson's attempt to infer from the fact that Philo assigns to God the origin of the 'Ideas', which had been treated by Plato as eternal and ungenerated Forms (*Tim.* 29a and 52a), that their copies must also have been created, would involve Philo in a series of inner contradictions. For how could God who, according to Philo, is never the direct source of evil, and is always introducing harmony and order, be the creator of a contentious and disordered matter? Indeed Philo virtually says as much when he poignantly states that 'it was not the matter subjected to his creative activity, material inanimate, discordant and dissoluble . . . that God praised, but the works of his own art, accomplished by a power unique, equal, and uniform' (*Heres* 160).

Plato was certainly vague on the manner in which the copies of the eternal Forms came into being, and his promise to follow this up on another occasion was apparently never fulfilled. On the other hand, Plato admits that the 'impressions are taken from the Forms in a strange manner that is hard to express'

(*Tim.* 50c), and makes no attempt to attribute their creation to the Demiurge. To have done so would have been contrary to his conception of the latter as 'good' and 'desiring that all things should come as near as possible to being like himself' (29e). Why should the Demiurge create semblances (*phantasmata*) that barely 'cling to existence on pain of being nothing at all'? (52c). Many scholars have therefore understood the emergence of the Platonic *eidōla* as some sort of automatic reflection of the Forms in the Receptacle. Wolfson's inference, then, that according to Philo God must have 'created' the copies is by no means a necessary one. We might just as well conclude that for Philo, as for Plato, the copies are mere shadow-images of the Forms, and that the precise explanation for their production was as nonchalantly brushed aside by Philo as it was by Plato.

It would appear, then, that for Philo, God is the indirect cause of a primordial matter whose existence turns out to be nothing but a logical moment in a larger, more complex and, as we shall soon see, probably eternal process of world formation. According to the alternate interpretation of Runia, however, Philo's primordial matter is an eternal entity by the side of God, whose utter passivity posed no challenge to the deity's all-powerful sovereignty. Although such an approach is attractive, it is difficult to square with Philo's description of it as 'in itself perishable' (*Heres* 160), which clearly implies that it is indirectly caused by God and is thus ultimately dependent upon the Deity for its very existence.[7] Moreover, Philo's characterization of Matter as differentiated and full of disharmony implies that it already reflects some measure of Form, and short of Plutarch's dualistic solution that it is possessed of irrational soul, such a state must ultimately be derived from the divine *Logos*.

We may now turn to the more important question of whether God's creative act was temporal or eternal. Aristotle takes note of those Platonists who maintained that the process described in the *Timaeus* was timeless and eternal and that the statements about the world's generation are analogous to the diagrams of geometricians that are used only for didactic reasons (*Cael.* 279b30). With the exception of Plutarch and Atticus, this interpretation was held by virtually all Platonists down to the time of Plotinus. In light of this widespread understanding of Plato's cosmogony in the *Timaeus* as teaching a doctrine of eternal creation, we may now examine a passage in Philo's *De providentia* 1.7 that appears to advocate just such a doctrine:

God is continuously ordering matter by his thought. His thinking was not anterior to his creating and there never was a time when he did not create, the ideas themselves having been with him from the beginning. For God's will is not posterior to him, but is always with him, for natural motions never give out. (Terian's trans., in Winston 1981: 109)

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[7] It should be noted that in Plato's conception of matter, the self-existing Receptacle (*hupodochē*) is its most stable and permanent constituent (*Tim.* 50b–c).

Philo's theory can thus be stated succinctly as follows. Insofar as God is always thinking the intelligible Forms, he is eternally creating the Intelligible World or *Logos*, and thereby also indirectly causing its shadow reflection, the sensible world, which he is constantly making to conform as closely as possible to its intelligible counterpart. Corroboration for this interpretation can be found in an oft-repeated principle of Philo's theology that God is unchangeable (*Cher.* 90), so that a temporal creation involving as it does a change in God's nature would thus stand in open contradiction to a fundamental assumption of Philo's thought. Although often inconsistent in minor matters, Philo is too competent a student of philosophy to contradict himself so flagrantly. We must therefore conclude that the many passages in which he speaks of creation in temporal terms are not to be taken literally, but only as accommodations to the biblical idiom.[8]

Runia, however, has rightly pointed out that the passage in *Prov.* 1.6–9 cited above cannot in itself be decisive in view of the faulty transmission of that text, which is available to us only in an Armenian version. He thus interprets Philo's theory of creation as referring to an 'inceptively' temporal beginning. Since according to Philo God forms all things simultaneously and instantaneously, the creative act is not in time (*Opif.* 26–8).[9] Once begun, however, creation is a continuous process (*Leg. alleg.* 1.18). Nonetheless, there are two further passages in Philo that help to confirm that he holds a doctrine of eternal creation. In *Leg. alleg.* 1.20, commenting on Gen. 2.4, 'when it came into being', Philo notes that Scripture does not define 'when' by a determining limit, 'for the things that come into being through the First Cause, come into being with no determining limit (*aperigraphōs*)'. Now, if the act of creation began at an instant of God's choosing, it could no longer be described as taking place *aperigraphōs*, since though indeterminate *a parte post*, it is clearly determinate *a parte ante*, i.e., it has a *perigraphē* or *peras* (Arist. *Phys.* 218a25) marking it off from what preceded it. Similarly, in *Qu. Gen.* 1.1 (Gr. fr.), commenting again on Gen. 2.4, Philo says that this verse 'appears to indicate indeterminate time, thus providing a refutation disconcerting those who sum up the number of years from which point they believe the cosmos came into being'. This seems to be a clear attempt on Philo's part to assert that calculation of the *anno mundi* is in principle impossible, and the efforts of those who seek to establish it through an analysis of scriptural chronology are futile. But this can only be so if the process of creation is not merely continuous, but has in fact no beginning.

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[8] For an explanation of the strangely dissonant note in *Decal.* 58, where it is explicitly stated that 'there was a time when the world was not', see Winston 1981: 17.

[9] The 'instant' or *to nun*, according to Aristotle, being a durationless point, is not a part of time: *Phys.* 4.10, 218a3.

TWO TYPES OF MOSAIC PROPHECY: ECSTATIC AND NOETIC

In *V. Mos.* 2.188 Philo enumerates three kinds of divine oracles: the particular laws, spoken by God in his own person with his prophet as interpreter; revelation through question and answer; and predictive prophecies, spoken by Moses in his own person, 'when inspired and of himself possessed (*ex hautou kataschethentos*)'. This schema yields two types of prophecy, ecstatic and noetic. The one is mediated through possession, the other through the prophet's noetic response to the divine voice, which is regarded by Philo as a biblical figure for rational soul. Moreover, it is affirmed emphatically that in the ecstatic state, the prophet's mind is entirely pre-empted by the divine spirit, so that it becomes a passive medium for the Deity's message. This idiosyncratic bifurcation of the prophetic personality is fundamental for a proper understanding of Philo's concept of divine revelation. In contrast to ecstatic prophecy, noetic prophecy does not render its recipient passive. Although Philo provides no separate account of this prophetic mode, we can discern its character from his description of the giving of the Decalogue. God, we are there told, is not as a man who is in need of mouth, tongue and windpipe. Instead he created a rational soul full of clarity and distinctness that shaped the air around it into a flaming fire, sending forth an articulate voice. Activated by the power of God, this miraculous voice created in the souls of all another kind of hearing far superior to that of the physical organ, 'a sluggish sense inactive until aroused by the impact of the air, whereas the hearing of the mind inspired by God makes the first advance and goes forth to meet the conveyed meanings (*phthanei proupantōsa tois legomenois*) with the swiftest speed' (*Decal.* 35, my trans.).

Significantly, what began in this passage as a description of a corporeal phenomenon, air shaped into a flaming fire, sounding forth an articulate voice, is suddenly and quite abruptly allegorized by Philo into one that is incorporeal, a mind to mind communication rather than the perception of a sense organ (cf. *Qu. Gen.* 1.42). The very fact, however, that he resorts to a rather intricate description of the miraculous divine voice in purely physical terms, which is only diverted to the intelligible level by a last minute manoeuvre clearly indicates that he was attempting to preserve the literal meaning of the biblical text as best he could.

For the notion of a mind to mind communication in order to explain the divine voice at Sinai, Philo may have been indebted to the Middle-Platonic tradition. The Platonists had been exercised by the need to explain the nature of Socrates' famous *daimonion* or sign, and one of the interpretations recorded by Plutarch is very similar to that adopted by Philo to explain the Divine utterance at Sinai: 'What reached Socrates, one would conjecture, was not

spoken language, but the unuttered words of a *daimōn*, making voiceless contact with his intelligence by their sense alone' (*De gen. Soc.* 588d).

It is important to note that Philo invokes the notion of ecstatic possession only to explain the ability of the prophet to predict the future, a talent clearly requiring the exclusive services of the *Logos*, since no finite mind could enjoy such a power (*Heres* 61; *V. Mos.* 2.6). On the other hand, Moses' promulgation of the particular laws, communicated to him by the divine voice, is understood to involve the active participation of the prophet's mind. The same is true of the 'ten Words' that summarized the entire Law and required the quickened perception of the entire Israelite nation. In light of the general thrust of Philo's thought (especially *Migr.* 76 and 80), it is very likely that he understands noetic prophecy to refer to the activation of the intuitive intellect, by means of which one grasps the fundamental principles of universal being viewed as a unified whole. For Philo, the unified vision of the world of intelligible Forms constitutes an inherent characteristic of the human mind, though for most individuals considerable effort is required to actualize it. When such a vision does occur, however, one achieves direct knowledge of the divine Mind, however fragmentary.[10]

Although Philo emphatically insists that the Law is not to be considered an invention of the human mind, clearly his meaning is that the laws of the Torah constitute natural laws and are therefore divine and not the result of arbitrary human devising (see *Qu. ex.* 2.43; 4.90; *Decal.* 15; *V. Mos.* 2.187; *Spec. leg.* 2.13). When our intuitive intellect is at work and formulates laws in accordance with the fundamental principles of being, it is the divine *Logos* whose power is thus made manifest. Thus, in Philo's view, the patriarchs, the living embodiments of natural law (*nomoi empsuchoi*), were sages/philosophers who understood the *Logos* of the universe and consequently made all their actions to be in conformity with it. For non-sages, who lack that unique insight, Moses formulated rules and precepts that can be derived from the archetypal actions of the sages. He was able to do so inasmuch as he had himself become assimilated to the *Logos* and therefore could derive from the lives of the patriarchs and from his own life the general rules and precepts that these lives exemplified. Indeed, the exemplary lives of Moses and the patriarchs themselves constitute laws of nature. As Aristotle had put it, 'a cultivated or free man is, as it were, a law unto himself' (*EN* 4.1128a31), and similarly, according to the Hasidic master, R. Moses Hayyim Ephraim of Sudilkov, 'the Zaddikim themselves are the laws and

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[10] Although this is somewhat reminiscent of Plotinus' theory of the undescended intellect, nowhere does Philo go so far as to state explicitly, as does Plotinus, that the human soul 'did not altogether come down, but that there is always something of the soul' that remains in the intelligible (*Enn.* 4.8. [6] 8).

commandments'. One is reminded of St Francis of Assisi's well-known saying, 'I am your breviary, I *am* breviary.' The enacted laws of Moses, however, are only 'copies' or 'memorials' of the natural law embodied by the patriarchs, and as mere copies they could be written down, thereby producing what Philo's non-Jewish Greek readers would surely have regarded as a strangely paradoxical hybrid form of such law. Moreover, for a Greek philosopher there is no substitute for the direct insight into the *Logos* of the universe. No general rules or precepts can serve in its stead, since every situation requiring action differs to a greater or lesser degree from every other. Hence, the rules and precepts formulated by Moses, though the best of their kind, are at most only general guidelines for the ideal conduct of life. If one wished to overcome this unfortunate limitation, one would have to duplicate the virtually full assimilation of Moses' mind to the divine Mind. It is precisely his desire to preclude even such a theoretical possibility that explains Philo's unceasing efforts to describe Moses as the exalted philosopher/sage nonpareil, whose supreme spiritual level cannot be matched by another (cf. *Heres* 17).

FREEDOM AND DETERMINISM

The first systematic analysis of the nature of human choice was provided by Aristotle in *EN* 3. If our choices, he says there, are the result of our deliberations, they can be said to be 'up to us' (*eph hēmin*) and we are morally responsible for them. Although it is true that our choices derive from our character, since 'our character controls how the end (*telos*) appears to us', if we are somehow responsible for our own state of character (*hexis*), we are also responsible for how the good or end appears. It may be objected, he grants, that 'to aim at the right end, we must by nature have as it were an inborn sense of sight to make us judge finely and choose what is really good'. But if this should be the case, he argues, 'how will virtue be any more voluntary than vice?' (1113b3–20). Aristotle's point is that if we should not be blamed for our vices, we should likewise not be praised for our virtues. Inasmuch as this is not the common view, it is obvious that we must reject any attempt to exculpate vicious behaviour as due to the lack of a natural endowment that enables us to make sound moral judgements. Aristotle would not deny that one who lacks any real capacity for exercising moral judgement may be characterized as 'brutish' (*thēriōdēs*), but he noted that such individuals are rare (7.1145a30). The objection would have been valid only if the biological nature of most people rendered their rational decisions mechanical and hence not something that genuinely 'depended on them'. Although it has been observed that Aristotle fails adequately to clarify the precise nature of 'what depends on us', Sarah Broadie has plausibly suggested

that the reason for that is rooted in the fact that his intentions in the *Nicomachean Ethics* are eminently practical and he is therefore unconcerned there with the theoretical problem of determinism. For that we must await the arrival of the philosophy of the Stoa and its critics.

According to S. Bobzien, the evidence indicates that early Stoic determinism was firmly grounded in Stoic cosmology, and was introduced by Zeno and elaborated by Chrysippus in their writings on physics. The latter's polemical two books *On Fate* were written only in response to certain criticisms. A passage in Plutarch presents a clear picture of Chrysippus' theory of universal determinism:

For, since the universal nature extends to all things, everything that comes about in any way whatever in the whole universe . . . will necessarily have come about conformably with that nature and its reason in due and unimpeded sequence, for neither is there anything to obstruct the organization from without nor is any of its parts susceptible of being moved . . . save in conformity with the universal nature. (*Stoic. rep.* 1050c, trans. Cherniss, LCL)

Moreover, Chrysippus explicitly mentions our virtues and vices as being among the qualitative states that cannot be in any other way than they are, and there is no hint that this point was considered problematic (1050a). This Stoic theory of a universal determinism deriving from cosmology, finds its mirror image in the eternal perspective of Philo's mystical monism, in which human action is viewed as in reality totally passive and readily described as non-action. The theme of human nothingness is reflected in much of Philo's writing.

So long as the mind supposes itself to be the author of anything, 'it is far away from making room for God and from confessing or making acknowledgement to him. For we must take note that the very confession of praise itself is the work not of the soul but of God who gives it thankfulness.' (*Leg. alleg.* 1.82, trans. Whitaker, LCL)

At times, the very words of Philo have an unmistakably Stoic ring to them: 'For we are the instruments, now tensed now slackened, through which particular actions take place, and it is the Artificer who effects the percussion of both our bodily and psychic powers, he by whom all things are moved' (*Cher.* 128, my trans.). The Stoics similarly say, 'the movements of our minds are nothing more than instruments for carrying out determined decisions since it is necessary that they be performed through us by the agency of Fate' (*SVF* 2.943, trans. Long and Sedley).

In a fragment from the lost fourth book of the *Legum allegoria*, Philo fully reveals the depth of his conviction that it is God alone who is active within all of creation in the precise sense of that term:

But if selections and rejections are in strictness made by the one Cause, why do you advise me, legislator, to choose life or death, as though we were autocrats of our choice? [cf. Plato, *Laws* 9.860e] But he would answer: Of such things hear thou a rather elementary explanation, namely, such things are said to those who have not yet been initiated in the great mysteries about the sovereignty and authority of the Uncreated and the exceeding nothingness of the created.[11]

Wolfson has indeed attempted virtually to transform the simple meaning of this Philonic fragment. He argues that 'when Philo says that God gave to the human mind a portion of "that free will which is his most peculiar possession" and that by this gift of free will the human mind "in this respect has been made to resemble him" [*Immut.* 47–8], it is quite evident that by man's free will Philo means an absolutely undetermined freedom like that enjoyed by God'. The fact is, however, that Philo is only adapting here for his own use a characteristically Stoic notion. Thus Epictetus writes: 'But what says Zeus? "Epictetus, had it been possible I should have made both this paltry body and this small state of thine free and unhampered . . . Yet since I could not give thee this, we have given thee a certain portion of ourself, this faculty of choice and refusal"' (*Diss*. 1.1.10, trans. Oldfather, LCL). Now, the Stoics held a relative free will theory, and all they meant by saying that God has given us a portion of himself thereby enabling us to make choices, is that, as A. A. Long has well put it, 'the *Logos*, the causal principle, is inside the individual man as well as being an external force constraining him . . . This is but a fragment of the whole, however, and its powers are naturally weak, so weak that, "following" rather than "initiating" events is stressed as its proper function'.[12] For the Stoics, man is not a mechanical link in the causal chain, but an active though subordinate partner of God. It is this that allows them to shift the responsibility for evil from God to man. The characteristic mark of human beings is their ability to choose between alternative actions by filtering their impressions through a noetic sieve and subjecting them to rational analysis. As Bobzien has aptly formulated it, whenever reason is interposed between the impression and our response to it, force is automatically ruled out. In short, Philo's point is that insofar as we share in God's *Logos*, we share to some extent in God's freedom. That this is only a relative freedom is actually emphasized by him when he says that God gave human beings such a portion of his freedom as they were 'capable of receiving' and that they were liberated 'as far as might be' (*Immut.* 47–8).[13]

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[11] See Harris 1886: 8, trans. H. Wolfson.   [12] Long 1971: 173–99.

[13] See Winston 1984. Briefly stated, according to the relative free will theory taught by the Stoics, and often characterized as 'compatibilism', voluntary motion is caused both by *Heimarmenē*, the universal causal chain, as well as the human psyche, which is also a part of that chain. Our choices are nonetheless within our power (*eph hēmin*), inasmuch as *Heimarmenē* provides only the proximate causes of human action, while the individual himself provides the principal causes.

THE SOUL AND ITS PASSIONS

For Philo, the human intellect is intimately related to the divine *Logos*, being an imprint (*ekmageion*) or fragment (*apospasma*) or effulgence (*apaugasma*) of that blessed nature (*Opif.* 146), or as he occasionally puts it, being a portion (*moira*) of the divine aether (*Leg. alleg.* 3.161). Middle Platonists readily juxtaposed the terms 'portion' and 'copy' in their descriptions of the human mind and its relation to the World Soul or God (see Plut. *Virt. mor.* 441f: *meros ti ē mimēma*; *Plat. qu.* 1001a–b), and Philo too places these terms side by side. Especially instructive is the passage in *Det.* 83–90, where he begins by defining the human mind as an impression stamped by the divine power, an image or likeness (*mimēma de kai apeikonisma*) of God, but then ends his discussion by designating it 'an inseparable portion (*apospasma ou diaireton*) of the divine and blessed soul, for nothing is severed (*temnetai*) or detached from the divine but only extended' (cf. *Gig.* 27; Sen. *Ep.* 41.5; and Plot. 5.3 [49] 12.45: *oude gar apotetmētai*).

In view of the exalted derivation of the human soul, its subsequent incarnation in a lowly corporeal envelope was necessarily seen as a 'fall'. Plato had offered two divergent explanations for this. In the *Phaedrus* it was viewed as the result of an intellectual fall, whereas in the *Timaeus* the soul was characterized as destined from the start to give life to a body. Middle Platonists had already noted this inconsistency and attempted to resolve it by emphasizing one or the other of these positions. In his discussion of this issue, Alcinous (*Didasc.* 25.6) enumerated four reasons for the soul's descent, and Philo appears to have alluded to all four of them (*Som.* 1.138; *Heres* 240), even adding at one point a fifth reason (*Qu. Gen.* 4.74). Philo often alludes to the extra-terrestrial life of the human soul and its final destiny, but he was most reluctant to give too prominent a place to the Platonic doctrine of reincarnation and its role in providing ultimate escape from the wheel of rebirth, inasmuch as this conception was quite alien to the biblical view. Hence his failure to map out in detail the projected life histories of the different types of souls and the deliberate vagueness that marks his various utterances on this matter.

In any case, the central thrust of Philo's biblical commentary is focused on the return of the soul to its native homeland. A close analogy to this is the later Platonic allegorization of Odysseus' return to his 'dear native land' (*Il.* 2.140) as symbolizing the soul's mystical journey to its true home (Plot. 1.6 [1] 8). The gradual removal of the psyche from the sensible realm and its ascent to a life of perfection in God ultimately leads us to the dominant motif in Philo's ethical theory, namely his analysis of the passions and their total elimination by the sage, who thus becomes fully assimilated to God, the paradigm of perfect rationality. The Stoics had similarly insisted on the wise man's complete *apatheia*, a state that was marked by a desire to achieve equality with the gods

(Sen. *Ep.* 92.30). Epictetus put it much more boldly: 'Let one of you show me the soul of a man who wishes to be of one mind with God . . . to be free from anger, envy and jealousy – but why use circumlocutions? – a man who has set his heart upon changing from a man into a god' (*Diss.* 2.19.26–7). The Stoic sage's commanding faculty (*hēgemonikon*) spontaneously makes correct judgements, wholly eliminating the passions (*pathē*), and generating only purely rational impulses (*eupatheiai*).[14]

Captivated by the Stoic conception of passionless virtue, Philo injected it into his own ethical theory by presenting Isaac and Moses as prototypes of this exalted ethical ideal. Although both these biblical figures exemplify soul types that achieve perfect virtue without toil, Moses presumably represents for Philo a higher type than does Isaac, since he is ultimately translated to an even higher station than that of the latter by being placed beside God himself, above genus and species alike (*Sacr.* 8). Isaac thus symbolizes the sage whose psyche, being *apathēs*, generates only *eupatheiai* and is thus analogous to the Stoic sage who acts out of a fixity of disposition, no longer having to struggle to make rational decisions. Moses, on the other hand, symbolizes the God-like human being, 'given as a loan to earthlings', that is, he belongs to that category of rational souls that ordinarily never leave the supernal spheres for embodiment below, living as it were in the disembodied realm of pure *nous*. Indeed, as we have already seen above, Moses, as a philosopher/sage nonpareil, represents an ethical level unavailable to other mortals.

The three canonical *eupatheiai* are *boulēsis* (willing or wishing), *eulabeia* (watchfulness or caution), and *khara* (joy), and Philo was in no way embarrassed to apply at least two of these, rational willing and joy, to God himself, though undoubtedly with the proviso that this refers only to God *qua Logos*. The wise man's *khara*, however, is not the equal of God's, since the limited capacity of finite creatures denies them the unbroken continuity that marks the divine archetype of their joy (*Abr.* 201–7; cf. Arist. *EN* 10.1178b25). As for *eulabeia*, it is never ascribed by Philo to God directly, though there may have been no theoretical difficulty in his doing so. *Eulabeia* is the rational avoidance of evil and it could be said that the Divine *Logos* is continuously characterized by such a spontaneous avoidance. Indeed, the Stoics come close to saying as much when they state that the deity is a living being 'insusceptible to anything evil' (D. L. 7.147).

Philo's doctrine of the passions, however, is not completely consistent with that of the Stoics, who had placed pity (*eleos*) among the species of mental

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[14] Although I have cited Epictetus in connection with the Stoic sage's *eupatheiai*, a source somewhat later than Philo, there is a strong presumption that the systematization of the *eupatheiai* into the canonical trio goes back to Chrysippus. See Inwood 1985: 173.

distress (*lupē*), thus classifying it as a *pathos*. It should be noted, however, that even the Stoic philosopher Seneca was unable to maintain this lofty position with rigorous consistency, and occasionally slips into expressions that describe the wise one as indulging in this forbidden emotion (*Beat.* 24.1; *Ben.* 6.29). Little wonder, then, if Philo, under the impetus of Jewish teaching, sometimes ascribes pity both to the sage and to God (*Sacr.* 121; *Immut.* 75–6). Similarly, Philo speaks approvingly of righteous anger (*Fuga* 90; *Som.* 1.91), and although he awards it only the second prize and recognizes the bitterness attached to it (*Qu. Ex.* 1.15), he nevertheless places repentance among the virtues and considers it the mark of a man of wisdom (*Virt.* 177; *Abr.* 26). In this case, the Neopythagorean preoccupation with self-examination, later taken up by the Roman Stoa, may have made it easier for him to do so.

Philo's works are replete with numerous descriptions of the canonical four generic passions (appetite, fear, distress and pleasure: *SVF* 3.378) that were designated by the Stoics as the sources of all vice. Influenced by Platonic imagery, Philo frequently compares the passions to wild beasts, because 'they tear the soul to pieces' (*Leg. alleg.* 2.11; cf. Plato, *Rep.* 9.571c), and he employs Plato's famous myth of the soul's chariot in *Phdr.* 246–7, where the *logikon* appears as the charioteer, and the *thumikon* and *epithumētikon* as the nobler and baser horses respectively (*Leg. alleg.* 1.72–3). But it was the fusion of Platonic and Stoic terminology in some Middle-Platonic accounts of the Stoic apathic ideal that readily explains Philo's nonchalant combination of the Stoic theory of the emotions with the Platonic tripartition of the soul, a combination that conveniently serves the numerous allegorical interpretations that characterize his biblical exegesis. This conflation, already found in Cicero (*Tusc.* 4.10–11), also turns up, as Inwood has noted, in many later authorities, including Arius Didymus (Stobaeus, *Ecl.* 2.38–9).[15]

Surprisingly, Philo also recognizes the aid that the beastly passions may provide to the mind:

For pleasure and desire contribute to the permanence of our kind: pain and fear are like bites and stings warning the soul to treat nothing carelessly: anger is a weapon of defense that has conferred great boons on many, and so with the other passions. (*Leg. alleg.* 2.8, trans. Whitaker, LCL)

Indeed, the essential presence of the passions in the overall cosmic scheme is evident in their constituting 'ideas' within the *Logos* (*Leg. alleg.* 2.12). That the passions are an indispensable component of human nature that cannot be eliminated is a Peripatetic position, and was apparently also the view of

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[15] Inwood 1985: 141.

Posidonius.[16] Though elsewhere he subscribes to the Chrysippan view of *apatheia* (*Leg. alleg.* 2.100–2), Philo is here following the Peripatetics and Posidonius.

MYSTICISM

A brief phenomenological comparison of some of the mystical motifs in Philo and the great Sufi theosophist Ibn ʻArabi (1165–1240) will allow us more fully to appreciate the dimensions of Philo's strong mystical tendencies. We are driven to this much later period and a non-Jewish tradition by the simple fact that Philo is the earliest known forerunner of theosophical Jewish mysticism. That it is by no means far fetched, however, to turn to a Sufi master for comparison can readily be inferred from the fact that 'there existed in Egypt a remarkable school of Jewish Sufis led by members of the family of Maimonides, whose central figures were Maimonides' son Abraham, grandson Obadiah, and David Maimonides'. As noted by P. Alexander, 'Abraham regarded the Muslim Sufis as the spiritual heirs of the Hebrew prophets, and in his *Comprehensive Guide for the Servants of God* (*Kifāyat al-ʻĀbidīn*) he advocated the adoption of their practices as a way of attaining perfection and union with God.'[17] Much of the content of the respective writings of Philo and Ibn ʻArabi is concerned with the exegesis of a holy scripture and often betrays the efforts of their authors to disguise some of their bolder views in order to deflect possible attacks by more conventional religious masters. Ibn ʻArabi refers at times to spiritual insights and knowledge that must be hidden from the majority of men because of the great dangers they involve, and Philo similarly notes that the sacred story that unveils the truth of the Uncreated and his powers must be buried, since such knowledge 'is a trust that not every comer can guard aright' (*Sacr.* 60; cf. *Cher.* 48). With many other Sufi writers, Ibn ʻArabi deals with the text of the Qur'an on the premiss that every verse has many more meanings than the one that might be obvious to the ordinary believer, but is accessible only to those whose inner eye is open. Philo similarly tells us that his allegorical interpretation of Scripture employs a method that was already used by inspired men who 'take most of the content of the Law to be visible signs of things invisible' (*Spec. leg.* 3.178).

The very title of one of Ibn ʻArabi's more expansive works, *The Meccan Openings* (or *Revelations*), described by Knysh as 'a colossal book that combines the characteristics of a spiritual diary and an encyclopaedia of the traditional

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[16] Cicero, *Tusc.* 4.43; *Ac.* 2.135, where it is also attributed to the Old Academy; Sen. *Ira* 3.3.1; Alcin. *Didasc.* 32.4. For Posidonius, see Galen *PHP* 5.5.29 (De Lacy 322), and frg. 31, EK, with Kidd's commentary 1988: 160.

[17] See Alexander, in Goodman 2002: 716–17.

Islamic sciences from an esoteric perspective', reveals an approach to divine revelation quite reminiscent of Philo. 'In Ibn 'Arabi's technical vocabulary', as Chittick has noted, '"opening" is a near synonym for unveiling, divine effusion, or self-disclosure . . . Each of these words designates a mode of gaining direct knowledge of God without the intermediacy of study or teacher . . . God "opens up" the heart to the infusion of knowledge.' Similarly, for Philo, it is God alone 'who has the power to open the wombs of souls and to sow virtues in them, and to make them pregnant with noble things, and to give birth to them' (*Leg. alleg.* 3.180). Moreover, although Philo insists that we must not disown any learning made venerable through time, 'when unforeseen and unhoped for, a sudden beam of self-taught wisdom has shone on us, when it has opened the closed eye of the soul and made us seers rather than hearers of knowledge . . . then it is to no purpose further to exercise the ear with words . . . God's pupil can no longer suffer the guidance of men' (*Sacr.* 78–9).

'For Ibn 'Arabi', writes Chittick, 'there is only one Being, and all existence is nothing but the manifestation or outward radiance of that One Being.'[18] Although Philo's position on this matter is not entirely clear, if, as I have argued above, primordial matter is ultimately derived from God, however indirectly, then we inhabit a universe that is in itself a manifestation of Deity, however veiled, and Philo's thought emerges as a form of mystical monism. It is in this light that we must understand his statement that it is 'God alone who has veritable Being. This is why Moses will say of Him as best he may, "I am He that is" (Exod. 3.14), implying that things posterior to Him have no real being, but are believed to exist in semblance only (*Det.* 159–60).' We find precisely the same notion in the anonymous commentator on Plato's *Parmenides*, fr. 2: 'It is we who are nothing in relationship to Him, whereas He alone is the only true Existent in relationship to all things that are posterior to Him.'

We shall now indicate some of the mystical motifs that Philo shares with many mystics. Like them, Philo is convinced that our goal and ultimate bliss lie in the knowledge of God (*Decal.* 81). Indeed, the mere quest is sufficient of itself to give a foretaste of gladness (*Post. C.* 21). The first step leading to God is the recognition of one's own nothingness and departure from self (*Som.* 1.60). Having gone out of oneself, the devotee must become completely attached to God. Moses asks us 'to cleave to God, thereby indicating the continuity, closeness and uninterruptedness of the harmony and union founded on affinity with the Divine' (*Post. C.* 12). This is the only passage that speaks explicitly of union, yet even here it is by no means certain that the reference is to the soul's union with God rather than to its own inner state of harmony and union when

[18] See Chittick 1989: 79.

cleaving to Deity. Moreover, it is very striking that in all the passages in which Philo speaks of the vision of God, all references to his experiential mystical language, such as sober intoxication, Bacchic frenzy, the body flushed and fiery, agitation by heavenly passion, being mastered by divine love, forgetting of self, and the mind that is no longer in itself, are entirely absent. Thus, the vision of God referred to in those passages must simply be a clear, self-evident intellectual grasp of God's existence that culminates in a state of tranquillity.[19]

B. McGinn, however, has suggested, that the vision of God that Philo some-times refers to as a vision of God's incorporeal or intelligible light (*Praem*. 37–9; *Qu. Gen*. 4.4; *Qu. Ex*. 2.51) may simply serve as a metaphor for an ineffable experience of God's presence. It would be difficult, however, to square this with Philo's assertion that Jacob's vision of God is a permanent one (*Praem*. 27). Mystic experience is usually not conceived as an ongoing state, but rather as one of brief duration. There are, of course, exceptions, such as the Sufi mystic Ibn al-Farid (twelfth to thirteenth century), who wrote from the level of one who had attained a permanent oneness with God, but there is no indication in Philo's writings of the possibility of reaching such a permanent unitive state. Indeed, Philo insisted strongly that such a powerful mystical focus cannot be maintained continuously, but is subject to an inevitable law of ebb and flow (*Qu. Gen*. 4.29). Consequently, Israel's permanent vision of God must be viewed as a self-evident intellectual grasp of God's existence. Hence, the highest divine level with which mystical experience is associated by Philo appears to be that of the Intelligible World, or God *qua Logos*, in contrast to what Philo at times calls *ho pro tou logou theos*, the pre-*Logos* God (*Som*. 1.66; *Qu. Gen*. 2.62, Greek fr.) whose essence is beyond the scope of the human mind (*Post. C*. 169).

The question that must now finally be confronted is that concerning the source of Philo's overpowering conviction of God's existence, which recalls the unshakeable confidence that is reflected in an assertion such as that of the great ninth-century Sufi master of Baghdad, Junayd, that mysticism consists in 'sitting in the presence of God without care'. Maimonides, the great twelfth-century Jewish luminary, will later similarly assert that intellectual worship 'consists in nearness to God and being in his presence' (*Guide* 3.51). Although Philo sometimes employs teleological and cosmological arguments for the existence of God, he makes it unmistakably clear that the demonstration of God's existence from his actions is only for those who have not been initiated into the highest mysteries and are thus constrained to advance from down to up by a sort of heavenly ladder and 'conjecture' the Deity's existence through plausible inference. The genuine worshippers and true friends of God are those who

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[19] *Som*. 2.226–9; *Gig*. 49; *Post. C*. 27–8; *Fuga* 174; *Immut*. 12; *Conf*. 31–2.

apprehend him through himself without the co-operation of reasoned inference, as light is seen by light (*Leg. alleg.* 3.97–103; *Praem.* 40). This formula is precisely that used later by Plotinus, when he speaks of 'touching that light and seeing it by itself, not by another light, but by the light that is also its means of seeing' (5.3.17.34–7, trans. Armstrong). It appears again in the heavily Platonized *Epistles* of the tenth-century Brethren of Purity (Ikhwân al-Safâ'), in which it is said that 'the seeing of God is the seeing of a light through light, to light, in light, from light'.[20] More significantly, it is also used by Spinoza in the *Short Treatise*, in the earliest formulation of his ontological argument for God's existence: 'God, however, the First Cause of all things, manifests himself through himself' (1.1.10).

Philo does not further explicate his 'light by light' formula, doubtlessly relying on the fact that his readers would immediately recognize it as part of a well-known Greek philosophical tradition. The Stoics, in fact, appear to have produced a version of the ontological argument that anticipated St Anselm's famous formulation 'that than which nothing greater can be conceived' (*Proslogion*, chs. 2 and 3). They pointed out that not only does nothing exist that is superior to the world, but nothing superior can even be conceived (Cic. *ND* 2.18; Sen. *NQ* 1. *Praef.* 13). The human mind thus possesses the notion of a being of the highest power or perfection, or, to use the later Plotinian formulation (6.8.14.41–2; 15.21), a being *causa sui*, and can therefore be said to have the existence of god engraved within. It would thus seem that in speaking of a direct approach to God, Philo is probably thinking of some sort of ontological argument, which, in contrast to the more traditional deductive cosmological argument, constitutes an analytical truth, whose function is only to clarify the concept of God's existence already contained within certain definitions of human reason, and so enable it to have a direct vision of God.

PHILO AND THE CHURCH FATHERS

The preservation of the vast Philonic corpus was effected through the courtesy of the Church Fathers, who by the end of the Patristic period bestowed on Philo, in Runia's felicitous phrase, the status of a 'Church Father *honoris causa*'. The first reference to an explicit connection between Philo and the Christians is Eusebius' mention in his *Ecclesiastical History* of a tradition to the effect that Philo met Peter in Rome during the reign of Claudius (2.17.1), and his statement that Philo, in his *De vita contemplativa*, provided an encomiastic account of the way of life of the first Christians in Egypt, after Mark had begun to preach the

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[20] Cited by Goldziher 1920: 191, and further elaborated in Nicholson 1963: 50–1.

Gospel there (2.17.1), a view that prevailed during the whole of the Middle Ages.

Clement of Alexandria was the first Christian author to mention Philo explicitly by name, doing so four times in the first two books of his *Stromateis* or *Miscellanies*. Indeed, according to Stählin, who published the definitive text of Clement's writings, Philo was used by Clement on more than 300 occasions in the *Miscellanies*, and Cohn and Wendland conveniently print large sections of Clementine material below their definitive Philonic text. Moreover, in her methodologically nuanced analysis of Clement's debt to Philo, which includes references to twenty-five or 70 per cent of the latter's treatises, A. Van den Hoek (1988) has identified four main blocks of material that clearly illustrate this close relationship: (1) The Hagar and Sarah motif. In *Strom.* 1.28–32 Clement takes up the allegory of the relation between Sarah and Hagar that was developed in Philo's *De congressu* to illustrate the proper relation between philosophy and faith. (2) The story of Moses, where Clement tries to show that Hebrew philosophy is older than any other wisdom and that Plato is dependent on Moses. Philo's biography of Moses has a similar apologetic motif, and Clement borrows freely from it, often word for word (*Strom.* 1.150–82). (3) The Law and the virtues. In *Strom.* 2.78–100, where Clement discusses the virtues, he makes extensive use of Philo's *De virtutibus*, running through it systematically, either through *verbatim* citation or paraphrase. Unlike Philo, however, for Clement the Law educates to Christ, who then takes over as the Teacher. (4) The temple, vestments, and the high priest. In *Strom.* 5.32–40 Clement deals with the cosmic symbolism of the Mosaic cult, a theme that had also preoccupied Philo, and is most clearly evident in his *V. Mos.* 2.71–135; *Spec. leg.* 1.66–97; and *Qu. Ex.* 2.51–124. Clement's emphases, however, are more concerned with the ascent of the faithful to a transcendent spiritual reality that was ultimately made possible through Christ's descent.

Van den Hoek notes that it was precisely Philo's allegorical biblical interpretations that so strongly appealed to Clement. It was Philo's unique ability to create a strong scriptural link for the Platonist philosophical convictions that he shared with many Christian biblical exegetes that made him so important for Clement and other Church Fathers. Similarly, Origen finds in Philo a model for the use of the allegorical method. As Runia has pointed out, many of the rules of Christian allegorical exegesis are built on the foundations laid by Philo, and it was from him that Origen adopted the doctrine that the literal sense of Scripture must yield to the figurative.

I conclude with a perceptive remark made by Chadwick concerning Origen's Platonism: 'Platonism was inside him, *malgré lui*, absorbed into the very axioms and presuppositions of his thinking . . . Platonic ways of thinking about God

and the soul are necessary to him if he is to give an intelligent account of his Christian beliefs.' This remark, in my opinion, can (with the substitution of Jewish for Christian), be justly applied to Philo himself, though with the important qualification that in Origen, as Chadwick correctly observes, there is more 'that is illiberal, world-denying, and ascetic'.[21]

[21] Chadwick 1966: 122–3. For an analysis of Philo's asceticism, see Winston 1984: 405–14.

JUSTIN MARTYR

DENIS MINNS

LIFE AND WRITINGS

Justin has been surnamed 'Philosopher and Martyr' since at least the beginning of the third century (Tertullian, *Adversus Valentinianos* 5.1). He was executed at Rome on the orders of the Urban Prefect some time between 163 and 168, after refusing to renounce his Christian faith. In the account of his trial, Justin states that he was then resident in Rome for the second time, that he had attempted to understand the teachings of all schools (*pantas logous*),[1] that he had adopted those of the Christians, and that he taught any who came to him (*Martyrdom of Saints Justin, Chariton, etc.*, 2–3). The little else that is known of his life must be gleaned from his writings. He came from Flavia Neapolis – Nablus – (*1 Apol.* 1.1), which had been founded by Vespasian near the ancient sanctuary of Shechem, in Syria Palaestina. Though he describes himself as being of the Samaritan race (*Dial.* 120.6; *2 Apol.* 15.1), the names Justin gives for his father and grandfather are Latin and Greek, and there is no indication that he belonged to the ethnic-religious grouping that had its cult centre at Shechem.

Justin's philosophical credentials are now more highly rated than was once the case, though he should not be thought to have belonged to an intellectual elite. Marcus Aurelius, who records his gratitude for not having had to resort to public lectures (*Meditations* 1.4), is unlikely to have welcomed Justin's invitation to engage in philosophical discussion. Like the beggar in Aulus Gellius' story (*Attic Nights*, 9.2), Justin expected the philosopher's cloak to identify him as a 'professional' philosopher (*Dial.* 1.2), evidently unaware of the scorn it provoked in the likes of Herodes Atticus. Similarly, Justin makes unembarrassed use of the hackneyed fable about the choice of Heracles, first recorded by Xenophon, which was parodied by Lucian (*2 Apol.* 11; *Memorabilia* 2.1.21–33; *Somnium* 6–15).

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[1] *Logos* is the word used for a philosophical school at *Dial.* 2.2. and 35.6.

Justin speaks of a time when he 'took delight in the teachings of Plato' (*2 Apol.* 12.1). Precisely what kind of philosophical education he had, or where he obtained it, is not known. That the account he gives in *Dial.* 2.2–6 of his progressive encounters with a Stoic, a Peripatetic, a Pythagorean and a Platonist is conventional does not preclude some foundation in fact.[2] In addition to teaching his own pupils, some of whom may have been among those tried and executed with him, Justin may also have engaged in debate with others interested in philosophy who were not Christians. He refers to an acrimonious exchange between himself and a Cynic called Crescens (*2 Apol.* 3.4–5).

Although Justin is likely to have acquired much of his knowledge of philosophy by attending lectures and disputations, and from handbooks, florilegia, or doxographies, there is a good case for his having read some of the *Dialogues* of Plato.[3] His use of philosophical sources will then parallel his use of the Jewish and Christian Scriptures, for he employs both Christian compilations of proof-texts drawn from the books of the Jewish Bible as well as complete texts of those books and quotes both from the individual synoptic gospels and from sources which harmonized synoptic passages for catechetical or liturgical purposes.

Justin represents himself as having come to Christianity at the end of a philosophical quest. But he does not think Christianity is just another philosophical school. It is *the* philosophy, true and complete. Nevertheless, it has features in common with other schools. Thus, it has its founding *didaskalos*, Christ (*1 Apol.* 4.7; *2 Apol.* 8.5), whose doctrines it is his task to expound, and the foundation of whose teaching are privileged texts, most particularly the prophecies of the Old Testament, but also memoirs (i.e., Gospels) composed by Christ's immediate disciples.

Justin continued to present himself as a philosopher after his conversion to Christianity, and to see himself as engaged in a common pursuit with other philosophers. This is evident in the audacity of his addressing himself to the emperor and his adopted sons, Marcus Aurelius and Lucius, in the *First Apology*. These are said to hear people on all sides calling them philosophers (*1 Apol.* 2.2.), and Justin sees himself engaging philosophical rulers as a philosopher himself. He reworks Plato's remark that philosophers should become kings, or kings should take to philosophy (*Republic* 5.473c–d), to make the obligation to philosophize fall on both rulers and those they ruled (*1 Apol.* 3.3). The whole of

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[2] Cf Lampe 2003: 258. Lampe provides a useful table of allusions in Justin to philosophical and other Greek literature (417–25) and remarks that the number of Platonist and Stoic references confirms the implication of Justin's narrative that it was only with teachers of these schools that he had studied for an extended period (263).

[3] Keseling 1926: 223–9; Hoffmann 1966: 16–17; Voss 1970: 27–8; Edwards 1991: 17–34.

the *Apology* is put forward explicitly as a philosophical undertaking: in describing Christian teaching and behaviour Justin as philosopher-subject is setting before philosopher-kings the basis on which they may give sober judgement, so that 'both rulers and the ruled have the benefit of the good' (*1 Apol.* 3.2).

Justin is aware that 'those who are considered to be philosophers' regard the Christian teaching that wrongdoing will be punished in eternal fire as 'bombast and scaremongering, since it encourages the virtuous life through fear, and not because it is noble and pleasing' (*2 Apol.* 9.1). But such criticism was not unknown amongst Greek philosophers themselves. According to Plutarch, Chrysippus had said something similar of Plato's invoking divine punishment as a deterrent from injustice (*De Stoicorum Repugnantiis* 1040ab = *SVF* 3.313).

In the *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew*, the longest of his three surviving works, Justin argues for the correctness of his, Christian, interpretation of the Jewish Scriptures. Trypho, his interlocutor, describes himself as a 'refugee from the recent war' (*Dial.* 1.3), a reference to the Jewish revolt led by Simon bar Kokhba between 132 and 135.

The *First Apology* is a petition seeking relief from the criminal prosecution of Christians who are accused of nothing more than being Christians. In this work, also, Justin mentions the Jewish war as a recent event (*1 Apol.* 31.6). The *Apology* is unlikely to have been written before Lucius became prominent in public life, about 153–4. The *Dialogue* was written later than the *Apology*, to which it refers (*Dial.* 120.6).

The relation of the *Second Apology* to the *First*, which it precedes in the manuscript, is uncertain, but it is clearly dependent on it. It may be a collection of fragments removed from the *First Apology* either accidentally, or by editorial decision at an early stage of the manuscript tradition.

Eusebius of Caesarea (*HE* 4.18.1–6) knew the *Dialogue with Trypho*, and both the *Apologies*, but seems to have viewed the latter as a single work. He also mentions another *Apology*, a book against the Greeks (*Pros Hellēnas*) dealing with questions arising between Christians and Greek philosophers, and the nature of the demons, another book against the Greeks entitled *Refutation* (*Elenchos*), a treatise on the oneness of God (*peri theou monarchias*) which drew upon both Greek authors and the Christian Scriptures, a work entitled *Psalmist* (*Psaltēs*), and another on the soul (*peri psuchēs*) in which the views of Greek philosophers were set out, preparatory to their refutation in another work. Eusebius also mentions a work (*sungramma*) against Marcion, but then quotes from the *First Apology* as though he were quoting from this work.[4] Immediately following the section quoted, Justin tells us that he has written a work (*suntagma*) against 'all

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[4] *HE* 4.11.8–9 quoting *1 Apol.* 26.5–6.

the heresies that have arisen'. Eusebius claims that 'a great many other works' of Justin were still being read by Christians in his time.

A number of other works are attributed to Justin in various manuscripts. Three of these (*Cohortatio ad Graecos (De vera religione)*; *De monarchia; Oratio ad Graecos*) have titles which suggest works mentioned by Eusebius, but it is thought to be more plausible that Eusebius' list prompted the ascription of these writings to Justin, rather than that the surviving works are those that were known to Eusebius.[5] It is possible that *De monarchia* predates Justin. *Ad Diognetum* may date to the end of the second century or the beginning of the third, the *Epistula ad Zenam et Serenum* perhaps to the beginning of the fifth. The *Expositio rectae fidei* and the *Quaestiones et responsiones ad orthodoxos* have been attributed to Theodoret of Cyrus (died c. 457). The *Confutatio dogmatum quorundam Aristotelicorum*, *Quaestiones christianorum ad graecos* and *Quaestiones graecorum ad christianos* date from the fifth or sixth century. John Damascene preserves a substantial fragment of a work on the resurrection under the name of Justin. Though some have regarded this as authentic, this is not the common view. A *De resurrectione* ascribed to Justin in the manuscript which preserves his authentic works has been attributed to Athenagoras. There also survive fragments of a letter, attributed to Justin, addressed to a sophist named Euphrasius concerning faith and providence.

THOUGHT

There are only a few passages in Justin's works that contain a sustained discussion of philosophical topics. The most important of these is in the opening chapters of the *Dialogue with Trypho* (1–8) where, after a brief initial discussion with Trypho about philosophy, Justin outlines his own philosophical education, and his encounter with 'an old man' who engages him in a dialogue about philosophy, a dialogue which is considerably more Socratic in tone than the *Dialogue with Trypho* itself. The *Apologies* contain discussions on fate and free will, and on the relationship between the teachings of philosophers such as Socrates and Christianity.

THE NATURE OF PHILOSOPHY

In the view expressed by Justin at the beginning of the *Dialogue* (2.1), philosophy, which alone leads us to and unites us with God, was 'sent down to

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[5] Riedweg 2000: 850. Marcovich 1990: 3–4; 82, however, thinks that *Cohortatio ad Graecos* and *De monarchia* are the works noticed by Eusebius.

human beings', but the existence of competing philosophical schools, includ-
ing Platonism, shows that many have failed to discover its nature. It has been
suggested that the notion of an original, single, philosophy is derived indirectly
from Posidonius,[6] or from the Platonist reworking of the Stoic understanding
of the history of philosophy, and particularly from the view of Numenius that
Greek philosophy was originally derived from Oriental wisdom.[7] The latter
is more likely if Justin identifies this original philosophy with the revelations
made to Moses and the prophets, whose writings, Justin believed, were known
to Plato, at least. However, Justin does not mean that the original philosophy
was fully available even to the Israelites. For the prophecies, telling that things
which seemed impossible or incredible were going to happen (*1 Apol.* 33.2),
were unintelligible before their meaning was unfolded in the incarnation of the
Logos who was their author (*1 Apol.* 23.1–3; 32.2; 62.3). For this reason they
were misunderstood or imperfectly understood by the Jews (*1 Apol.* 49.5; 52.2),
by the demons who tried to parody them (*1 Apol.* 54. 3–4), and by Plato when
he read them (*1 Apol.* 60.4). Hence, it is in Christianity alone that Justin was
able to discover 'the only secure and useful philosophy' (*Dial.* 8.1). Nevertheless,
Greek philosophers were able to come to a partial awareness of the truth, and
by two distinct, but related, paths. First, the same *Logos* of God who revealed
the truth to Moses and the prophets is also present by participation in all human
beings so that, independently of any special revelation, they are able to see, even
if only dimly and uncertainly, what is real ('*ta onta*', *2 Apol.* 13.5), though this
might not amount to much more than the knowledge that 'God exists, and that
justice and piety are honourable' (*Dial.* 4.7). Secondly, by reading the books of
Moses, Plato was able to come to an incomplete, and inaccurate, understanding
of the truths actually revealed by the *Logos* (*1 Apol.* 59.1–60.7). It is the *Logos*
as source both of the Biblical revelation and of the powers of rational inquiry
that links these two partial approaches to truth among pagans. Justin himself
confuses the issue by speaking of 'seeds' in both cases, but in different senses. In
the one case the seed of the *Logos* enables rational inquiry about the existence
of God and the worthiness of virtue, in the other, the reading of the books
of Moses allows there to be 'seeds of truth amongst all human beings' for the
philosophers and poets 'took their *starting points* from the prophets' (*1 Apol.*
44.9). Distorted and misleading reflections of the revelations of the *Logos* to
Moses also entered Greek culture in the work of poets and mythographers, at
the instigation of evil demons who sought in this way to destroy the probative
force of the fulfilment of the prophecies (*1 Apol.* 23.3; 54.1–10). These demons
also seek to turn human beings away from the worship of the true God by

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[6] Hyldahl 1966: 134–40.   [7] Cf. Numenius, frs. 1a; 9; 24 and Droge 1989: 71–2.

representing themselves as gods (*1 Apol.* 5.1–4; 14.1; 58.3). They punish those who refuse to worship them, amongst both Greeks and barbarians (*2 Apol.* 1.2; 7.3; 8.1–3). Their victims are really Christians, even if they lived before the time of Christ, for it is by their participation in the *Logos* that they are able to recognize the demons as false gods (*1 Apol.* 46.3–4; *2 Apol.* 10.4–6).

GOD AND HIS *LOGOS*

The existence of God is axiomatic for Justin. It is something that souls can perceive without the aid of grace or revelation (*Dial.* 4.7). Justin emphasizes the transcendence of God, whom he describes in terms that are found in contemporary or near-contemporary Platonists. God is unbegotten (*1 Apol.* 14.1; 25.2; 49.5; 53.2; *2 Apol.* 6.1; 12.4; 13.4; *Dial.* 5.4; 114.3; 126.2; 127.1), inexpressible (*1 Apol.* 9.3; 61.11; *2 Apol.* 10.8; 12.4; 13.4; *Dial.* 126.2; 127.2), unnameable (*1 Apol.* 61.11; 63.1; *2 Apol.* 6.1), incorruptible (*Dial.* 5.4), unchangeable (*1 Apol.* 13.4), *apathēs* (*1 Apol.* 25.2.). At *Dial.* 3.4 Justin is asked by the old man for a definition of philosophy, and he replies that philosophy is knowledge of that which exists (*epistēmē . . . tou ontos*) and thorough acquaintance with what is true (*tou alēthous epignōsis*). In the manuscript-text, Justin is next asked for a definition of God, but some commentators propose that 'God' here is a corruption of 'that which exists' (*to on* having been misread as *ton theon*). Justin's answer is: 'that which is always the same and in the same manner and is the cause of existence to everything else – that, indeed, is God'. This equation of God with that which alone truly exists, which borrowed Plato's description of the Ideas, and was reinforced by God's naming himself as 'the one who is' (*ho ōn*) at Exodus 3.14, was to become firmly embedded in the Christian tradition as a means of describing the distinction between God as the cause of all, who alone exists in the full sense of the word, and everything else that comes into being (*ginetai*) because caused by God. Because God so transcends his creatures they cannot, of themselves, have any real knowledge of him. Because they are created (*Dial.* 5.4), human souls have no affinity with God by means of which they might perceive God, no faculty of thinking of God (*Dial.* 4). Knowledge of God is only possible because of a gracious divine revelation, delivered in the first instance through the inspiration of the prophets by divine Spirit (*Dial.* 7), and then through the incarnation of the *Logos*.

Because of God's transcendence there is need of an intermediary 'power of God', such as the *Logos*, to reveal his will. At several points the divine transcendence is expressed in spatial terms: 'no one with any sense would dare to say that the Father and Creator of all departed from everything supra-celestial

in order to appear on a tiny portion of the earth' (*Dial.* 60.2).[8] God's remaining in the celestial (*Dial.* 60.5; 127.5; 129.1) or supra-celestial regions (*Dial.* 56.1; 60.2) is a metaphor for the ontological gap between the creator who *is* and his creation that *becomes*: God is 'superior to things that undergo change' (*1 Apol.* 20.2). If 'the Father of all and unbegotten God' is to be imagined to have appeared to Moses then he must be composite (*suntheton*), which is incompatible with being unbegotten (*Dial.* 5.2, 4).

Justin's way of dealing with God and the divine *Logos* has some affinities with the accounts of God and the second gods given by Alcinous, Maximus of Tyre and Numenius,[9] but Justin's primary concern is with the *Logos* as revealer of the truth, and of the Father's will (*1 Apol.* 23.2; 63.5; *Dial.* 11.4–5; 34.8; 43.2; 133.6), rather than as intermediary in the creation and governance of the cosmos. The *Logos* is described as an 'other God' (*hetereos theos*) (*Dial.* 62.2; 128.4; 129.1, 4), distinct in number but not in intention (*gnōmē*, *Dial.* 56.11). This has been taken to imply that the two are the same in substance.[10] But Justin means, as Trypho understands him to mean, that the 'other' god has 'never done or said anything other than what the maker of all intends (*para gnōmēn*)'.[11] Alcinous also speaks of the obedience of the created gods to the creator (cf. Alcinous, *Handbook* 15.2).

Justin disagrees with those, perhaps among his co-religionists, who believe that this 'power' is 'indivisible and inseparable from the Father' in the way the light of the sun is inseparable from the sun itself (*Dial.* 128.3). When Justin says that the *Logos* was begotten from the Father by the Father's power and will, and not by abscission (*Dial.* 128.4), this is to eliminate any suggestion that the divine substance (*ousia*) is divided or altered; it is not to make a claim of substantial unity of the *Logos* with God.[12] While the logic of Justin's argument requires that the *Logos* cannot be, like God, *agen(n)ētos*, it is not clear whether, or in what sense, being 'begotten' of God differs from being created, except that it is said that God begot him from himself as a rational power before all the creatures (*ktismatōn*) (*Dial.* 61.1; cf. *Dial.* 62.4; 129.4–5). There are a few passages in

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[8] Alcinous also considered that the first God was 'above the heavens' (*Handbook* 28.3), and incapable of local motion (*Handbook* 10.7). Numenius has the first god remaining idle in the creation, while the creator god moves through the heaven (fr. 12.13–14).

[9] Cf. Alcinous, *Handbook* 10.3; 15.1; Maximus, *Dissertationes* 8.8; 41.2; Numenius, frs. 11; 12; 13.

[10] Osborne 1981: 215.

[11] Marcus Aurelius (*Meditations* 9.1.4) and Epictetus (2.19.26) describe the goal of the wise man as being of the same *gnōmē* (*homognōmonas* and *homognōmonēsai* respectively) with nature or God. As Epictetus explains, this does not mean the elimination of the wise man's own *gnōmē*, but its subordination to God, so that everything will be according to the *gnōmē* of oneself and of God at the same time (1.12.7; 17.28). For Justin's use of *homognōmonos* cf. *1 Apol.* 29.3.

[12] Cf. also the parallels to 'begetting' at *Dial.* 61.2 and compare Numenius, fr. 14.

which Justin has been taken as assigning to this 'other' God a mediatorial role in the creation of the universe from unformed matter, but in none of these is it incontestibly clear that this is Justin's meaning (*1 Apol.* 59.5; 64.5; *2 Apol.* 6.3).

Despite his emphasis on divine transcendence, Justin represents God as having a remarkably direct involvement and interest in his creation: it is, indeed, as creator that Justin distinguishes God from the *Logos* (*Dial.* 55.1, cf. *1 Apol.* 58.1; *Dial.* 56.1; 60.2, and Alcinous, *Handbook* 15.2). Even if his providence is mediated by the *Logos*, and by angels (*2 Apol.* 5.2; cf. Alcinous, *Handbook* 15.1), he is the 'compassionate Father of all, who abounds in mercy' (*Dial.* 108.3), who cares for human beings (*1 Apol.* 28.4; *Dial.* 1.4), and who, of his goodness, has created all things for their sake (*1 Apol.* 10.2). He rejoices in those who imitate 'the good things that are present to him: temperance, justice and philanthropy' (*2 Apol.* 4.2; *1 Apol.* 10.1).

Plato is said to have derived from Moses the doctrine that God 'made the world by turning (*trepsanta*) formless matter' (*1 Apol.* 59.1). Justin was aware that some Platonists believed that the cosmos was uncreated (*agennētos*, *Dial.* 5.1), but he himself maintained that Plato taught in the *Timaeus* (41b) that the world is not of itself indestructible, but that it continues in existence indefinitely at the will of God (*Dial.* 5.4). It is a reasonable inference that Justin must have supposed that the formless matter was itself created.

Plato is also charged with having derived from Moses his statement in the *Timaeus* (36b; 34a–b) that God placed the World Soul (for Justin, the Son of God) in the universe in the shape of the letter X (*1 Apol.* 60.1–5). The further claim that Plato found in Moses an enigmatic reference to the Holy Spirit (*1 Apol.* 60.6–7) refers not to the *Timaeus* but to a phrase in the *Second Epistle* (312e: 'the third about the third' – *ta de trita peri ton triton*) which may have influenced Numenius' triad of gods (cf. Numenius fr. 24).

INTELLECT AND COGNITION

At *2 Apol.* 10.6 Justin quotes a phrase from *Timaeus* 28c which has been described as 'perhaps the most hackneyed quotation from Plato in Hellenistic writers'.[13] Socrates, Justin says, urged human beings to 'knowledge, through rational inquiry, of the God who was unknown to them, saying "the father and creator of all is not easy to find nor is it safe for one who has found him to declare him to all"'. Apuleius had used a version of this in support of the view that God is inexpressible and unnameable, and Andresen asserts that it serves the same purpose in Justin (Apuleius, *De Platone et eius dogmata* 1.5,

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[13] Chadwick 1980: 429.

Andresen 1953: 167). But Justin himself does not make this connection, and
the form in which he quotes the tag, agreeing with Alcinous' 'unsafe' in place
of Plato's (and Apuleius') 'impossible', weakens its suitability for this purpose.
As Dillon points out, Plato's statement might be taken to mean either that
the nature of God can be communicated to only a few, or that it cannot be
fully communicated at all (Alcinous, *Handbook* 101). Nevertheless, when Justin
says that 'whatever philosophers and lawgivers have at any time uttered well or
found was achieved by them with hardship according to a finding and observ-
ing of reason (*logos*)' (*2 Apol.* 10.2), it is probable that he does not mean that
the discovery of the truth was merely difficult. Certainly, it was made difficult
because of the malignity of demons, who seek to block the discovery of the
truth, and punish those who strive for it, as shown in the immediate context
by the case of Socrates. But the human mind, unaided, cannot discover the
whole of the truth because it possesses only a part, an imitation, of the whole of
the *Logos*, and thus is able to see the truth only dimly (*2 Apol.* 13.5). Those
who, with hardship, came to some knowledge of the truth are entitled to be
called Christians, because their rational inquiry was possible only through their
partial possession of the *Logos*, who became incarnate in Christ. But after the
incarnation of the *Logos*, even the simplest, least-educated Christians have access
to the whole of the *Logos* (*to logikon to holon*) now made visible (*2 Apol.* 10.1).
Whereas 'Socrates persuaded no one to die for his teachings, Christ, since he is
the power of the inexpressible Father . . . persuaded not only philosophers and
dialecticians, but also craftsmen and those altogether unskilled', and these 'came
to despise honour and fear and death' (*2 Apol.* 10.8).

   The presence of an implanted seed of *Logos* (*2 Apol.* 7.1; 13.5), which is a 'part
of the divine spermatic *Logos*' (*2 Apol.* 13.3), makes possible such apprehension
of the truth as can be attained without revelation. *Logos spermatikos* is, in origin,
a Stoic term, but Justin has adapted and transformed its meaning, perhaps under
the influence of the New Testament parable of the sower (Matt. 13.4–9). If
human rationality can be described as a seed, or part, of the *Logos* this is not
to be understood in a Stoic, materialist sense. Rather, 'the seed of something,
and the imitation of something, to the extent that an imitation is possible, is
not the same as the thing of which the participation and imitation are made, in
accordance with its bounty' (*2 Apol.* 13.6).

   It is only at the level of participation in the *Logos* through the rational powers
that there is an affinity between the human mind and the divine. This is not an
affinity that can develop of its own accord, seed-like, to a full comprehension
of the divine. But it does serve to explain the similarities between those of
the teachings of philosophers such as Socrates that were correct, and the full
revelation of the *Logos* in Christ (*1 Apol.* 5.4). It is because of their possession

of this participation in the divine *Logos* that non-Christian philosophers have sometimes been able to glimpse the truth, and whatever they have said that is true and good belongs to the Christians, for it is the teaching of their teacher, the *Logos* (*2 Apol.* 13.4).

SOUL AND EMBODIMENT

Justin was taught by the old man who introduced him to Christianity to reject the notions that the soul is immortal, since this would imply that it was uncreated (*agennētos*) (*Dial.* 5.1), and that it passes into the bodies of animals (*Dial.* 4.7). The departure of enlivening breath (*zōtikon pneuma*) from the soul causes it to die, just as the body dies when the soul departs from it (*Dial.* 6.2). Though created, and therefore perishable, the soul will nevertheless endure for so long as God wills it to endure. This is said to cohere with the teaching of Plato that the world itself, though perishable, is preserved from destruction by the will of God (*Dial.* 5.3–4; cf. Alcinous, *Handbook* 15.2). The soul is not itself life, but participates in life, and therefore can cease to live (*Dial.* 6.1–2). After death the souls of the holy remain in a better place, the souls of the unjust and the wicked in a worse place, awaiting judgement. When the former are shown to be worthy of God they no longer die, but the latter are punished for as long as God wills them to exist and to be punished (*Dial.* 5.3). While Justin believed that, after death, the unjust will be punished in their bodies, and not as naked souls, as in the myth of Rhadamanthus and Minos (*Gorgias* 523c–e), this presumably refers to punishment inflicted after a general resurrection (*1 Apol.* 8.4). For he also insists that the soul remains sensate after death, as otherwise it could not experience the punishment visited upon it by God for sins committed in the body (*1 Apol.* 18.2–4; 20.4). He seems to have supposed that, in order to be sensate, separated souls would need to be in some sense corporeal, for at *Dial.* 1.5 the teaching that the soul is incorporeal is attacked on the ground that an incorporeal soul would be incapable of suffering punishment for sin.

VIRTUE AND HAPPINESS

Before his conversion, Justin had believed that the pursuit of philosophy was the only path to happiness (*Dial.* 3.4; 4.2), and after relating his own discovery that Christianity was the only safe and and profitable philosophy, he assures Trypho that once he has recognized the Christ of God, and been perfected (i.e., baptised), it will be possible for him to enjoy happiness (*Dial.* 8.1–2).

Justin is complimentary about the ethical doctrine of the Stoics (*2 Apol.* 8.1), although he chides them for their teaching on fate, which he took to be

strongly determinist (*2 Apol.* 7.3–7). While this was a Platonist commonplace (cf. Alcinous, *Handbook* 26.1), Justin had a particular reason for attacking the Stoics on fate, namely, the fear that his own emphasis on the fulfilment of prophecy as the principal proof of the truth of Christianity (*1 Apol.* 30) laid him open to the charge of determinism (*1 Apol.* 43.1). Human behaviour cannot be determined by fate because without freedom of the will there is no rationality in a system of reward for good behaviour and retribution for bad (*1 Apol.* 10.2–5; 28.3; 43).

Justin's discussion of fate has a number of affinities with that of his younger contemporary Alexander of Aphrodisias. Both argue that freedom for moral action is presupposed or entailed by law-making (*2 Apol.* 7.7; *De fato* 19, 36), reward and punishment (*2 Apol.* 7.5; *De fato* 19, 36), praise and blame (*1 Apol.* 43.2; *De fato* 16), choice and responsibility (*1 Apol.* 43.2–4, 8; *De fato* 12, 14), rationality (*1 Apol.* 43.8, *2 Apol.* 7.7; *De fato* 14), and the ability to change between opposites (*1 Apol.* 43.5–6; *2 Apol.* 7.6; *De fato* 9, 12, 35).[14] Both argue that determinism is destructive of virtue and vice, and of the divine (*1 Apol.* 28.4; 43.6; *2 Apol.* 7.9; *De fato* 17, 37). Both deal with determinist objections arising from prophecy (*1 Apol.* 43.1; 44.11; *De fato* 30, 31). This suggests at least that Justin was in touch with currents of thought similar to those represented by Alexander.

For Justin, the ability to change is consequent upon being created (*1 Apol.* 10.3–4). God intends human beings to become sons of God (*Dial.* 123.9; 124.4), endowed with incorruptibility, immortality, and freedom from suffering.[15] But they are created free, changeable, passible and corruptible. The transition from one condition to the other is dependent on the exercise of free choice (*1 Apol.* 10.3; *Dial.* 88.5; 141.1). If they live near God in holiness and virtue, they are able to become immortal and enjoy the friendship of God (*1 Apol.* 21.6).

So long as Christianity continued to gain converts amongst the educated classes in the ancient world an encounter of some kind between it and philosophy was inevitable. The engagement between the two that Justin attempted set a pattern that would be followed by many educated Christians in succeeding centuries. His representation of Christianity as true philosophy precluded Christian hostility to philosophy in itself, and his lingering affection for Platonism (*2 Apol.* 13.2) was to be reflected in the strongly Platonizing drift of much of subsequent Christian theology. The importance of Justin in this early, and

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[14] At *1 Apol.* 43.6 Justin says that someone fated to be wicked or virtuous would never be capable of opposite things (*tōn enantiōn dektikos*) while at *De fato* 9 Alexander speaks of countless cases in which 'one would find there is present some capacity for admitting opposites (*dunamin tina . . . tōn enantiōn dektikēn*)' (trans. Sharples).

[15] *1 Apol.* 10.2–3; 13.2; 19.4; 52.3; *2 Apol.* 1.2; *Dial.* 45.4; 46.7; 69.7; 88.5; 117.3; 139.5.

long enduring, orientation of Christian theology was forgotten in the western Church, but the careful 'omnibus' collection of his supposed works that was transcribed in 1364 (*Parisinus Graecus* 450), upon which the transmission of his authentic works depends, shows that it was by no means forgotten in the East.

APPENDIX

Amongst the writings wrongly attributed to Justin there are three that are thought to have been the work of one author, of Platonist inclination, but familiar with Aristotle, writing no earlier than the fifth century.[16] In the *Confutatio dogmatum quorundam Aristotelicorum* quotations from the *Physics* and *De caelo* are followed by discussions which refute what are thought to be doctrines inimical to the uniqueness of God as eternal and uncreated, and as freely creating everything that exists. The *Quaestiones Christianorum ad Graecos* consists of five short questions and answers which may be based on an actual debate between a Christian and a non-Christian philosopher. After each of the latter's answers there follows a longer refutation of his argument by the Christian. Here too, the concern is to attack philosophical doctrines that are thought to be incompatible with the uniqueness and freedom of God, such as that the cosmos is uncreated and eternal. The *Quaestiones Graecorum ad Christianos*, the least finished of the three works, sets out fifteen questions about such matters as the existence of the incorporeal, the difference between the soul and God, the nature and voluntariness of the divine creative act, and the possibility of resurrection. The Christian answers then follow. They do not address all of the questions asked, and often contain several short responses to the same question. The theological preoccupations are generally the same as in the other two works, and it concludes with forty-eight arguments against Greek objections to the resurrection of the dead.

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[16] Riedweg 2000: 869, who adds that in many respects the author's intellectual profile calls John Philoponus to mind.

CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA

CATHERINE OSBORNE

1 LIFE AND WRITINGS

Titus Flavius Clemens[1] (St. Clement of Alexandria) was probably born in about 150 CE, though we know not where, nor who his parents were. His own works, and those of Eusebius, are the main sources for his life. His obscure and controverted account of his studies (*Strom.* 1.1, 11.2) seems to refer to six teachers: one 'of Ionian origin' in Greece, two in Magna Graecia, one from Coele-Syria (part of Lebanon) and one from Egypt; from 'the East', one Assyrian and one Palestinian Jew; and finally one in Egypt: 'This was the last I encountered but the first in ability' (1.1, 11.2). This comment implies that his narrative tracks his travels chronologically, whence we may infer that his education began in Greece (which may or may not have been his home) and ended in Alexandria.

Who were these teachers? Were they Christians or pagans? His knowledge of mystery religion suggests that he may have started his adult life as a pagan.[2] The favourite teacher is probably Pantaenus, head of the Christian School in Alexandria.[3] According to Eusebius, Pantaenus was a prominent thinker in Alexandria during the reign of Commodus (180–93 CE) having received a Stoic philosophical education. Allegedly Clement succeeded Pantaenus at the Catechetical School, although it remains unclear what post Clement held and for how long.

He evidently left Alexandria, perhaps for Cappadocia, before 211, and must have died between 211 and 216: in 211 he was entrusted with a letter to Antioch, from Alexander, then bishop in Cappadocia (Eusebius, *HE* 6.11). In a later letter of c. 216, Bishop Alexander mentions Clement, along with Pantaenus, as no longer alive (Eusebius, *HE* 6.14.9).

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[1] The full name is given by Eusebius *HE* 6.13 and Photius *Cod.* 111.

[2] *Protrepticus* ch. 2; but see Riedweg 1987 claiming that Clement derived his knowledge of the Mysteries from Plato.

[3] Eusebius *HE* 6.13.2, citing a lost work of Clement. How formal and/or official this 'School' was in the time of Pantaenus or Clement is uncertain.

Presumably, since Clement occasionally describes his major work, *Stromateis*, as an aide-mémoire *for his old age*, he was not young when he embarked on it (*Strom.* 1.1, 11.1). Evidently he was writing after 193, since he twice lists the Roman emperors up to the death of Commodus (193 CE) (*Strom.* 1.21, 144.2; 1.21, 144.4–5). He was perhaps fifteen when Justin was martyred; he might have heard Atticus in the 170s in Athens, and Numenius of Apamea, in Syria; he was contemporary with Celsus; Ammonius Saccas was a younger contemporary teaching in Alexandria until about 240. Plotinus was about eleven when Clement died, while Origen was perhaps twenty-five and could have studied under Clement, as Eusebius suggests (*HE* 6.6.1). Clement cannot have known Philo, who died a hundred years before he was born,[4] but allegorical interpretation in the Philonic tradition surely figured in Pantaenus' curriculum.

Eusebius gives a list of Clement's works (*HE* 6.13).[5] Besides the extant works (see the list in the Appendix), excerpts of his major work, *Hupotuposeis* in eight books, on the mystical interpretation of Scripture, survive in Eusebius, Maximus Confessor, Photius and Cassiodorus. Eusebius also lists works *On Easter*, *On Fasting* and *On Calumny* (*HE* 6.13.3). It is doubtful whether the reference to the Ecclesiastical Canon at *Strom.* 6.15, 125.3 is to a work under that title, as is often supposed. Clement sometimes promises to write further on various subjects, which he may or may not have done.

2 CLEMENT AS A PHILOSOPHER

Including Clement in a history of philosophy is controversial, given his reputation for being both eclectic and unsystematic. In reality, the second charge is unjustified and the first is a misunderstanding. Both are usually based on a superficial reading of Clement's comments about his work, not on philosophical attention to his writings and the Platonism of his time.

(i) Eclectic or selective?

Clement's recurrent comments, in the *Stromateis*, about bees doubtless provoke the charge of 'eclecticism'. His ideal methodology is illustrated by his portrait of his teacher (probably Pantaenus) as a 'Sicilian bee, sampling flowers from the apostolic and prophetic meadows and making a spotless commodity grow in the

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[4] Clement's use of Philo is puzzling. Despite using Philonian material extensively, he names him only four times, describing him as a Pythagorean on two of these occasions.

[5] Jerome's list (*De vir. ill.* 38) may be derivative from Eusebius.

souls of those who heard his lectures' (1.1, 11.2). Yet the bee does not collect without discrimination, nor is the honeycomb messy or unsystematic.

Images of bees, ants, honey and gold digging recur throughout.[6] Ants and bees illustrate an energetic approach to amassing useful material for study, while bees symbolize the choice, quality and coherence of the selection, not just the effort involved. Evidently Clement anticipated some anxiety about his habit of collecting, magpie style, from pagan and Christian wisdom. Unfortunately, subsequent generations have seen only that he invites the charge and not that he carefully refutes it.

'Eclectic' is Clement's own word:

By 'philosophy' I don't mean the Stoic or the Platonic or the Epicurean and Aristotelian, but such things as are rightly said by all of these sects; that is, such things as teach morality with a devout understanding – that selective (*eklektikon*) whole I call 'philosophy'. (*Strom.* 1.7, 37.6)

In current usage, 'eclectic' is used pejoratively of collecting opinions haphazardly, without rational or philosophically respectable criteria, but Clement's point is exactly the opposite. He uses 'eclectic' approvingly (as had Aristotle and Chrysippus), for a *discriminating* approach, an ability to pick out what is well said and what is not, instead of blindly following a particular school of thought. He invokes crafts in which selectivity leads to better husbandry: breeding animals, pruning trees, culling stock, surgery in medical treatment. These illustrate the value of *cutting out* what is not required, and harvesting what is good (*Strom.* 1.9, 43–4). He enlists Plato on the need to distinguish philosophy from sophistry, gymnastics from plastic surgery, medicine from cookery, and dialectic from rhetoric (*Strom.* 1.9, 44.1; cf. Plato, *Gorgias* 464–6). Clement's ideal sage, the true Gnostic, is selective, collecting what is true, discarding the dross, in search of union with the source of all truth, who is God.

Clement's Gnostic is not a gnostic in the sense in which that term is used of the sects such as Valentinians and the followers of Basileides.[7] Such sects are characterized particularly by their class distinction between a spiritual elite who have secret knowledge and the riff-raff who are excluded from salvation. Clement endorses the idea that knowledge of spiritual truths is the pinnacle of perfection (hence his choice of the title 'Gnostic' for the Christian sage), but it is not the only route to salvation, since the *Logos* has many ways of training the souls even of simple believers; and the knowledge is not hidden but is made

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[6] Bees, *Strom.* 1.6, 33.5–6; ants and bees, *Strom.* 4.3, 9.3, cf. Proverbs 6.6 and 8a (LXX); honey and gold *Strom.* 4.2.

[7] In what follows 'Gnostic' refers to Clement's ideal sage, and 'gnostic' refers to heretical gnostic sects, targets of Clement's polemics.

available to all by way of the innate reason with which we were all created, and the allegorical interpretation of Scripture.[8]

One might worry that Clement's eclecticism is no more reasonable than any other School loyalty. If he chooses doctrines on the basis of Christian loyalty, is he not *exploiting* philosophy rather than *doing it*? But no: such a complaint gets Clement's methodology back to front. For Clement, there is no true understanding of Scripture without philosophy. Which texts are canonical and what they mean cannot be settled otherwise. We cannot use Scripture, which we don't understand, as a guide for reading other less-obscure texts; quite the reverse. First one gains understanding through the lesser mysteries, including pagan philosophy, and then one will be equipped for discerning the deepest mysteries of the Scriptures.

Isn't it essential that someone who desires to win the power of God must make clear distinctions concerning intelligible things by doing philosophy? And isn't it useful for him to be in a position to distinguish ambiguous expressions, and things in the Old and New Testaments that are stated homonymously? For it was by ambiguity that the Lord worked his sophistry on the devil at the time of his temptation – so I don't myself see, right now, how on earth the 'inventor of philosophy and dialectic' (as some people suppose) was misled by being taken in by the ambiguity trope. (*Strom.* 1.9, 44.3–4)

Against those who call philosophy 'the work of the devil', Clement here suggests that the devil was worsted by Jesus in the desert due to ignorance of logic.

(ii) Disorganized thinking?

The title of Clement's major work *Stromateis*, often (mis)translated '*Miscellanies*', feeds the second charge, that Clement is an unsystematic thinker. This puzzling title could mean 'counterpanes', the throws for covering couches. But why call a work of philosophy 'throws'?

The same title occurs, probably later, in other authors, and usually for works that systematically assemble information on Greek philosophy.[9] Clement periodically reflects on his title and on his conception of the work, sometimes invoking the image of a *patchwork quilt*, though not so much because the patchwork is arbitrary as because it links relevant things, draws connections, 'passing from one thing to another continuously, as the name suggests' (4.2, 4.1).

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[8] Although Clement clearly imbibes an Alexandrian tradition of allegorical interpretation his method, and his results, are distinctively new.

[9] Ps.-Plutarch *Stromateis* or *Placita* is a collection of 'opinions of the philosophers', date and authorship unknown. Origen's lost *Stromateis* surveyed Greek philosophy in relation to Christianity.

Sometimes he invokes the idea of *wrappings* enclosing nuggets of truth. A kernel of truth is hidden under an inedible shell, as in a nut; some of the philosophical covering may have to be discarded (1.1, 18.1). The truth needs to be hunted out, or dug for, under the *Stromateis*.[10] Occasionally, he thinks of storing blankets for summer: the work is a set of notes stashed away for his old age, not published for display; it is a remedy for forgetfulness (*lethes pharmakon*, 1.1, 11.1; cf. Plato, *Phaedrus* 274e–275a); he has assembled the material that he has not already forgotten, *systematically into chapters*; the writing serves for record-keeping, not for communication (1.1, 12.1). But since written storage is risky, he has had to omit some material, he says, lest it get published unexpectedly; for the written text is orphaned without its author, or some follower of his, to defend it (1.1, 14.4–15.1; cf. Plato, *Phaedrus* 275d).

So much for the title. Scholars also disagree on how to place the *Stromateis* and other major works in the grand publication plans that Clement sometimes mentions. The opening of the *Paedagogus* articulates a three-fold sequence in the training of a Christian: first, protreptic, to inspire an attitude of faith in the candidate and instil habits; secondly, moral education, under the *paedagogus* or moral tutor, training the soul to be receptive to intellectual concerns and to control the passions; and thirdly, intellectual learning, under the *didaskalos* or teacher (*Paed.* 1.1.1–3). At each stage it is the Divine Word (*Logos*) who imparts inspiration, moral training or intellectual instruction.

Clement seems to mean that his *Protrepticus* is the first in a catechetical programme, and the *Paedagogus* is the second. By implication, a third work, containing the serious intellectual work, was still to come. Scholars have sometimes identified the *Stromateis* with that promised *didaskalikos logos*.

However, at the beginning of *Stromateis* 4, Clement again sets out a programme of future work, which can be paraphrased as follows (4.1, 1.1–2.1):

Our next subject should be (i) martyrdom and (ii) who it is who is perfect; then (iii) the fact that everyone must do philosophy. After that, (iv) concerning faith, and (v) concerning enquiry. This completes the preliminary (symbolic) kind of initiation. Finishing the ethical account hastily in this way, we can then set out (vi) the assistance that the Greeks received from barbarian philosophy. After that outline, we shall proceed to (vii) an exposition of the scriptures in response to the Greeks and to the Jews and try to finish off in one book everything that we said in the introduction that we would do, but haven't managed to do in the *Stromateis* so far because there's too much.

Book 4, which focuses on martyrdom and on the equality of women, seems to cover items (i) to (iii) from the above list. Book 5 is on faith, and the relation between faith and knowledge, and considers the practice of concealing the

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[10] *Strom.* 1.2, 21.1–2: the image of hunting dogs; 4.2, 4.1: Heraclitus on digging for gold.

truth under signs and symbols. It seems to cover items (iv) and (v), and that appears to complete what Clement calls the 'ethical account', since the start of book 6 claims that the ethical section, now complete, has explained what kind of person the true Christian Gnostic is (*Strom.* 6.1.1). This leaves items (vi) and (vii) to be treated in books 6 and 7, suggesting that the book 4 programme summarizes the remaining books up to and including book 7.[11]

It follows that the *further* subjects, offered in the next paragraph of book 4, might be for a future work. These include (a) recording speculations handed down from Greeks and barbarians regarding first principles, and the opinions of the philosophers; (b) demonstrating that the Scriptures are authentic, and (c) engaging in some anti-heretical polemic (*Strom.* 4.1, 2.1). Only then, after completing the whole project, shall we progress to the 'true Gnostic *phusiologia*' (4.1, 3.1), for which the first stage is cosmogony, followed (perhaps after some other subjects) by theology (4.1, 3.2–3). We are, says Clement, initiated into the lesser mysteries, before the greater ones (4.1, 3.1).

In the light of 4.1, some scholars deny that the *Stromateis* can be the *Didaskalikos logos*, or that they include anything of the 'greater mysteries'. Yet the start of *Strom.* 6 provides counter-evidence. There Clement implies (in line with 4.1) that he has completed the 'ethical account', and that books 6 and 7 will describe the Gnostic's religious observances, proving that he is not an atheist (6.1, 1.1–2). Shortly afterwards (at 6.1, 2.1) he compares his eclectic method to a meadow in which various plants bloom higgledy-piggledy. Between these two comments, both about the *Stromateis*, Clement says:

The *Paedagogus* in three books has already set out for us the training and upbringing from youth – that is the upbringing that enlarges the community of faith, starting with catechesis, and prepares the souls of those enrolled as men to be valiant with regard to the reception of gnostic knowledge. So clearly, once the Greeks have learnt, from what we shall be saying in this book, that it was impious of them to persecute the one beloved of God, then as our notes proceed in accordance with the style of the *Stromateis*, we shall need to go on to resolve the difficulties raised by the Greeks and the barbarians with regard to the advent of our Lord. (*Strom.* 6.1, 1.3–4)

Evidently, then, the *Stromateis* are a sequel to the *Paedagogus*, even if the first five books still relate to ethics, and the rest concern religious practice. It remains unclear how to reconcile this with the programme in 4.1. Are the *Stromateis* the summit of the Gnostic's philosophical training? On one view a much more systematic intellectual treatise was still to come, either in works now lost (particularly the *Hupotuposeis*) or in a work that Clement never wrote; this was what

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[11] *Strom.* 8 is discontinuous with the rest, probably notebooks not intended for publication.

was meant by 'the greater mysteries'. On another view, the *Stromateis* are already part of that supreme initiation, though perhaps unfinished.

In either case Clement is proposing something strikingly similar to what was to become the ascending path of philosophical training in later Platonism. Hints of such a scheme appear not only in the trilogy that starts with protreptic, but also in the mystery-religion motif of *Stromateis* 4.1. Like the Platonists, Clement's Gnostic studies philosophy in order, starting with ethics, then physics, then theology or metaphysics. Clement's position as catechist in Alexandria and his association with precursors of Plotinus such as Origen and Ammonius Saccas hint at the possibility that Plotinus and post-Plotinian Platonists took inspiration from the Christian School at Alexandria started by Pantaenus. Clement's true 'Christian Gnostic' who, by initiation into the great mysteries, achieves total unification with the Divine, already anticipates Plotinus.

(iii) Knowledge and faith

Arguably, Clement's most important work is his epistemological inquiry into the roles of faith and intellectual knowledge in the ideal human life. Scholars generally claim that Clement's epistemology was provoked by three things: (i) pagan thinkers' hostility to the Christian's preference for faith over reason;[12] (ii) the Valentinian gnostics' view that faith is for the simple and gnosis for the elite (not to be confused with Clement's more inclusive elitism);[13] (iii) simpletons in the Church who held that faith alone is sufficient (*Strom*. 1.9, 43.1). I suspect that these challenges have been overstated.[14] Clement's aspiration to set his catechetical programme on a sound philosophical footing readily explains his work towards a grammar of assent, without specific polemical targets.

Pistis is Clement's word for 'faith'. Confusingly, he uses the word in various ways. First, it identifies a kind of immediate insight, grasping unhypothetical starting-points without demonstration (cf. *Strom*. 7.16, 95.6; 8.3, 7.1). The appropriate attitude to starting-points that are trustworthy (*pista*) is faith. Faith is here assimilated to voluntary assent, *sugkatathesis*, in Stoic epistemology (*Strom*. 2.2, 8.4).

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[12] *Strom*. 2.2, 8.4 alludes to such hostility on the part of 'Greeks'. Scholars cite Galen and Celsus. For Galen see *De pulsuum differentiis* 2.4. Celsus' attack on Christianity (*Logos alēthēs*) appeared c. 180 CE. Origen's *Contra Celsum*, published around 248, provides our evidence for it, but Clement surely knew it.

[13] *Strom*. 2.3, 10.2. mentions Valentinian Gnostics who ascribe faith to 'us, the simple ones' and *gnōsis* to themselves.

[14] Such a context is diagnosed by Chadwick 1966: chapter 2 and Lilla 1971: 118.

Secondly, faith sometimes follows scientific demonstration, when the conclusion merits belief (*Strom.* 8.3, 5.1–3; cf. *Strom.* 2.11, 48.1). Thirdly, by contrast, it is faith that takes Scripture on trust, at the merely literal level, and refuses further inquiries. Clement calls this *psilē pistis* (simple faith), at *Strom.* 1.9, 43.1; 5.1, 9.2. Here faith is the most basic rung, not the highest. Although it suffices for salvation, Clement recommends further effort (*Strom.* 5.1, 5.2–3; 5.1, 11.1).

Clement's attitude towards faith can seem confused until these senses are distinguished. Faith for the simple Christian is an uncomplicated trust in Scripture, while for the more philosophical it will be a superior kind of assent based on allegorical interpretation and philosophical inquiry. This higher kind of *pistis* is integral to *gnōsis*, which builds on simple faith: they are not the preserve of different classes of souls, as in Valentinian gnosticism. Though few achieve *gnōsis* in this life, the means to do so are in principle open to all, namely human effort, philosophy and the teaching of the *Logos*. Scripture, the main source of enlightenment, requires allegorical interpretation, which demands intellectual training; yet the intellectual training is but one part of the three-fold work described in the *Protrepticus*, *Paedagogus* and *Didaskalos*. The Incarnation is not just a source of intellectual enlightenment. We must avoid assimilating Clement to the very gnostics whose extreme intellectualism he is trying to domesticate, or to the Platonism he has Christianized.

Clement offers an enlightening thought-experiment: suppose, *per impossibile*, that *gnōsis* and salvation were exclusive alternatives, which would one choose? The Gnostic, Clement says, would choose knowledge without hesitation. (*Strom.* 4.22, 136.5). This demonstrates the per se desirability of knowledge, since one would still choose it, even if it did not deliver salvation.[15] In reality *gnōsis* does bring salvation, but we do not pursue it *for the sake of salvation*.

The climax of *gnōsis* strikingly resembles the contemplation of the intelligible world in later Platonism. It is unattainable in this life, since it demands release from corporeality (*Strom.* 5.3, 16.1; 5.11, 67.2.). Clement is probably directly recalling Plato's *Phaedo*, though parallels are found in Plutarch, Maximus of Tyre and Justin Martyr.[16]

(iv) Metaphysics, cosmology and soul

It appears, from *Strom.* 4.1 (discussed above), that Clement envisaged writing further on the origin of the world, as the first stage in *phusiologia*, and on

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[15] Compare *Republic* book 2 on the per se desirability of justice.
[16] *Strom.* 5.11, 67.2 (*Phaedo* 65e–66a); *Strom.* 5.4, 19.4 (*Phaedo* 67b). Book 5 is rich with other citations of a variety of Platonic dialogues; cf. Justin, *Dialogue* ch. 2.

'theology', which seems to be the pinnacle of it (*Strom.* 4.1, 3.2–3). Evidently, if he did so, the work is now lost.

However, some extant passages adumbrate Clement's views on these topics. In cosmogony, the allegorical interpretation of Genesis, and the Platonist distinction between sensible and intelligible worlds are combined. Clement argues that Genesis 1.1–3 (up to 'and there was light'), which describes the earth as 'invisible', is about the intelligible world (*Strom.* 5.14, 93.4–94.3). Only from verse 6 does it begin to describe the sensible world. Concerning the origin of matter, some have attributed to Clement a Platonizing view, whereby matter pre-existed creation: Photius found, and disliked, this view in Clement's (now lost) *Hupotuposeis* (*Bibl.* 109); some scholars see it in Clement's generally approving, or at least uncomplaining, account of Plato's views at *Strom.* 5.14, 89.2–90.1.[17] Yet elsewhere, he explicitly endorses (with Plato and, he thinks, Moses) the view that the cosmos *came into being, but not in time*, which presumably implies that if matter pre-existed, or is uncreated, still it *did not pre-exist in time* (*Strom.* 5.14, 92.1; 6.16, 145.4). He reviews various philosophers' accounts of matter at *Strom.* 5.14, 89.5–7, including the idea that matter is among the first principles, is shapeless, lacks qualities, that Plato described it as 'not being', but none of these does he explicitly endorse. Indeed, although the claim that matter is 'non-being' allows things to come 'out of not being' when they are created 'out of matter that pre-exists', this has nothing to do with non-existence, or non-existence prior to creation. The idea (familiar in other Platonist texts) is simply that matter as such is characterized by the privation of all the qualities that it potentially has. Development occurs when qualities take the place of their negation or privation. So what precedes the development of any positive form will be the privation of all forms, something that 'is not' whatever form it might have.

A crucial feature of Clement's metaphysics is the *Logos*, or Word of God. This has several roles. First, it is the mind of God, identical with God and containing his thoughts (namely, the intelligible Ideas, as in much Platonism of the time), *Strom.* 5.3, 16.3–4. Secondly it is distinct from God, as Son (*Strom.* 4.25, 156.1–2), the beginning (*archē*) of creation (5.6, 38.7–39.1), the Wisdom of God (5.14, 89.4; 7.2, 7.4). Thirdly, it is immanent in the universe as the World Soul, or the law and harmony structuring the world (7.2, 5.4–5). By contrast, God as such – we might say 'God the Father' though Clement does not have a clear or sophisticated Trinitarian formulation – is transcendent,

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[17] This observation seems unsafe, since Clement is equally sanguine in reporting the Stoic view that God and the soul are bodies, at 5.14.89, 2. Trusting Photius, who may have misread Clement's non-judgemental citation of philosophical positions, is risky, although Photius concedes that several claims he found objectionable in the *Hupotuposeis* were rejected in the *Stromateis* (*Bibl.* 111).

outside space and time, inaccessible to the senses, beyond being, ineffable, above virtue. What knowledge we have of God is by way of negation,[18] or through the various aspects of the *Logos* that is his emanation. Parallels have been traced here with various forms of Platonism, Philo and Gnosticism.[19] There are notable anticipations of the Plotinian *One*.[20]

Clement's account of soul looks remarkably Aristotelian. He distinguishes inanimate objects, e.g., stones (moved extraneously) from animate things (moved by impulse, *hormē*, and perceptual representations, *phantasia*). There is a sequence of faculties: stones have a natural state; plants have growth;[21] animals have both of these, plus impulse and perceptual representation; human beings also have the *logikē dunamis*, rational faculty, whereby they don't (or shouldn't) just act on impulse like animals, but evaluate their perceptual experiences. Perception proffers images of attractive pursuits, but the rational soul must distinguish which ones will yield genuine pleasure. It is easy to succumb to the impulse arising from these proffered pleasures, and this can become a habit (*Strom.* 2.20, 111.3–4). Hence *akrasia* results from clouded judgement, following repeated exposure to mistaken pleasures.

Thus for Clement the soul is basically virtuous and errs through weakness. The contribution of perception and impulse is not intrinsically evil; they serve well enough in animals, and would serve equally well in human beings if they consistently applied their reason. Clement's polemic is against the gnostic Basileides, whose rival explanation attributes *akrasia* to separate spirits in the soul which attack the virtuous part, like soldiers in the wooden horse. Clement faults Basileides for building evil into human psychology (*Strom.* 2.20, 112.1–114.3).

Clement adopts from Plato the important notion of *homoiōsis theōi* (becoming like god, *Tht.* 176b), enriching it with the Genesis motif of creation in God's image, *kat'eikona*, and likeness, *kath'homoiōsin* (Genesis 1.26 (LXX)). These he treats as distinct ideas: the image (*eikōn*) is a natural resemblance between human mind and divine logos, since man too naturally has reason, given in Creation, but to achieve 'likeness' is something else, no natural kinship but an

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[18] *Strom.* 5.11, 71.1–5. Note the mention of lesser and greater mysteries.

[19] Note in particular the idea that the believer becomes 'monadic' in imitation of the impassibility of Christ, *Strom.* 4.23, 151.3–152.1; 4.25, 157.2; on God as the monadic source, 7.17, 107.4–6; cf. Philo *Opif.* 15; 35.

[20] Although Lilla points out the similarities he holds back on the grounds that Clement's God is more like *nous* in Plotinus, because he has thoughts, citing *Strom.* 5.3, 16.3, Lilla 1971: 221–2. But this text, which is also his source for the idea that the *Logos* is to be identified with the mind of God, is obscure, lacunose and part of a dialectical engagement with Plato. By contrast there is a much clearer statement at 4.25, 156.1, which suggests that God is not a thinking subject, but that the Son is the principle to which all cognitive predicates apply.

[21] Clement is non-committal on whether plants count as animate (*Strom.* 2.20, 111.1–2).

achieved status, as in Plato. It involves realizing one's potential for God-likeness, by practising intellectual virtue and impassibility (*Strom.* 2.22, 131.5–132.2; cf. Plotinus *Ennead* 1.2).

It is often said that this idea was already present in Philo.[22] But Clement's distinction between image and likeness, such that *homoiōsis* is attained by effort, not given in creation, seems to be new, and was to spawn, over centuries, the extraordinarily fecund motif of the imitation of Christ. This example neatly illustrates how Clement brings philosophy to Scriptural exegesis, rather than the reverse.

(v) Ethics

Arguably the work on God-likeness already belongs to ethics. It reveals the Platonic inspiration that underlies Clement's ideal of impassibility, which might otherwise seem closer to Stoicism. His model of perfection is the total impassibility, *apatheia*, of God, with *metriopatheia* (moderation) as a secondary target. Parallels here with contemporary and later Platonism have been carefully observed in the literature.

Clement discusses the correct attitude to the world and to God in *Quis dives salvetur*, which locates virtue in the attitude towards, and use of, worldly goods, not wealth or poverty as such. Several works provide detailed, indeed entertaining, reflections on the morals of his day: the dangers of too many baths; the problem of kissing in public (*Paed.* 3.9.48.2; 3.11.81.2). *Strom.* 3 investigates marriage, negotiating a path between Clement's own ascetic ideals and two perceived threats, from people who claim that purity is unaffected by sexual licence and from Marcionism's rejection of sex as the work of an evil creator. For Clement, marriage allows the virtuous to exercise reason, in imitation of the *Logos*, and achieve ascetic control within a supportive relationship.

(vi) Metaphilosophy

Clement's reflections on the place of philosophy in human life, and in the search for truth, are fundamental. What use is philosophy? This is itself a philosophical question, probably Clement's most urgent one. He explores the limits of what philosophy can do. He asks whether philosophy is the handmaid of theology, and how it contributes to understanding and evaluating the canonical Scriptures. Revealed religion cannot settle questions about the relation between philosophy and revelation, since we first need to know whether revelation is the tool to

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[22] Merki 1952: 38–44; Völker 1938; Lilla 1971: 109. More nuanced assessment in Runia 1993: 149.

settle that. The very question of how and when to use philosophy can be settled only by philosophy, it seems.

Clement's entire work is an extended treatment of these issues. One answer invokes the *Logos*, as Reason built *naturally* into the human soul when it was made in the image of God, which equips us for rational investigation. This capacity enables the eclectic philosopher to identify which of the pagan philosophers attained truth, and which should be rejected. For the interpretation of Scripture, the allegorical method requires the highest intellectual discrimination in its use of philosophy.

Secondly, Clement's 'True Gnostic' is able to grasp the truth in virtue of his *acquired* assimilation to the divine *Logos*. As a result of his intellectual studies he is in a position to give fully informed assent to what he knows, no longer relying on simple faith.

Clement defends the use of philosophy by appealing to philosophical grounds, and this might seem circular. But it is actually stronger than it looks. It is worth comparing Clement with Justin, who anticipates his ideal of a Christianity informed by philosophy, but justifies it by claiming that ancient philosophers learnt things from Moses. This situates the warrant for philosophy in the truth of revelation. Reversing that relationship is Clement's great achievement. Even to ask the question is already to engage in philosophy, and any answer that satisfies will in fact need to be philosophical. *Pace* Justin's valiant attempt, no appeal to Scripture as arbiter can succeed because Scripture offers no unambiguous message. First we have to apply the interpretative judgement of the *Logos*.

So, reason is the only way to settle the relation between revelation and philosophy, even if one thinks that the answers lie in Scripture, although the dichotomy between reason and Scripture will ultimately turn out to be false, since *Logos* in us and *Logos* in Scripture are both expressions of the same source.

CLEMENT'S SIGNIFICANCE

As we have seen, Clement develops a range of original and challenging lines of thought in his attempt to secure the dependence of Christian theology on intellectually respectable work in philosophy. One might be tempted to ask whether he is really a Platonist philosopher dressing his ideas up with a veneer of Christian language, rather than a genuine Christian believer, but that is probably an anachronistic way of thinking since Clement is effectively forging an account of what it means to be a believer: what is required for salvation, what kind of a being God is, how the second person of the Trinity relates to the first person, and what its role is *vis-à-vis* revelation, morality and speculative thought. There is, in a sense, no answer to the question whether Clement is a Christian,

since he is just working out what it is to be one, by modelling his ideal of the Christian Gnostic and marking him off from threatening alternatives on either side. Clement's careful opposition to exclusive sectarian forms of gnosticism, and his establishment of a critical but positive attitude to pagan philosophy, provides a salutary model for later thinkers such as Origen, the Cappadocian Fathers and later thinkers in the Platonic tradition.

ORIGEN

EMANUELA PRINZIVALLI

The life of Origen (c. 185–after 250), born in Alexandria in Egypt, son of a martyr and the eldest of seven brothers, was that of a master of Christian philosophy. We are told this, with a certain implausibility regarding chronology, in book 6 of the *History of the Church* composed by Eusebius of Caesarea, who had already written, together with his teacher Pamphilus, an *Apology* in Origen's defence. Leaving aside the different effects of a treatment purporting to be on the one hand historical and on the other of an apologetic character, we can identify in the Eusebian *History of the Church* indications of an attitude both of celebration and of defensiveness – which also has implications for an understanding of Origen's basic relationship with philosophy. After acquiring a deep familiarity with Scripture at a very early age, Origen, who made his living as a teacher of grammar to support his family after the death of his father, was called, because of his zeal and ability, by Bishop Demetrius to organize catechetics at the Alexandrian didaskaleion. That must be interpreted to mean that Demetrius, aiming to promote greater centralization in the Alexandrian church, established, with Origen's support, a school under direct episcopal control. That was a novelty compared with other schools in the past – and perhaps also in his own time – for these were simultaneously autonomous liturgical communities as well as centres of Christian instruction. That is clear from the writings of Clement of Alexandria and from the report in Eusebius about a Christian group centred around a certain Paul, a heretical teacher from Antioch, which met in the house of a rich matron where the young orphan Origen lived (*HE* 6.2.14). Therefore, in the period before Origen the existence of a succession (*diadochē*) of Christian teachers (Pantaenus, Clement) in a single catechetical school – as claimed by Eusebius – seems unlikely.

At some stage Origen divided the school into two courses, one for beginners, given by his disciple and friend Heraclas, and one for advanced pupils. This division in itself appears related to what obtained in philosophical schools and makes us realize that Origen's teaching, even before the subdivision into

two courses, was not limited to the basics of the *regula fidei* for catechumens, but was aimed at deepening the basic understanding of the faith. In the division one might also see an indication of some of the difficulties Origen met with in his teaching – which led to a redrafting of the programme. Indeed, Heraclas, to whom the first level had been entrusted, was also possessed of strong philosophical credentials, having been for five years an auditor of a philosopher no better identifiable when Origen himself began to attend his lectures. Information about this derives from a letter of Origen's written to defend himself on the charge of following a pagan educational programme (*HE* 6.19.12). He explains that he had looked for philosophical training to meet the demands of his Christian teaching which had aroused the interest of heretics and pagan intellectuals. From the evidence of Porphyry, drawn from *Against the Christians* and included by Eusebius immediately before Origen's letter (*HE* 6.19.6), it is clear that his philosophy teacher was the Platonist Ammonius Saccas. At a later date Ammonius was also the teacher of Plotinus. In his *Life of Plotinus* Porphyry speaks of an Origen as a fellow student with Plotinus and as the author of two works (*On daimones* and *The King Alone is the Creator*) which do not appear among works of our Origen known elsewhere, and the majority of modern critics think – because of chronological impossibilities and difficulties of fact – that it is a case of two people with the same name. Some maintain that Porphyry was confused between two Origens and that Ammonius had not been the teacher of the Christian Origen, but a conclusion of that sort seems unnecessary: Porphyry speaks of the two in separate contexts and as authors of different books and, even if there is insufficient evidence to affirm with certainty that he thinks of them as two different individuals, we certainly cannot say that he identifies them. So there is no reason to question the information about the fellow disciple in Ammonius' school, which is presented in a context where Porphyry is unambiguously speaking of the Christian Origen.

The date of the beginning of Origen's literary activity is uncertain. Eusebius puts it at 222, but perhaps it should be set earlier. Certainly Origen's reputation grew, with the result that he was invited to visit various places outside Alexandria, and also by Julia Mammaea, the mother of the Emperor Alexander Severus. But a misunderstanding also grew with Demetrius, culminating in the incident of Origen's ordination to the priesthood through the agency of two friendly bishops outside Alexandrian territory, and the invalidation of that ordination, though that was limited to Alexandria and Rome. Origen moved to Caesarea in Palestine (after 231, perhaps in 233) where, besides taking up school activity again, he was also able to dedicate himself to pastoral work, of vital importance to him because his pedagogical project went far beyond the instruction of a

Christian elite. In those of his homilies that have been preserved, indeed, he develops a strategy of communication at different levels, by means of which he manages to offer each listener the level of understanding of which he is capable, thus allowing whoever is attentive and well prepared to grasp a deeper message with each step, via subtle allusions scattered in the texture of the homily. If Origen, confronted by the charges of the Platonist Celsus, defended the faith of 'simple' believers (*Contra Celsum* 3.58; 6.13–14), and again against Celsus as well as in his homilies emphasised the inadequacies and contradictions of the philosophers, nevertheless in his preaching and teaching he pushed every Christian towards a deepening of the basics of the faith, an objective for which, explicitly at least in the case of his advanced teaching, philosophy turned out to be a useful propaedeutic study.

Origen himself explained the relationship which should pertain between philosophy and Christianity in a letter to his disciple Gregory: just as geometry, music, grammar, rhetoric and astronomy are considered auxiliary to philosophy, so philosophy is an aid to Christianity. The story told in Exodus 11.2 and 12.35, where the Hebrews rob the Egyptians of gold, silver and rich clothing to construct the ark and its holy furnishings, symbolizes the proper use of worldly knowledge with the end of honouring God. But this activity is not easy and one runs the risk of superimposing heretical doctrines derived from Greek philosophy on the Scriptures, a risk of which Ader the Idumaean is the symbol when he superimposes the worship of idols on the true worship of God (cf. 1 Kings 12.28; Origen, *Letter to Gregory* 3). With these considerations Origen aligns himself with the traditional argument that ties the origin of every heresy to a particular philosophy and which at practically the same time was developed systematically in a work written in Rome, entitled *Philosophoumena* (mid-third century) and once attributed to Hippolytus. This theoretical caution in dealing with philosophy, confirmed in more or less anxious tones in different texts – and also taking account of different interlocutors – is greater than that shown by Clement who, in the *Stromateis*, did not hesitate to think of philosophy as a form of revelation for the Greeks, in parallel to that of Moses for the Hebrews. But in practice the description preserved in the *Discourse of Thanks*, traditionally attributed to Gregory Thaumaturgus, shows us Origen, now settled in Caesarea, untiring and passionate in his exhortations to choose 'the philosophical life': 'he maintained indeed that it is not possible to be genuinely dutiful towards the Lord of the Universe . . . indeed in the strict sense to be genuinely religious at all, without practising philosophy' (*Or.* 6.78.79). The general import of these words is obvious in that they aim to promote a mental disposition and a way of living even more than any specific doctrinal content: and if the goal in prospect is the Christian God, the methods, defined as Socratic by the author

of the *Discourse* (*Or.* 6.97) are those with which any Greek philosopher of late antiquity would have felt familiar.

After describing the progress of Origen's philosophical teaching from dialectic to ethics and to theology – which last represented also for contemporary pagan philosophy the peak of speculative endeavour since it concerns first principles – the author of the *Discourse* makes plain that Origen required the study of all the writings of ancient authors, whether philosophers or poets, neglecting no one except the 'atheists', probably the Epicureans. He gave a full introduction to the others, guiding his pupils to harvest 'what was useful and true' from all of them (*Or.* 14.172). In this expression lies the exegetical key to an understanding of the limits of the reception of philosophy, not only by Origen but by every Christian writer. For the Christian philosopher there are certain premises which derive from divine revelation and are non-negotiable: the truth, insofar as it is revealed, exists as a restricting barrier, so to speak, to inquiry itself. However, in Origen the area available for inquiry in the strict sense is wider than will be permitted later on, both because in Origen's time definitive solutions had not yet been given to certain questions (the relation of the Holy Spirit to the Father and the Son; the origin of the soul; the nature of the devil) and because he himself, by reason of his personal stance, widens the field of inquiry, for example in speculation on the situation before and after the present world order (Introduction to *Princ.* 7).

If we now return to the information from Porphyry in Eusebius, we can better evaluate the thrust of the attack he directs against Origen: he says that Origen distorted the Greek education he had received with uncivilized (that is, Christian) impudence, living as a Christian but retaining Greek principles in his conception of reality and of God. Porphyry then points to a series of philosophers beginning with Plato and Numenius and finishing with the Stoics Chaeremon and Cornutus, Origen apparently acquiring from the last two (but perhaps, as Rufinus' Latin translation suggests, he is referring to the whole list) the 'metaleptic' reading of Greek mysteries which he applied to the Scriptures. The expression '*metaleptikos tropos*' could be understood as synecdoche of the concept 'allegory', but perhaps Porphyry means, more generally, that Origen, by an improper cultural transposition, applies Greek categories to texts that are incompatible with such categories. The charge of having surrendered to philosophy, which, as we have seen, had already from time to time been brought against Origen during his lifetime, was brought up again in the writings of Marcellus of Ancyra and others, and would remain in circulation throughout the long course of Origenist controversies, which culminated in the condemnations of the Emperor Justinian in 543 and 553. What interests us here is only to compare the judgements of his disciple Gregory, the author of

the *Discourse of Thanks*, with those of the hostile philosopher Porphyry, in as much as they agree on one point: Origen had a complete mastery of Greek philosophy.

One of the positive effects of Origen's use of philosophy is that he has contributed to our knowledge of the writings and theories of earlier philosophers, thanks to the quotations to be found in his works, especially in the *Contra Celsum*. Hence, we can identify two basic philosophical worlds: Stoicism, of which he provides good information in a number of areas, including some important quotations from Chrysippus and Chaeremon; and Platonism which, in the person of Numenius of Apamea, especially valued by Origen who puts him among 'the true philosophers' (*C. Celsum* 1.14; 4.51; 5.57), is intertwined with the Pythagorean tradition. To a lesser extent we can trace quotations from Aristotle who, however, affects Origen's work partly directly, partly through lexica, partly through the influence of Ammonius. And there are other quotations of Peripatetics and Epicureans. The regular presence of philosophical quotations in the *Contra Celsum* and their comparative rarity in Origen's exegetical works makes us regret the almost total loss of the *Stromateis*, where, in a manner already well developed by Clement, he compared Christian and pagan philosophers, in particular – according to Jerome (letter 70.4) – Plato, Aristotle, Numenius and Cornutus, 'to support the teachings of our religion': a claim not far from that of Porphyry.

The frequency of references to Stoicism should not make us think that Origen was substantially influenced by that philosophy: he rejects the monism and materialism of the Stoics and, when he makes use of Stoic doctrines, he fits them into a coherently Platonic substrate, which we might call a mentality rather than a strictly philosophical position. In the Platonic manner he recognizes two levels of reality: one intelligible, invisible and incorporeal, the other sensible, visible and corporeal. As regards corporeal matter the so-called Middle Platonists like Alcinous had adopted the Stoic theory of an amorphous substrate (*hupokeimenon*) subject to every kind of change and specified by its qualities. In a comparable way Origen thinks of intellectual nature as a common substrate specified by qualities (*Princ.* 3.6.7). Thus, he can claim that the soul is akin (*suggenē*) to God in as much as it is an intelligent being (*Exh. mart.* 47; *Princ.* 3.1.13), and maintain a clear distinction between God and intelligent creatures, since the distinctive quality of God, in its internal economy ultimately determined as Trinitarian, is the substantial possession of Being which is identified Platonically with the Good. Specifically, though reforming it in a coherent manner, he uses the distinction between being *per se* and being *per accidens*, a Peripatetic concept introduced into Middle Platonism by Alcinous. From that derives the fact that divinity is unchangeable, while other beings, in as much as they are created,

possess the good accidentally and are therefore changeable and specified in their qualities by their free will.

If the Platonic mentality is a secure datum, the appeal of Origen to Scripture is constant and continual:

Paul teaches us that the invisibility of God is understood via visible things and that things not seen can be thought of on the basis of their formal principles and their similarity to things which can be seen [cf. Rom. 1.20] . . . And perhaps just as (God) has created man in his image and likeness [cf. Gen. 1.27], so he has also created other creatures according to their likeness to specific heavenly exemplars. Perhaps earthly things bear the image and likeness of heavenly realities to such an extent that even the grain of mustard, the smallest of all seeds, has an exemplar which it resembles in heaven. (*Comm. in Cant.* 3.9)

In this passage the paradigm-copy relationship between heavenly and earthly realities is presented in biblical language. The Scriptural intertextuality is structured on one quotation from Paul, one from Genesis and a hint from the Gospels (the parable of the grain of mustard seed). This presentation introduces us to another important consideration; it does not help with an adequate evaluation of Origen if, starting from his philosophical knowledge, we want to reduce him to the parameters imposed by belonging to a specific school or having a specific philosophical stance, or, even worse, if we superimpose on Origen's thought in a pedestrian manner linguistic and doctrinal schemata deduced from more or less contemporary Platonic philosophers: that would mean not only killing off the originality of our author but misreading his precisely Christian stance (which Porphyry, for his part, recognized, though he put negative value on it). We have already said that Origen, as a Christian philosopher, maintains that the truth is communicated by God through the Scriptures. His theological work is therefore inextricably bound up with his exegesis to the extent that it is appropriate to identify him as a theological exegete. Hence, when we encounter philosophical concepts and terminology, we must remember that each of these elements is reoriented by Origen to express the mystery of the Christian God in a way which he clearly always considers an approximation.

In Origen's time Gnosticism (and on this point Marcionism too) opposed the revelation of a higher God to that of a lower, who speaks through Jewish Scripture. Origen, and before him Clement, challenges this picture, re-emphasizing the two basic doctrines inherited from Judaism: the oneness of God and the fundamental equality of men, created in the image and likeness of the one God (Gen. 1.26–7). His whole thought therefore moves from this accepted legacy to an intra-Christian debate and unfolds from a hermeneutic which derives its single inspiration and revelation from the Scriptures, in virtue of Paul's insistence that the whole Law is spiritual (Romans 1.20) because Christ speaks in the Law and the Law speaks of Christ. Christ is its inspiration, since he is the

Logos, the Word of God, acting through the agency of the Holy Spirit; and, again insofar as he is the *Logos*, he experiences a kind of incarnation in Scripture, assuming the limitations of human speech and writings (*Hom. in Lev.* 1.1). Thus Christ is the hermeneutic principle of Scripture. The progress brought by the revelation of the NT consists in its having made the christological significance, which in the old dispensation was granted only to a few, available to all (*Princ.* 2.7.2).

The presupposition of Christology is obviously the dividing line which separates Origen from Philo, the Alexandrian Jew whom he considered to be among his predecessors (*C. Cels.* 5.55; *Hom. in Ios.* 16; *Hom. in Ex.* 2.2) and whose work he preserved and spread, bringing the scrolls of Philo's work to Caesarea. Nonetheless, Philo constitutes for Origen a model of exegetical method, because in the Jew's works he finds that same Platonic foundation which provides the theoretical support for his own hermeneutic as well as an overall interpretation of the Pentateuch within which lists of themes serve as a point of reference for his personal variations and developments.

For Origen, as for his Alexandrian predecessors Philo and Clement, the letter of Scripture is like a dark veil, which has the function of keeping the mystery of the spiritual sense away from whoever approaches it unworthily. Put differently, this means that the letter is the body which hides and protects the soul. Sometimes Origen allows this sub-division a triple sense, on the basis of the triple anthropological schema drawn from 1 Thess. 5.23: just as man is composed of body, soul and spirit, so Scripture offers a literal sense for the simple believers, an intermediate sense for those more advanced and a spiritual sense for the perfect (*Princ.* 4.2.4; *Hom. in Gen.* 2.6; *Hom. in Lev.* 5.1). But this and other triple subdivisions are never systematized by Origen who believes them purely functional in relation to the fundamental subdivision of the two levels, the literal or carnal/material which the Christian must understand and go beyond, and the spiritual, which is in effect inexhaustible and to which the Christian can attain in his continual progress. The means of reaching it is almost always the allegorical method – used Paul by (*Gal.* 4.24–6) to 'christologize' the Hebrew Bible – and which Philo had also deployed. Origen amplifies the contents of allegorical exegesis compared to the traditional typology which reads in the facts and personalities of the OT the facts and personalities of the New (e.g., Isaac as Christ, Rebecca as the Church), by virtue of a whole series of techniques deriving above all from Philo. We can apply ourselves to recovering the significance of numbers (numerological exegesis) or of etymologies (etymological exegesis) or we can use psychological exegesis to recognize beneath the literal sense references to the soul, with its vices and virtues – and we can develop such exegesis systematically to indicate the relationship between the soul and the *Logos*. In the steps of the Gospel of John, and like the Gnostics, even if

with a different orientation, Origen proposes a 'vertical allegory' which relates the events of the Bible to higher, heavenly realities. Origen's allegorization is anything but an exercise in fantasy: the relationship between the literal and allegorical senses is controlled by analogy. Sometimes, however, the literal sense is impossible: a literal reading offers something inappropriate (*defectus litterae*), a stumbling-block erected by the Spirit to stimulate the search for the spiritual sense (*Princ.* 4.2.9). Even this procedure is not new, since it had already been enunciated by Stoic philosophers to interpret the Homeric myths and had been taken over by Philo: Origen's merit is to have organized different cues into a theoretically complete pattern of procedures.

Two texts, of equal intellectual boldness but different in their achievement, sum up the character of Origen's work, showing distinct degrees of his ongoing integration of theology and exegesis: *On First Principles* and the *Commentary on John*. The first of these works, in four books, which has come down to us in its entirety only in Rufinus' Latin translation – with a certain touching up in light of later orthodoxy – investigates, as its title itself indicates, the basic principles of being. Origen proposes Christian doctrine as in direct competition with the philosophies of the day and engages in the production of a systematic synthesis – within the limits in which one can speak of a system for a writer in antiquity. From differing viewpoints and with further detail as his work proceeds, he sets out claims about the following: God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, rational creatures, the world and its end, free will, the interpretation of Scripture. On each of these questions Origen establishes a noticeable doctrinal advance on what preceded him: for the first time he proposes the eternal generation of the Son from the Father, the doctrine of three hypostases which will be at the base of the Trinitarian credal formula of the Councils of Nicaea and Constantinople; and for the first time he develops reflection on the Holy Spirit. His treatment of free will, in book 3, against Stoic, Gnostic and astrological determinism, which develops in an independent manner themes deriving from Alexander of Aphrodisias and Maximus of Tyre, will remain a model for later Christianity, while in Origen's hermeneutical principles, to which practically the whole of book 4 is dedicated, the theory of different senses of Scripture will find its starting-point right down to the Reformation. The organic unity and programmatic character of *On Principles* inevitably ensured its wide diffusion – and was probably intended to from the start; which allows us to understand why the work was at the centre of a series of debates. The *Commentary on John*, in thirty-two books, preserved only in part and containing a number of proposals even more daring than those of *On Principles*, proceeds through the biblical text in minute detail, reaching the point of taking up an entire book to explain the single pericope 'in the beginning was the Word'. Origen's process of thought

follows the Gospel text so closely, breaking in on it as it proceeds, as to generate a terminology which intertwines philosophical borrowings completely freely with the language of the Bible.

Let us now try to discover the practical effects of what has been said about Origen's methods and originality, by setting out, in broad terms, his thought about God. His fullest and most systematic treatment is found in *On Principles* 1.1: indeed it is significant that Origen, who starts with the specifically philosophical question of the incorporeal nature of God and is aware that the term 'incorporeal' is not found in Scripture, discusses in the first instance two texts, Deut. 4.24 (Our God is a devouring fire) and John 4.24 (God is Spirit) in order to challenge the Stoic position, adopted by Christian theologians in the Asianic tradition, for whom God is a subtle corporeal spirit, made of fiery matter. In other words Scripture is always and everywhere his compulsory reference point. To the Stoic notion he opposes the idea of an absolutely incorporeal and transcendent God, a monad or henad, fundamentally unknowable, who is however at the same time a good and just creator, and of whom man can acquire a certain knowledge by way of analogy through his creation. In this vision Middle Platonic elements converge with others that are Judeo-Christian. Typical of Middle Platonism, already taken over in the Alexandrian theology of Philo and Clement, are on the one hand the definition of God as a monad and henad, on the other the absence of any description of God as One. Similarly Middle Platonic is the emphasis placed on the unknowability of God, while the concept of creation belongs to Judeo-Christian thought, which had progressed to the specific thesis of creation *ex nihilo*. Origen shows himself well informed about the secular debate in progress among the Platonists concerning divine transcendence (we may recall the opposing positions of Numenius and Plotinus), that is, whether God can be considered as *nous* (mind, reason) and *ousia* (substance) or whether he is rather above the categories of reason and being (the first thesis is proposed in *On Principles* 1.1.6; the second in the *Commentary on John* 19.6). Origen's oscillations about this seem to depend on the context from time to time, which in its turn depends on the interpretative requirements of the text itself. In any case the God of Origen is a god who – and not only in Christ – can be described as possessed of affect: an idea which goes well beyond the Platonic concept of divine love:

Does not even the Father, the God of the universe, 'showing pity and mercy' [Ps. 103.8] and of great kindness, suffer in some way? Do you not know that when he regulates human affairs he shares the sufferings of mankind? . . . Not even the Father is without affect. If we pray to him, he shows pity and compassion, suffers from love and identifies himself with feelings which – granted the greatness of his nature – he apparently might not have. For our sake he bears the griefs of men. (*Hom. in Ez*. 6.6)

So, at the root of Origen's thought is the personal God of the Jewish Scriptures and the Gospel: a God who, according to John, (1 Jo. 4.7.8), identifies himself with love, turned to the care and salvation of his creatures (*Comm. in Cant.* 2.36). This does not disallow the fact that for each of the specific definitions of God (ingenerate, unchanging and invariable, self-sufficient, ineffable, without form or colour, beyond every place and devoid of passions – despite what we have just read in the passage quoted above) a parallel can be found in Middle Platonic writers such as Alcinous, Maximus of Tyre, Philo and Plutarch. The Middle Platonic triple division of principles (God, World Soul, matter) is translated by Origen into the schema God the Father, Son, world. The Father and the Son are respectively called *protos theos* and *deuteros theos* (*C. Celsum* 6.47), expressions already used by Numenius (frs. 11 and 21) and Alcinous (*Didasc.* 164.19).

The Son is the centre of Origen's speculation about God, the mediating element *par excellence*, for the reason that he is the means by which creatures share in the divine life of the Father. While the Father is, as for Numenius, the Good in itself (*autoagathos*), the Son derives his being good from direct participation in the Father's divinity (*Comm. in Joh.* 2.2.3). The Son is defined as Wisdom which is an emanation (*aporroia*) from the glory of the Omnipotent one, in scriptural language (Prov. 7.25): an idea which finds a parallel in Plotinus' vision of the generation of Nous from the One (*Enn.* 5.2.1). And in the direct participation of the Son in the divine life lies his difference from creatures which are mediated by the *Logos*-Son. This doctrine of participation, familiar in Middle Platonism, was later viewed with suspicion because it is susceptible of an Arian interpretation: Athanasius substitutes the concept that the Son is generated from the substance of the Father. According to Origen, *qua* Wisdom the Son is turned towards the Father, the highest God, and *qua Logos* he is aligned to reveal God to the world. As Wisdom he contains the 'reason-principles' (*logoi*) of every being, the principles in accordance with which all things are made by God in his wisdom (*Comm. in Ioh.* 19.147). In other words, *qua* Wisdom the Son is the intelligible world, eternally the object of the Father's thought: a world which, as in Middle Platonism and in Philo, has lost the static quality of archetypes like Platonic ideas – to assume the dynamism proper to the thoughts of God or Stoic *logoi*. *Qua Logos* the Son creates the *logikoi*, that is, intelligible creatures, outside time – according to the dynamic models contained in Wisdom.

Wisdom and *Logos* then come to be the first and principal titles (*epinoiai*) of the Son, from which many others derive (power, image, way, truth, life, gateway, shepherd, etc.). These are traditional names, all derived from the Scriptures, but for Origen they represent the various ways by which the Son works his

mediation between the Father and the universe. In this sense the Son includes within himself all plurality, in contrast to the absolute simplicity of the Father.

Probably Numenius, proposing the connection between the first and second god as a participation of the second in the being (= the goodness) of the first (fr. 19), and the relationship between the two gods as a dynamism of simultaneous reciprocity by analogy with the intellect which produces thought (fr. 15), has influenced Origen's formulation of the eternal generation of the Son by the Father (*Princ.* 1.2.7), his most significant advance on the subject of the Trinity – in a way analogous to the Plotinian doctrine of the eternal generation of Nous from the One (*Enn.* 5.1, 6). However, in looking at all the similarities with Numenius and other Platonic philosophers, as well as with Philo himself, on the topic of the relation between the highest God and the Son, we should remember that the Christian doctrines of the Incarnation and of the Son's redemptive death – events central to Origen's thought – indicate an unbridgeable difference from these possible sources.

The deepest understanding of Origen's activity, and hence of his character as a Christian philosopher, was revealed by the seriousness of his dialogue with the Gnostics, which has the goal of reorientating their thought-structures in an orthodox sense. If we can push out into conjectural territory, he had in effect learned above all from the Gnostics their unease at living in a material world which checks and deadens the impulses of the spirit, and he had grasped their profound way of looking at the world and their dissatisfaction with the formulae they heard in meetings of the community.

Origen's insight, generated in confronting the Gnostics, brings the beginning and the end of cosmic history closely together, embracing both in a single vision. Origen thus approaches his reaffirmation of traditionally orthodox assumptions about the oneness of God and the natural equality of human beings via a metaphysical structure close to that of the Gnostic systems and by pursuing a direction similar to theirs insofar as he proposes a double movement of fall and recovery at the ontological level. Like the Gnostics he sees the reality which surrounds us as the effect of a sin committed in a cosmic order ontologically superior and earlier in time than that which we now experience, and he sees man as an essentially spiritual being (according to the Platonic definition of man as a soul using a body) whose actual bodily structure, characterized by a heavy materiality, is a sign and result of falling away from a higher condition. In distinction from the Gnostics, however, he declines to locate the fault within divine reality but attributes it to rational creatures (*logikoi, noes*) created perfectly equal and free by the one God, but on whom falls the responsibility, due to their natural freedom (free will), for that distancing of themselves from God

which occurred at some stage before the present life. The theory of pre-existence, therefore, is affirmed by Origen[1] not for epistemological reasons, as in Plato, but to counteract the Gnostic doctrine of different natures and hence different destinies. Origen offers no discussion of events within divine material; for him the process of restoration is not driven by the logic of an inevitable recomposition of the divine, as happens among the Gnostics who consider themselves of the same substance as God in their spiritual part. As regards redemption Origen reunites in the figure of the *Logos*-Son, via the doctrine of the *epinoiai*, the multiplicity of aeons of the Gnostic system. The protagonists of the process of fall and recovery are beings akin to God with regard to their intelligible nature, as we have seen above, but distinguished from him by the insuperable limits of their creaturely condition (*Princ.* 1.1.7; 3.1.13; 4.2.7). They freely distance themselves from God, through a sense of satiety, through the cooling of their love, and they freely choose to return to him. However, not all rational creatures have distanced themselves from God: certainly the creature which will become the soul of Christ has not done so. That soul, glued unfailingly to the *Logos* with blazing love (*Princ.* 2.6.3), assumes an essential role in the Incarnation, because Origen denies that the nature of God can be mingled with a body without some mediation. Hence, it is the soul of Christ which can act as an intermediary because on the one hand it is akin to God and on the other to a creature, and it is precisely the mediation of the soul which constitutes the basis for the *communicatio idiomatum*.[2] The soul of Christ is the perfect realization of the indissoluble love that binds all rational creatures to *Logos*. It is in fact the only soul still found in the original protological unity with the *Logos* of the universal Church of *logikoi* and it is the model for every soul and for the terrestrial Church. The theme of the erotic tie – Origen does not systematically distinguish between *erōs* and *agapē* – of the soul with the *Logos* is treated in the *Commentary on the Song of Songs*. This work is the peak of Origen's exegesis: herein he develops the themes of mystic nuptials, the wound of Love, the spiritual senses, that is the connection between the exterior and the interior senses of man: all to be found in the occidental mystique to come.

   Origen emphasizes that the origin of the present universe is due directly to the one creator God, who is just and good, while in the Gnostic systems it is attributed to a creator God distinct from the highest God, even if derived in varying ways from him. Justice and goodness are reunited in the one God who has created the universe of intelligible creatures and who creates the

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[1] *Contra* Edwards 2002: 89–93.
[2] A Latin technical term in Christology to indicate that in the person of Christ the qualities of the *Logos* can be atttributed to mankind.

present world as a means of restoration for them. In this universe the three different spaces (heaven, earth, hell) correspond to the three great categories (angels, human beings and demons) into which rational creatures are subdivided, having bodies adequate to their spiritual condition and hence to the different requisites for their restoration, which occurs according to modalities completely individualized for each of them (*Princ.* 2.1.2–3; 4.3.10). The sufferings of rational creatures in their condition after the fall, and also the hardening of their hearts and their deafness to spiritual pain – all indicating a greater distancing from God and therefore a greater interior negativity – are conceived as punishments whose purpose is ultimately the good of the sufferers (*Princ.* 2.10.6; 3.1.13). God, being just, punishes the different sins appropriately, but God's punishment, in as much as he is good, cannot be other than medicinal. So the punishments precede the end in time, and then comes the end and ultimate purpose of all things, in accordance with a schema exactly opposite to the traditionally retributive sequence which considers punishment and reward as the last act, accompanying the definitive differentiation of men into the two categories of the justified and the damned. To reconcile the free will of creatures, on which his cosmology is pivoted, with the omnipotence of God who wants the good of his creatures and therefore obtains it, Origen proposes the theory of successive worlds or aeons (*Princ.* 1.6.3; 2.3.1), adapted to the goal of harmonizing the providential final victory of the good with the freedom of rational creatures. Only a succession of events which reveals itself in a plurality of worlds makes plausible the fact that each creature experiences disgust at evil, in the ways and time scale appropriate to individual character, and freely makes a choice for the good to which God urges each creature (co-operation of grace and free will). Origen's position is diametrically opposed to Stoic cosmological determinism (*Contra Celsum* 4.12; 4.69; 5.20), that is to the idea of a cyclical movement of worlds all of which are identical and all of which end in conflagration (*ekpurosis*): for Origen the sacrifice of Christ is unique and unrepeatable, and every aeon is different from each other because the freedom of creatures determines on every occasion their differing initial and final states. He challenges Stoic material monism according to which every bodily substance is destroyed (*C. Celsum* 3.75; 6.71). For Origen, as for the Platonists, the body is the tool of the soul and is shaped by it: indeed, by virtue of Origen's concept of bodily matter as a shapeless substrate determined by individual qualities, the body expresses the spiritual condition of the creature, heavy and dense in its human condition, subtle and rarified in its angelic state. One is always dealing, however, with the same body, not with a different body. Origen decisively rejects (*Princ.* 1.8.4) the Orphic-Pythagorean and Platonic doctrine of metempsychosis, the more strongly since it also presupposes transmigration into animals and plants. So it is the same

intellectual creature, with its inseparable corporeality, in the succession of aeons which passes from one state to the next, in accordance with the experience it has gained during the preceding aeon.

Origen uses the axiom that the end is like the beginning in two ways, because it regulates both the initial and the final dissimilarity of his creatures at the beginning and at the end of each world/aeon (*Princ.* 2.1.1; 2.1.3) and their initial and final similarity: 'we maintain that the goodness of God through Christ will recall all creatures to a single end, after having conquered and subdued even his adversaries' (*Princ.* 1.6.1). The final purpose of all creatures is therefore the same, that is, the reintegration into the good (= *apokatastasis*) of every creature, including the devil: in other words, at the end there is universal salvation. *Apokatastasis*, a word translated by Rufinus as *restitutio omnium, perfecta universae creaturae restitutio*, will be one of the doctrines which will bring a series of condemnations on Origen. In fact it represents the kingpin of his thought, developed coherently in line with the Platonic identification of God as both being and goodness, and of evil as absence of being. But Origen separates himself from Platonism at a crucial point in as much as he denies to matter any concrete existence (*C. Celsum* 4.66), while for the Platonists evil is associated with matter which is precisely the formless and non-being. To admit therefore the final exclusion from the good even of one single creature would be equivalent for Origen to denying divine omnipotence and withdrawing evil from the sphere of the contingent. It remains unclear if the final state of creatures is conceived of as corporeal (obviously it would be a matter of a light, luminous and etherial body), or as incorporeal: at least once (*Princ.* 1.6.4) Origen leaves the question open, as is confirmed by Jerome (*Letter* 124.4).[3]

Origen's prospective on the universal salvation of creatures envisages a similar universal prospective on the redemption brought by Christ (*Comm. in Joh.* 2.83). The sacrifice of Christ is not only for mankind but 'for every being possessed of logos' (*Comm. in Joh.* 1.255). The ways in which this might happen are obscure. Sometimes Origen seems to refer to the capacity of the *Logos* to show himself physically in different ways to the various orders of creatures (*Comm. in Joh.* 10.37–8). Hence nothing prevents us thinking that the unique sacrifice of Christ (*Comm. in Joh.* 1.255) is perceived differently even in its physical aspects by different orders of creatures. If, as is probable, not all creatures have sinned in their earlier existence, then for some of them that sacrifice represents a final, inexpressible possibility of perfection.

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[3] In the *Commentary on John* Origen is inclined to an eventual incorporeal state. Here we recognize the influence of Platonism.

Origen died at the age of sixty-nine, perhaps in Tyre, probably not long after being subjected to torture during the Decian persecution. Some of the successes of his theological schema, such as the doctrine of three hypostases, were built into the revised version of Trinitarian theology developed by the Cappadocian Fathers and definitively adopted at the Council of Constantinople in 381. That same doctrinal formulation eliminated the subordinationism in accounts of the Trinity which Origen shared with earlier supporters of *Logos*-theology. The specific doctrines which brought down condemnations on Origen were preexistence and *apokatastasis*; in these theories both a denial of God's retributive justice and the danger of a final ontological assimilation of creatures to God could be seen.

PART III

PLOTINUS AND THE NEW PLATONISM

INTRODUCTION TO PART III

Plotinus is generally acknowledged to be, after Plato and Aristotle, the dominant figure in the entire history of ancient Greek philosophy. Beginning in the eighteenth century, German historians of philosophy gave Plotinus and his successors the pejorative label 'Neoplatonists'. With this label 'Neo' they explicitly intended to indicate a decline in the rational purity of Platonic thought. Plotinus, however, in no way regarded himself as an innovator. He consistently maintained that he was explicating and defending the philosophical view that we know as 'Platonism' and that he believed was found primarily, though not exclusively, in the dialogues of Plato. Typical of all Plato's disciples, Plotinus welcomed insight into the nature of Platonism from the testimony of Plato's immediate disciples – especially Aristotle – and from what we can only suppose was the continuous oral tradition beginning within the Old Academy and leading up to Plotinus himself. At least part of the appearance of innovation arises from Plotinus identifying as authentically part of Platonism what he took to be necessary implications of claims made explicitly in the dialogues. In addition, Plotinus as well as his successors, taking Aristotle to be an Academic – albeit at times a dissident one – were content to articulate Platonic claims in Aristotelian language. We shall find throughout this book that Aristotelian terminology and arguments are regularly used by self-declared disciples of Plato to express the Platonic world view.

Plotinus' writings evince a serious encounter with non-Greek religion, though it is unclear to what extent he was more than merely aware of the existence of the nascent Christian sect. By the end of the third century CE, however, when his disciple Porphyry was writing, it was understood that Christianity was becoming a formidable opponent to promoters of Hellenic wisdom. Porphyry, we know, was inspired to write a book attacking Christian pretensions. That the threat of Christianity to traditional religion was not merely theoretical we know from the persecutions of Christians under the Emperor Diocletian.

The battle, at least at the political level, was to be decided in favour of the Christians after the Emperor Constantine converted to Christianity in 312. In Porphyry's successor and perhaps pupil, Iamblichus, there is a clear emphasis on the religious dimension of Platonism. It is natural to surmise that at least to some extent this was a consequence of concerted efforts by Platonists to present Platonism as an alternative 'Gospel'. Making this all the more plausible is the fact that each of the Greek philosophical schools thought of themselves not primarily as constructing theories but as offering a superior way of life to anyone who would embrace its message. The ancient idea of philosophy as a way of life (*bios*) adds a particular urgent dimension to the disputes between the increasingly sophisticated proponents of Christianity and those who continued to embrace traditional Hellenic values.

PLOTINUS

DOMINIC J. O'MEARA

1 LIFE AND WRITINGS

Among the philosophers of late antiquity Plotinus stands out as a thinker of exceptional depth, subtlety, originality and power. His value was recognized already in his time by a leading critic in Athens, Longinus. Somewhat more than a century later, in the Latin West, Augustine praised Plotinus as a Plato revived and Eunapius testified to the veneration for Plotinus among Platonists in the Greek East.[1] Some decades later, in Athens, Proclus devoted a commentary to Plotinus' work, a treatment he normally reserved for the highest philosophical authorities, such as Plato.[2] But Plotinus was also something of an outsider. He taught in Rome, in a group that gathered around him, not in a school in one of the major cities for philosophical studies, Athens and Alexandria. He was criticized by Athenian professors. His group dispersed before his death and the strong school traditions which developed in Athens and Alexandria in the fifth and sixth centuries had other roots. Yet even if standing outside the educational institutions of late-antique philosophy, Plotinus' work provided this philosophy with fundamental ideas, in the absence of which, and despite various doctrinal differences, late-antique Platonism is hardly conceivable (see below, 2(e)). This impact was made possible in large part by the mediation of Plotinus' pupil Porphyry. Since it is through Porphyry that we have almost all of what we know of Plotinus' life and of what we have of his work, we might begin by considering the manner in which Porphyry conveyed to us the life and works of his teacher.

It is towards the beginning of the fourth century, some thirty years after Plotinus' death, that Porphyry published a biography of Plotinus (*On the Life of Plotinus and the Order of his Works*[3]), together with, and as a preface to, his edition of Plotinus' works (the *Enneads*), the edition which became authoritative and

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[1] Porphyry, *Life* 19–20; Aug. *Contr. Acad.* 3.18.41; Eunap.*Vit. soph.* 455.
[2] For surviving fragments of this commentary see Westerink 1959.   [3] Henceforth *Life*.

has come down to us. It has been suggested that with this publication Porphyry was reacting to a new challenge which had developed at the turn of the fourth century, the challenge to Plotinus' heritage represented by the successful school founded in Apamea in Syria by Porphyry's former pupil, now a determined critic both of himself and of Plotinus, Iamblichus.[4] If this is so, then the way in which Porphyry presented Plotinus' life and work was conditioned to some extent by the demands of his polemic with Iamblichus. We feel this perhaps in the portrait Porphyry gives us in the *Life* of Plotinus as an ideal sage, possessing every virtue, a paradigm of philosophical perfection, living the divine life which might be reached by those who read the Plotinian texts which follow the *Life*. Plotinus' divine-like nature is attested by various anecdotes (*Life* ch. 10) and by a lengthy oracle delivered (*post mortem*) by Apollo (ch. 22), testimonials as impressive as anything Iamblichus could come up with in his portrayal of *his* ideal sage, Pythagoras, in *On the Pythagorean Life*. It is perhaps in this light that we might read Porphyry's opening words in the *Life* that Plotinus 'seemed ashamed of being in the body', an attitude which hindered him from speaking about his origins, parents and native country, which made him refuse the making of a portrait or bust of him (a refusal curiously betrayed by his faithful pupil Amelius) and which eventually led to a neglect of his body such that sickness followed and death. In all this we might feel some hagiographical exaggeration on Porphyry's part: shame and gross neglect of the body, the instrument of the soul, are not what Plotinus advocates (see below, 2 (d), vi).

   It is thanks to another pupil of Plotinus, Eustochius, a doctor who attended Plotinus when, retired on a country estate outside Rome, he died in 270, that Porphyry knew that Plotinus was sixty-six years old at the time. Eustochius also told Porphyry of Plotinus' last words: 'Try to bring the divine in us to the divine in the All.'[5] If Porphyry says that Plotinus would not talk about his background, he can at least tell us that Plotinus began his study of philosophy in Alexandria at the age of twenty-eight, being disappointed until finding Ammonius, a teacher who made a deep and lasting impression, Porphyry suggests, on Plotinus, but about whom we know very little.[6] After studying eleven

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[4] Saffrey 1992.

[5] 2.26–7. The precise wording and interpretation of Plotinus' last words are controversial; cf. d'Ancona 2002.

[6] For a collection and critical assessment of ancient reports on Ammonius, see Schwyzer 1983. Longinus puts Ammonius in the group of philosophers who contented themselves with oral, rather than written, transmission of their doctrines (Porphyry, *Life* 20.25–36). Much of what is reported about Ammonius (for example in Hierocles and Nemesius) seems to be Porphyrian in origin and sometimes reflects Porphyry's own views. However, Porphyry did not know Ammonius. It is thus very difficult to be sure about what really were Ammonius' views, even if it seems clear that Plotinus' philosophy, in some doctrinal aspects and in its general philosophical approach, must owe much to Ammonius (*Life* 3.33–5; 14.15–16). It seems that Ammonius attempted to unify the philosophy of Aristotle with that of Plato.

years with Ammonius, in 243 Plotinus joined the young Emperor Gordian III's military expedition against Persia, in search, Porphyry says (3.16–17), of Persian and Indian philosophy (we would expect nothing less from an ideal sage comparable to Pythagoras and Plato). The expedition was a failure, the emperor killed, but Plotinus managed to escape to Antioch and then settled in Rome in 244.

An unofficial philosophical school developed around Plotinus in Rome, including close pupils and collaborators such as Amelius (from 246 to 269) and Porphyry (from 263 to 268), a group of devoted and regular members of the school such as Eustochius, and, since the school was open, more casual visitors. The devoted and regular members included senators, doctors, men of literature and women, in particular Gemina (perhaps the widow of the emperor Trebonian) and her daughter who were Plotinus' hosts. Porphyry tells us that texts from Platonist and Aristotelian commentators of the second century were read in the lectures of the school (including Numenius, Atticus, Aspasius, Alexander of Aphrodisias) and that sometimes philosophical questions, such as that of the relation between soul and body, could be discussed for days. This suggests that the activities of the school may have resembled those, for example, of Epictetus' school, which combined the study of authoritative texts (in Epictetus' case, those of Chrysippus, in Plotinus' case, those of Plato) with discussion of various philosophical problems. The reading of Platonist and Aristotelian commentators may have been done in connection with the interpretation of passages in Plato and in Aristotle. Plotinus' teaching style, to the irritation of some (3.37–8), was very open and undogmatic, very different from the highly structured programme followed later in the schools of Athens and Alexandria. Plotinus was also assisted by Amelius and Porphyry in dealing with the criticisms of him coming from Greece and with the more subversive threat to some members of the school represented by Gnosticism (chs. 16–17).

These activities did not distract Plotinus, in Porphyry's portrayal of him, from his concentration on a transcendent life. Always 'there', living the life of *theōria*, knowledge (8.6 and 19–24), Plotinus was also 'here' (in the realm of *praxis*, action), acting as a respected arbiter and as a guardian attentive to the education and material interests of orphans left in his care (9.5 ff.). This domestic activity might have extended itself, had he been able to realize a project he proposed to the Emperor Galienus (both Galienus and his wife held Plotinus in honour) to develop an abandoned city in Campania into a city to be called Platonopolis and to be governed by 'Plato's laws' (12.1–8). Scholars disagree as to what Platonopolis would have been like, but the reference to Plato's laws should not be ignored. At any rate the project was not realized. Most important, however, was Plotinus' activity as a teacher and the attention to others which this teaching implied.

This attention extended to writing texts for the members of the school, an activity for which Plotinus was not particularly well disposed: he had poor eyesight, jumbled words and took no interest in literary form (8.1 ff.). At first, in Rome, Plotinus wrote nothing. Porphyry associates this in his narrative (3.24 ff.) with a mysterious pact made, he says, by Ammonius' students, Plotinus, Erennius and Origen, not to divulge Ammonius' teaching (echoes again of Pythagoras!). However, the pact was broken and in 254 Plotinus began composing treatises (at first relatively brief) in connection with his school lectures. When Porphyry arrived in Rome in 263, twenty-one treatises had been written. Porphyry suggests that their circulation was restricted (4.13–14), to the extent that at first he was not given access to them (18.20). He credits himself with stimulating Plotinus to write more, and indeed the treatises which Plotinus then composed gained considerably in extension, depth and freedom of expression. When Porphyry left Rome for Sicily in 268 on Plotinus' advice (Porphyry was contemplating suicide), he received there two batches of treatises written before Plotinus died.

In describing these circumstances, Porphyry provides (chs. 4–6) a chronological listing of the treatises which seems generally correct: total precision is scarcely possible here. The study of the treatises in this chronological order has not revealed convincing evidence of major doctrinal development or change in Plotinus' thought. The treatises reflect the work in Plotinus' school. They sometimes concern questions or problems which are standard in Platonist schools of the period (see for example 5.9 [5].10ff.; 1.8 [51].1), or issues raised by contemporary concerns (the threat represented by Gnosticism, for example; see 2.9 [33]), or relate more to the interpretation of passages in Plato (for example 3.9 [13].1), these matters being connected in that the solution of a problem may be confirmed by a passage in Plato, or the correct reading of a passage in Plato amounts to the solution of a philosophical problem. Although the treatises are not written as dialogues, they frequently develop as a dialogue of views, one view opposing or answering another (perhaps sometimes echoing discussions in Plotinus' circle) in an evolving treatment of the theme. This can become quite complex and the direction Plotinus wishes to take and his position may not be clear in an aporetic exploration reminiscent of parts of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*.[7] Or the discussion can be quite scholastic, polemical and dialectical in dealing with other philosophical schools (for example, the Stoics).[8] Or the mood can

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[7] One of Plotinus' favourite expressions, *ē* (which might be translated as: 'Or is it not rather the case that . . .'), indicates a new view to be explored, not necessarily his own definitive position (for example, 6.9.1.20; 1.5.5.3; 1.8.4.14).

[8] It is thus quite hazardous to abstract Plotinus' 'doctrine' from passages taken in isolation from the aporetic or dialectical progression of thought to which they belong.

become protreptic, exhorting us on the way to the Good in passages of great poetry. In short, the treatises reflect Plotinus' view of the function and aim of philosophy (below, 2(d), v).

Plotinus' lectures and texts were preserved in other versions before Porphyry prepared to bring out his edition. Amelius had 100 volumes of notes (*scholai*) of Plotinus' lectures which he brought to Apamea when he left Rome in 269. Eustochius seems to have published the treatises in some fashion. But Porphyry claims that he had been designated by Plotinus as editor of the treatises (8.51; 24.2–3). This claim is backed up by Porphyry's account of his arrival in Plotinus' school in Rome, his conversion to Plotinus' ideas and his important role in the school: Plotinus' biography becomes in some places Porphyry's autobiography; through Plotinus Porphyry asserts himself as Plotinus' representative. In introducing his edition of the treatises, Porphyry refers to Andronicus of Rhodes' edition of Aristotle and Theophrastus as one of his models (24.6 ff.), an edition which had involved an ordering of Aristotle's texts in terms of a division of the sciences, as well as a work on the life of Aristotle and the order of his works. So too does Porphyry write the *Life* and arrange Plotinus' treatise in terms of the sciences, ethics (*Enn.* 1), physics (*Enn.* 2–3), and metaphysics[9] (*Enn.* 4–6), so that they come to constitute a curriculum leading the mind of the reader though successive levels to the highest Good. Porphyry furthermore broke up some of Plotinus' treatises so as to reach the number 54, i.e. 6 × 9, the numbers for perfection and totality. The resulting texts were then arranged in six sets (1–6) of nine treatises each, i.e. six 'nines' ('enneads'). Here again, Iamblichus may be in the background, since he published a Pythagorean curriculum (of which *On the Pythagorean Life* is the first part) in ten books, arranged according to the sciences. Porphyry's edition was published in three volumes (*codices*), as it still is in Henry and Schwyzer's critical edition: vol. I (*Enn.* 1–3), vol. II (*Enn.* 4–5), vol. III (*Enn.* 6).

Porphyry's division and reordering of the treatises has the disadvantage of artificially forcing them into a curricular structure. It also dismembered some treatises, the parts of which, however, usually follow each other in the edition (e.g., *Enn.* 6.4, 6.5), but which, in one case (*Enn.* 3.8, 5.8, 5.5, 2.9), find themselves dispersed in different parts of the edition. However, since Porphyry's edition imposed itself in late antiquity and remains our edition, we conventionally refer to the treatises by their place in the *Enneads* (e.g., *Enn.* 3.8), sometimes adding in brackets the number in the chronological list Porphyry supplies (e.g., *Enn.* 3.8 [30]) or even just giving the chronological number (treatise 30). Despite

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[9] I.e. 'theology', as concerning divine beings, Soul (*Enn.* 4), Intellect (5) and the One (6); on the range of the divine as going from the One down to Soul, see 5.1.7.49.

the violence done to the treatises, Porphyry does not seem to have tampered with the actual text of the treatises – he was sensitive to the particularity of Plotinus' writing, adding perhaps in some places brief glosses (but this is uncertain) and supplying the treatises with titles which were already current in the school or which he composed. The division of the treatises into chapters was made much later, by Marsilio Ficino when he published the first complete translation (into Latin) of Plotinus in Florence in 1492.

2 THOUGHT

It is not possible, in one brief chapter, to do justice to the breadth and depth of Plotinus' philosophy. What might be attempted is to sketch something like a subway plan which provides orientation and indicates major stations from which the reader might emerge (hopefully!) for further explorations in the light of Plotinus' own works. In attempting this sketch, I wish to suggest the movement of thought whereby Plotinus came upon and explored some of the ideas characteristic of his philosophy. A number of these ideas are present already in the first group of treatises that Plotinus wrote, before Porphyry's arrival in the school: I will refer first to these treatises, before passing to the more extensive discussions to be found in treatises composed later.[10]

(a) First principles

Plotinus regarded himself as simply taking up and explaining knowledge which had already been attained by some of his predecessors, in particular by Plato (5.1 [10]* 8–9). Plato, however, is not always clear in what he says (4.8 [6]* 1.26ff.), and Plotinus took account of the variety of interpretations of Plato developed before him. In an approach ultimately inspired by Aristotle's description in *Metaphysics* 1 of the extent to which his own predecessors had anticipated his theory of first principles (*archai*) or causes (*aitia*), Platonists of the second century sought to identify Plato's first principles, basing this on their interpretation of the making of the world as recounted in Plato's *Timaeus*. A fairly standard approach may be found in Alcinous' school-book (*Didaskalikos*, chs. 8–10), where three first principles are listed: God, the transcendent Forms and Matter.

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[10] Plotinus' treatises will be cited according to their enneadic numbering (e.g., 5.1), to which will be added, on first mention, their chronological numbering in brackets (e.g., 5.1 [10]) and an asterisk (e.g., 5.1 [10]*) for those treatises for which at present a detailed commentary is available (see Bibliography). It is best to read Plotinus' treatises as wholes, a task made easier today by the availability of commentaries on individual treatises, of which a list is given in the Bibliography below.

What this involves, as a reading of the *Timaeus*, is that the world is constituted (eternally) from *matter* formed by a World Soul following the model provided by a transcendent *god*, an Intellect whose thoughts are the transcendent *Forms*. However, in 5.1, Plotinus identifies as first principles, which he takes to be those of Plato: Soul, Intellect and the One.[11] This list, we note, does not include matter. Furthermore, Plotinus' principles do not function as co-ordinate constituents of the world, as they do in Alcinous, but the world eternally derives from Soul, which derives from Intellect, which derives from the One. We may consequently wonder how Plotinus reached his particular list of first principles and how it represents what he must regard as a correct interpretation of the cosmology of Plato's *Timaeus*.

(1) SOUL   Beginning with the lowest of first principles, Soul,[12] Plotinus describes it in 5.1.2 as that which gives life, structure, unity and value to the world, to body. Without it, body would be dead, or rather just darkness, the darkness of matter (2.26). Plotinus evokes here Plato's description in the *Timaeus* (30b, 34b) of the world as a living organism, animated and ordered by a World Soul, a description taken up also in the Stoic theory of the cosmos as structured and driven by an immanent divine life-force. Plotinus notes that this conception of soul also concerns *our* soul, we who think about the world (2.49–51), and he affirms that Soul, as cosmic principle or cause, is not a body: it acts as one and entire throughout the world and is not spatially divided and fragmented as are bodies (2.28–40).

   This last point had been argued a little before, in 4.7 [2]*, where Plotinus discusses the question of the immortality of the soul, a theme this time evoking Plato's *Phaedo*. Plotinus notes that to answer the question of immortality we need to know what is the nature of soul and he then argues (against materialist views such as those of the Stoics and Epicureans) that soul is not a body, and (against Aristotle) that soul, as incorporeal, does not depend for its existence on body. The arguments are often fairly traditional, coming from the *Phaedo* and from Platonist and Aristotelian criticisms of Stoicism. But they help bring out the distinction Plotinus wishes to make between body and soul, a distinction which implies not only that soul is not body, but that body depends on soul for whatever unity, structure and life it might have. For Plotinus, body is composite, having

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[11] Modern studies sometimes refer to Soul, Intellect and the One, in Plotinus, as 'hypostases'. However, Plotinus uses the term *hupostasis* to refer, not to the One, but to the realities it produces, and a better term for all three would be 'principles', as suggested by Gerson 1994: 3.

[12] For convenience of reference I capitalize soul (and intellect), when referring to the nature of this first principle as a whole, a nature which includes a gradation of different souls (World Soul, individual souls), just as Intellect contains a gradation of different intellects.

mass and occupying space. As composite, it is subject to constant change and, as quantitative and spatial, each part of it occupies a particular space such that it is divided by space from other parts. But if body is composite, what composes it? What organizes it into a functional unity? Neither itself (as what is composed), Plotinus claims, nor its constituent parts (also composed, ultimately of the elements, themselves composed of matter and form) can act as the organizing power (4.7.2). Furthermore, if soul is understood (as it is in Plato's *Phaedo* and in Aristotle's *De anima*) as the cause responsible for living functions such as growth, sense-perception and thought, its power of recognition, for example, suggests an identity over time which body, in its constant changing, does not possess (4.7.5.20–4). Furthermore, soul's power as *one* subject perceiving a multiplicity of quantitatively and spatially separated objects is not that of which body (alone) is capable (4.7.6). Plotinus is pointing to the idea he develops elsewhere (4.9 [8]; 6.4–5 [22–3]*) that the concepts of one/many, whole/part, as they apply to bodies, work quite differently in regard to soul: soul is not one or many, a whole or parts, in the way body is. Since it is not quantitatively and spatially determined like body, soul can be both one and many, both a whole and parts in a way impossible for body.

(II) INTELLECT   The distinction between soul and body becomes, in 4.7.9–10, a more general distinction between corporeal reality and the transcendent intelligible being of which Plato speaks, not only in the *Timaeus* (27d), but also in the *Phaedrus* (247cd). In 4.2 [4]*, prolonging the discussion in 4.7, Plotinus procedes to refine this two-level structure by subdividing it into four, on the basis again of the *Timaeus* (35a): Soul is divisible in its capacity to be present in quantitatively and spatially divided bodies, whereas Intellect (*nous*) remains entirely indivisible; yet while being divisible as present in bodies, Soul remains one in its substance, thus undivided, whereas forms in matter are divided over bodies and lose this unity, but not to the point of becoming completely divisible as are bodies.

If we return to 5.1.3–4, the distinction between Soul and Intellect is described in terms of the knowledge possessed by Soul (which manifests itself in the ordering of the world), but which it receives from Intellect. Like earlier interpreters, for example Alcinous, Plotinus identifies the god who makes the world in the *Timaeus* as a transcendent Intellect whose thoughts are the Forms which are the models inspiring Soul's cosmic ordering. Other interpreters, for example Porphyry before he was persuaded to think otherwise (*Life* 18.8–19), had distinguished between the divine Intellect and the Forms, either in the sense that the Forms were exterior to and independent of Intellect, or in the sense that they were thought up by Intellect. However, to secure the truth of Intellect's

knowledge of the Forms (see below (c), ii) and the independent reality of the Forms, Plotinus felt it necessary to maintain the internality of the Forms in Intellect, indeed the identity of the Forms and Intellect. Intellect neither discovers the Forms (with the risks of error this implies), nor invents them (with the dependence this means for the Forms), but it is identical to them. This identity (here also Plotinus is anticipated by Alcinous in his thesis, if not in his explanation of the thesis) is that of Aristotle's divine Intellect, whose activity of thinking is identical with its object of thought (*Metaphysics* 12.7 and 9). Plotinus' Intellect is thus an indivisible unity of the activity of thinking and its object of thought, in act and not in potentiality, whereas Soul *acquires* the knowledge with which it orders the world from Intellect. Yet the unity of Intellect is also a multiplicity, that of the Forms which find their reflection in the determinate structures of the world. Each Form is both thought and thinking, an intellect, and all are Intellect: the unity-multiplicity of Soul, a unity of which spatially divided bodies are incapable, is even more intensive in Intellect, where the greatest degree of unity of any multiplicity whatever is reached in the identity of thinking and its object (5.1.4.26–33; 5.9 [5]*, 7–9).

(III) THE ONE   However intense its unity, Intellect remains a united multiplicity. The unity given by the identity of the activity of thinking and its object also involves multiplicity in the duality (constitutive of its unity) of thinking subject and object thought. Plotinus argues from this that Intellect cannot, as Aristotle, Aristotelians, and Platonists such as Alcinous and Numenius believed, be considered as an absolutely *first* principle (5.1.5; already argued in 5.4 [7], 2; see 5.6 [24]): in being constituted as Intellect, in being constituted as a unity/multiplicity, it *presupposes* such a principle, which, as absolutely first, cannot be in any degree multiple, but must be absolutely non-multiple, i.e., 'one'. The 'One' is thus the principle presupposed by the constitution of Intellect as a unity of thinking and its object of thought, the Forms. Since the 'One' is such, it is neither Intellect nor Form. And since it is the principle of the highest degree of composite unity, it is the very first principle.

Plotinus thinks in 5.1.8 that this first principle is that to which Plato refers in the *Second Letter* (312e) and in the *Parmenides* (137c ff.). He identifies it furthermore with the Form of the Good, which Plato says is 'beyond Being' (*Republic* 509b), since Plato identifies the Forms as true primary being. Plato's Form of the Good gives existence in some way to the (other) Forms, but we note that Plotinus' One, as that which makes it possible for Forms to be constituted, is not itself a Form. The One, as the principle which constitutes all else (Intellect, Soul, the world), can be described as the Good, as that on which all else depends, which is self-sufficient in itself, dependent on nothing else, in

no need, yet giving existence, unity, form and value to all else (1.8 [51]*, 2.1–7; see below (c), iv).

   This brief sketch of Plotinus' theory of first principles raises many questions, some of which will be considered below. One of these questions concerns the sense and way in which Intellect is constituted from the One, Soul from Intellect, and the world from Soul. We might wonder also in what way this theory can claim to be an interpretation of the cosmology of the *Timaeus*, from which it seems very distant, and what becomes of another of the first principles in the lists provided by second-century Platonists, namely matter.

(b) The constitution of reality

In 5.1.6.3–6, Plotinus refers to what he takes to be a traditional and much debated question: how does the multiplicity of things come from the One? In a sense the first Greek philosophers, at least as Aristotle describes them in *Metaphysics* 1, derived the world in all its parts, through various stages, from an original material (water, air, fire). However, in later accounts, in Plato himself, it seems, as well as in Aristotle and in other philosophers, the world is constituted through the combination of various causes. In Plotinus, the question becomes particularly radical and difficult, since he holds that everything, by stages, derives from one single cause. The attempt to answer this question is made all the more difficult in that, as will be seen below, the One is not something which can be known or described: how then can we explain its production of everything? Since we do know and can describe productive processes at a lower, derived level, perhaps these processes might provide an appropriate approach to our question. Thus Plotinus refers to the dynamic productivity of nature – the sun producing light, fire producing heat – to suggest the implausibility of thinking that the power of the One, a power producing everything, could be non-productive. On the contrary, in nature, the more powerful and perfect (i.e., mature) something is, the more productive it is (6.27–39; see 5.4.1–2). The examples of light and heat indeed illustrate what Plotinus takes to be a more general process, which he applies to the question of the productivity of the One, the process whereby a primary activity, for example the activity that is fire, is followed or accompanied by a secondary activity, for example the heat produced by fire.[13] Plotinus uses this theory of double activity to help with the

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[13] Plotinus also uses the example of water flowing from a source, 'emanating'. 'Emanation' is a term often used by modern scholars to describe in general the constitution of things from the One in Plotinus. However, strictly speaking this is incorrect, since 'flowing' is just one of the natural processes which can serve to exemplify a more general constitutive process. We might prefer to use the term 'derivation' which, in English, may sound less aqueous and be less misleading.

question of how everything, and in the first place Intellect, is produced from the One.

The question as to the sources of Plotinus' theory of double activity has been much discussed by scholars, who have traced it back to Stoicism, to Aristotle and to Plato. Certainly Plotinus uses Aristotelian terminology, in particular that of activity (*energeia*). And the causal process whereby Aristotle's divine Intellect inspires, as an object of love and thought (*Metaphysics* 12.7), imitation in the movements of the celestial spheres, provides Plotinus with a model of causality whereby a transcendent immaterial activity can, without being thereby affected, elicit the constitution of lower activities which are imitations of it, a causal relation which fits well with that required by the way in which Plato's Forms function as paradigms for the many evanescent imitations or images of them in the sensible world. Plato's view that what is good is unstinting in giving of its goodness (*Timaeus* 29e) and that soul becomes fecund in participating in the Forms (*Symposium* 209a) would also support the idea that what is perfect is productive.

Expressed as a general theory of causality explaining how one thing is constituted by another, Plotinus' theory of double activity takes it that an activity which is complete in itself, for example fire as an activity, naturally produces, without changing in its activity or being affected by this, a secondary activity which accompanies it, for example the heat produced by fire, which depends on it (remove the fire, and the heat it produces disappears), and which is a sort of image of it. The secondary activity, once constituted, can, in its turn, function as a primary activity in relation to a further activity secondary to it.

(I) THE CONSTITUTION OF INTELLECT Applying this theory of double activity to the question of the constitution by the One of Intellect, we can try to think of the One as if it were a primary activity from which derives, without any change in its activity, a secondary activity which depends on it and is an image of it, Intellect. Intellect is constituted to be an image of the One in the way in which *thinking* can be an image of something, by thinking it. So there needs to be a potentiality to think, as such indeterminate, actualized or made determinate by its object of thinking, the One, thus becoming an image of the One. However, as we have seen, the One is beyond all form, all determination, all thought, thus not an object that can be the determinate act that actualizes the potentiality to think. Thus in desiring to think the One (for Plotinus, thinking is a form of desire to reach that which one does not have: 5.6.5.8–10), the initially indeterminate potentiality to think the One thinks it, not as it is, but *as it is thinkable*, i.e., as expressed as a determinate multiplicity. This determinate multiplicity, as what actualizes the potentiality to think, is identical with the

thinking: thinking and what is thought are one. Intellect is thus constituted as the attempt to think the One which becomes the self-thought that is Intellect. The unlimited, undetermined power of the One finds determinate thinkable expression in Intellect's thinking of itself.[14]

Plotinus' account of the constitution of Intellect involves many difficulties, both exegetical and philosophical. Without going into these here, we might at least remind ourselves that what is at stake is our attempt to understand matters which transcend the domain of discursive reasoning (below (c), iii). It should also be stressed that the process of constitution at issue, despite what might be suggested by the account we attempt to give, is not a sequence of events taking place in time and space (see 5.1.6.19–22). Time and space are constituted *after* the constitution of Intellect and Soul: they are posterior in the causal order. Intellect constitutes itself and is completely constituted from the One, atemporally and non-spatially. Finally, we note that Plotinus believes (5.4.2.8–9) that his account covers the two first principles that Aristotle attributes to Plato (*Metaphysics* 1.6), the One and the 'indefinite Dyad' which Plotinus takes to be the indeterminate potential thinking actualized in Intellect.

Intellect is united determinate multiplicity comprising a structure of primary, general Forms (identified by Plotinus with the 'major kinds' of Plato's *Sophist* 254d–255a, i.e., Being, Sameness, Difference, Rest, Motion, 6.2 [43]*), to which are subordinated more specific Forms, whose gradation does not weaken the systematic unity whereby all Forms are linked together and involve each other, in the way, Plotinus suggests, that a body of science involves a network of interconnected truths (5.9.8; 10.11–15). However, in contrast to human science, where the grasp of a theorem may involve potentially, but not actually, the grasp of other theorems and of the whole of the science to which it is linked, on the level of Intellect, all Forms will actually link with each other and with the whole as a unity. How far does the range of Forms extend? This question, a traditional question raised already in Plato's *Parmenides* and made into an acute problem in Aristotle's critique of Plato's theory of Forms, is discussed by Plotinus in 5.9 [5] 10–14, where he briefly considers whether there are, for example, Forms of artefacts, of base things, of individuals. Plotinus returns to the question concerning Forms of individuals in 5.7 [18], where he refers, not only to human individuals, but also to other animals (3.19). Plotinus' position on the question of Forms of individuals is much debated by scholars. It seems to be his view that, in general, that which, in the sensible world, is not due to matter (see below, iii), deficiencies of various kinds, and which corresponds to form, to a determination of some kind, is caused by formal principles,

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[14] See 5.1.7; 5.2.1; 3.8 [30].8–11; 6.7 [38]*.15–16; 5.3 [49]*.10–11.

logoi, transmitted by Soul from intelligible reality (see 5.9.10.1–2; 6.7.11.3–4; below, iv).

(II) THE CONSTITUTION OF SOUL   Intellect, as activity, produces in turn a secondary activity, Soul, which Plotinus sees as constituted in a way comparable to the constitution of Intellect (5.1.7.36–49; 5.2 [11].1.14–18). Soul is therefore an expression of Intellect, an image of it. Soul, like Intellect, is a united multiplicity, one soul and many souls ordered in a gradation, but linked to each other and linked to what constitutes them, Intellect (5.1.10–11). Soul, as image of Intellect, distinguishes itself, in Plotinus' account, by its tendency to project itself, to express itself and direct things (4.8.3.25–30; 5.2.1.22–8; 3.4 [15].1.1–3; 3.8 [30].5), a tendency giving rise to the production of the world and the presence of soul in the world. Two aspects might be distinguished in the production of the world by Soul: its production of matter, and the constitution by Soul of the world in matter.

(III) MATTER   There has been some controversy as to whether Plotinus holds that Soul actually produces matter (*hulē*), or thinks that matter exists independently of Soul and is not produced by Soul (as is the case, for example, in Alcinous). However there is good evidence that Plotinus holds that Soul produces matter (1.8.7). Matter is not a first principle, for Plotinus, but the very last product in the causal chain constituting reality. Plotinus describes it as absolute indetermination, incapacity to receive and retain any form (3.6 [26]*.7–19; 2.4 [12]*.6–16; 2.5 [25]*.4–5). It is thus neither Aristotelian matter (which is actualized by form) nor, one could argue, is it the 'receptacle' of Plato's *Timaeus* (which precontains what will be ordered). Its immunity to any form means the impossibility of any actualization of it, or activity. As such, then, it is non-productive, the sterile end to the causal chain. It acts as a counterfoil to form, weakening, hindering, rendering evanescent the product of Soul, the result of which is the world. As absolute 'poverty' of form, Plotinus describes it as absolute evil, since it has nothing of the Good (the One) as manifested in the activities that are Intellect and Soul (1.8.2–3). As the total absence of any good, matter is that in terms of which physical 'evils' arise (e.g., deficiencies such as sickness, 4.19–26) and in relation to which moral evil originates (below, (d), iv). Plotinus' conception of matter as absolute evil was criticized and rejected by his Platonist successors, in particular by Proclus in his *De malorum subsistentia*.

(IV) THE CONSTITUTION OF THE WORLD   Soul's tendency to project and express itself means that it seeks to fill the negativity of matter with form. It does this by

projecting itself as a descending gradation of souls (5.2.2), the lowest level of this being Nature, which brings formal principles (*logoi*) to expression in (or rather on) matter (3.8.4–5). In describing how Soul produces the world, Plotinus is careful to insist that this is not done by a process of fabrication similar to human fabrication. Plato's image, in the cosmological account of the *Timaeus*, of god as an artisan, or craftsman ('demiurge'), of the world, modelling it after the pattern of the Forms (28c–30a), had been ridiculed by his critics: could the world really be the product of a laborious, toiling, calculating god? This literal reading of the *Timaeus* took a sinister turn in the version of it found in a religious movement of Plotinus' time, Gnosticism, which saw this world as the botched product of an evil and ignorant god, a world from which we, as humans, must escape to return to another higher world and a god of goodness. Against Plato's critics and against what he thought of as Gnostic perversion of Plato's ideas, Plotinus insisted that Soul does not need to labour or calculate in producing the world. The world is rather that which effortlessly accompanies the knowledge possessed by Soul. We can sense here, at work again, the principle of double activity. In the first part of his work directed against Gnosticism (3.8), Plotinus explains this in terms of the thesis that action (*praxis*) and making *(poiēsis)* are what either accompanies or substitutes for knowledge (*theōria*). In the human sphere, Plotinus argues (3.8.4), our actions and productions externalize and express our knowledge or are ways in which we seek a knowledge that is lacking (4.31–43). Similarly, in nature in general, all action and production accompany (as a secondary activity, we can add) the knowing activity which is Soul, as the diagrams drawn by the geometer accompany his geometrical knowledge (4.4–10). The world is the expression of knowledge, not of error or ignorance, and is therefore the expression of the Good (3.8.2–3).

What this involves is that Soul, at its lowest level of self-projection, Nature, provides a basic formal structuring in matter on which supervene in bodies, as contributing to the ordering of things, individual souls (4.3 [27]*.6.10–17), the whole being linked and directed by World Soul in an order that can be described as 'providence', a providence expressing through World Soul the knowledge or order of Intellect (3.2–3 [47–8]). Bodies, at the lowest level, are heapings (*sumphorōsis*) of qualities in matter (6.3 [44]*.8.20; 15, 24ff.; 2.7 [37].3) expressive of the formal principles (*logoi*) mediated by Soul inspired by the Forms in Intellect.[15] The order given the world by soul is not only spatial, it is also temporal: time is conceived by Plotinus as successivity in the life of soul, which images the non-temporal, eternal order of Intellect (3.7 [45]*.11).

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[15] In 6.1 [42]*, Plotinus provides an extensive critique of the Aristotelian and Stoic categories as applying to the sensible world.

(c) Knowledge

Knowledge, as can be seen from the above, is not something which merely concerns humans: it characterizes all of reality, ranging in the causal order from a sort of 'pre-thinking' in the One,[16] through Intellect, as the highest knowledge of the One, and Soul, as knowledge of Intellect/Forms, down to forms in matter, the last expressions of soul's knowledge. There are therefore different stages of knowledge linked together in a descending series such that lower levels of knowledge depend on and are images of higher ones. We, as humans, are integrated in this series, on the one hand, as souls in bodies which connect us through sense-perception to the order given to the world and its contents by Soul, and, on the other hand, as individual souls which are connected as images to individual Forms/intellects in Intellect. The latter connection means that, as souls, we remain permanently linked to Intellect; a part of us (a claim much contested by Plotinus' successors) stays 'there', in Intellect (4.8.8), a part to which we always have access, even if, in our conscious lives, we are often unaware of this, being distracted by the cares of material existence.

Before considering this in more detail, a further general point should be stressed. Plotinus accepts, as regards knowledge, a principle widely followed in Greek philosophy which goes back as far as Empedocles and which Aristotle attributes to Plato (*De anima* 1.2, 404b13–18) and himself accepts with the appropriate distinctions, the principle that like is known by like, i.e., that a subject attains knowledge of an object by becoming 'like' it in some way (6.9 [9]*.11.32), the most radical example of which, representing the strongest form of knowledge, being the identity of subject and object in Intellect.

(1) PERCEPTION   If we start from sense-perception, in Plotinus' view we do not know perceptible things *passively*, i.e., as being subjected to imprints (*tupoi*) physically caused in us by exterior objects and representing, as images, these objects (4.6 [41]). Rather, the soul is active: it comes into contact, through sense organs, with the forms in things and the souls or World Soul that mediate forms. Thus, for example, in the experience of physical beauty, we, as souls, are moved by the sight of beautiful things in that we recognize form in them: form, for Plotinus, is what makes perceptible things beautiful (1.6 [1]*.2–3). We recognize things as beautiful, we judge them to be beautiful because we already know Forms, as souls linked to the Forms in Intellect. Souls rediscover themselves and the Forms in Intellect through the perception of beauty. Since

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[16] On this see 5.4.2; 6.9.6.52; 6.7.37; 6.8.16.32.

matter compromises the beauty that is form (5.8 [31].1), form known free from matter, in its original state as Form in Intellect, is pure and primary beauty, the beauty of intelligible reality explored by Plotinus, in the second part of his anti-Gnostic treatise, 5.8 [31], as being the source of the beauty of the world. But to reach knowledge of intelligible beauty, soul must become like this beauty: it, too, must be purified of the corruption of materiality so as to know intelligible beauty as it is (1.6.5). The beauty of soul is moral and intellectual, as it is in Plato's *Symposium* (210bd).

(II) INTELLECT   In the third part of his anti-Gnostic treatise (5.5 [32]), Plotinus wishes to show how Intellect, as source of the world, is not subject to error or unreliable, as alleged by Gnostic descriptions of the Demiurge of the world, but possesses knowledge in a way excluding any possibility of error or imperfection (1.1–6). To introduce this view of Intellect as total and perfect knowledge, Plotinus evokes arguments which can already be found in ancient Scepticism's attacks on dogmatic philosophy. These arguments distinguish between external objects, as they are, and the way we are affected by them, the images we have of them in knowing them.[17] Following this distinction, it seems that we know things, not as they are, but as they affect us, as they appear to us, as the images which we have of them. Consequently, we do not know things as they are, contrary to the claims of dogmatists. Plotinus evokes these sceptical arguments (although, as seen above, he himself does not hold that we know merely images of things), in order to show that true knowledge of something must dispense with intermediaries, affections (*pathē*) and images, coming between the subject which knows and the object known. Rather than being external to the knowing subject, the object known must be internal to it. The internality of the object means that the subject's knowledge of it is immune to sceptical arguments. Intellect is the strongest, purest level of knowledge, total knowledge, in that it is an identity of thinking subject and object thought (5.5.1–2). Sceptical arguments reappear later, in treatise 5.3 [49]*, where they serve to put into question the possibility of self-knowledge.[18] Here again, Plotinus takes advantage of these arguments in order to show that self-knowledge is only possible if the knower and the known are identical, if the self known is not other than the self knowing. Total and perfect knowledge, as exemplified by Intellect, is thus self-knowledge (5.3.5). All forms of knowledge must depend, to the extent that they are knowledge, on the primary and most intense form of knowledge, Intellect's knowledge of itself.

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[17] 5.5.1.12–19; see Sextus Empiricus, *PH* 1.19–20 and 94; 2.51.72.
[18] 5.3.1.1–12; 5, 1–48. See Sextus Empiricus, *M.* 7.310–12.

(III) DISCURSIVE AND NON-DISCURSIVE THOUGHT   It is clear from Plotinus' account of the perfect thought characterizing Intellect that it is quite different from the thinking which we exercise as humans who live in the world and think about it. Indeed Plotinus can be understood as elaborating his description of Intellect's thought by taking human thought and removing from it whatever causes it to be deficient, to be lacking in knowledge or to be mistaken (5.8.4–8; 5.3.2–9; 1.8.2.9–11). What makes human thinking deficient is the externality of the objects of thought, the recourse to images or impressions and the dependence on discursivity, i.e., reasonings, inferential sequences which may introduce error.[19] To ensure the absolute truth of Intellect's knowledge, the externality of its objects and discursivity must be removed in our description of it. However, if Intellect's thought is non-discursive in the sense of not depending on fragile conclusions inferred from premises concerning external objects, it nevertheless constitutes a system of truths in the sense that Intellect is a unified gradation of Forms/intellects interconnected in such a way that each truth in the whole entails every other truth in the whole, a discursive image of which is the systematic structure of a science.

(IV) THE UNKNOWABILITY AND INEFFABILITY OF THE ONE   If by starting from our way of thinking and negating its deficiencies we might reach a concept of the higher way of thinking characteristic of Intellect, we cannot know the One over and above the way in which the One is known in Intellect's self-knowledge (above (b), i). For the One, as prior to any form or determination, is not such a reality as to be an object of knowledge: as it is in itself, it is beyond even the highest form of knowledge (6.9.3.36–45). How then can it be known? And if language, as Plotinus believes (following Plato, Aristotle and the Stoics), is the externalization of thought, then the unknowable One cannot be spoken: it is ineffable. How then can we speak of it?

These questions concerning the limits of thought and language, in relation to a reality which goes beyond them, are posed by Plotinus with unprecedented clarity. His response to them might be summarized as follows. If the One cannot be known and spoken *as it is*, it can be known and spoken *as it affects* us, as it manifests itself to us in its presence in us.[20] The structure of the causal chain constitutive of reality means that when something is constituted, what is constitutive of it is somehow present in it, while not being part of it. So the

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[19] We should distinguish between the discursivity characterizing soul in its relation to the physical world (external objects, inferential sequences) and the discursivity of soul's thinking prior to, and independently of, its descent to body (soul's thinking as an image of Intellect's knowledge).

[20] See 6.9.3.49–54; 5.3.14, on how Plotinus takes advantage here of the sceptical distinction between things as they are and things as they affect us.

One, as constitutive of Intellect and of Soul, is present in us, to the extent that its causal power affects us. Thus when we speak of the 'One', we are speaking of *ourselves* as a multiplicity dependent in its existence on something non-multiple. And when we speak of the 'Good', we speak of our own deficiency, our lack, and of what could remedy this deficiency or lack, what is good *for us* (6.34–42). To mark these limits in the scope of thought and language as regards what lies beyond these limits Plotinus uses the expression 'as if' (*hoion*) when speaking of the One (see 6.8 [39]* 13.50).

(d) The Good

It has been noted above that in conducting discussions about what produces the world, Plotinus keeps in mind the fact that it is *we* who conduct these discussions. These inquiries concern us: knowledge of the world is also knowledge about ourselves; in discovering our nature and seeing our position in the structure of reality we learn things which matter for the way we conduct our lives in this structure. Plotinus may not have been interested in talking about his *physical* genealogy, his physical *genos* (Porphyry, *Life* 1.3–4), but he feels that knowing one's *metaphysical* genealogy, one's *genos* in Intellect (5.1.1.28), is of the greatest importance to us, as souls, to the extent that we have forgotten 'where' we have come from, who our metaphysical 'father' is, what we are and what our purpose is (1.1–29). It is for this reason that Plotinus elaborates in 5.1 his account of first principles. This account is a remedy for our self-forgetfulness and our consequent confusion about ourselves and about what is of value to us.

(1) THE SELF   Plotinus refers sometimes to 'us' (*hēmeis*), using this word in a quasi-technical sense suggestive of a developed philosophy of the self. If, according to Plato's *Alcibiades* (129ce), humans are souls using bodies as instruments, then 'we' are primarily soul. In Plotinian terms, soul informs body, making it into an organic composite, a body ensouled, endowed with a trace of the soul producing it (2.3.9; 1.1 [53]*.7). The producing soul may be Nature as what produces the basic organism on which supervenes the individual soul (4.9.3; 4.3.6; 6.7.4–5; 7). 'We' are then this individual soul, prior to and independent of the body, which comes to the body and governs it. Plotinus does not regard the presence of individual soul in body as something negative: soul descends in a body following its natural tendency to express what it has, its knowledge, to organize what is inferior to it through its inherent goodness, its divinity (4.8.5.24–7; 3.2.7.23–7). As individual souls present in a body, we can, however, in our care for bodily affairs, become so engrossed in these affairs that we come to identify ourselves with them, to forget our metaphysical origins and stature,

taking corporeal things as of primary value, as Narcissus became infatuated with his image and sought to unite himself with it (1.6.8.8–16; 5.8.2.31–5). Our self is thus multiple and 'mobile' in Plotinus (3.4 [15]), as has been noted by scholars: like a cursor moving on a screen, it identifies itself with different things, including things far inferior to it, acting as if it were these things and as if they were of primary value. Or it can return to its original self as soul and act as such, even to the point of focusing its activity upwards towards that of Intellect and living as Intellect, a state Plotinus describes in the famous opening lines of 4.8.

(II) THE GOOD LIFE   What does the self desire? What will respond to its need and give it rest, self-sufficiency, completion? These questions correspond to a central issue discussed in ancient Greek ethics, the issue of *eudaimonia*: in what consists the good life, the best life for humans? In 1.4 [46]*, Plotinus defines the good life as the highest or most perfect kind of life. Life itself can range (3.18ff.) from its lowest biological expression, up through different levels of soul, to the life of Intellect (1.4.3–4). To the extent then that the human self is soul, rational soul as constituted by Intellect, the best life for it is sharing in the life of Intellect, living the life of Intellect. In certain respects this concept of *eudaimonia* corresponds to what Aristotle describes as the highest happiness, the life of *theōria*, which is a sharing in the life of the gods (*Nicomachean Ethics* 10.7) which in Aristotle is the life of divine Intellect's self-thought (*Metaphysics* 12.7). But Plotinian *eudaimonia* evokes also aspects of the perfect life of the Stoic sage, who is immune to all passions and the vicissitudes of bodily existence, who is complete in the perfection, independence and freedom of his reason. Like Aristotle's man of practical wisdom (*phronimos*) and the Stoic sage, Plotinus' good man (*spoudaios*) is a model of how to lead the good life, a life in which Plotinus even finds the pleasure at rest of Epicurean *eudaimonia* (1.4.12). Such a model was provided, Porphyry seems to be suggesting in the *Life*, by Plotinus in his own life.

(III) VIRTUE   It is commonly assumed in Greek ethics that to live the good life is to live virtuously, i.e., to live a life characterized by moral and intellectual excellence (*aretē*). This excellence can be described as regards Plotinus as the virtue manifested by the good man (*spoudaios*). However virtue is also required in order to *become* such a *spoudaios*. Plotinus discusses the latter aspect in the early chapters of 1.2 [19]*, distinguishing between levels of virtue in a gradation leading up to the life of Intellect. The lowest level of virtue in the gradation is that of the four cardinal virtues defined by Plato at the end of *Republic* 4. These virtues, the 'political' virtues (or 'civic' virtues, in Augustine's Latin

version) – practical wisdom, courage, moderation and justice – Plotinus regards as giving measure, limit, to our desires and passions (1.2.2–3). What is involved is soul to the extent to which it directs itself towards bodily concerns and allows itself to be drawn away by the unlimitedness, lack of measure, that matter induces in these concerns. Limit and measure, as forms coming from Intellect, are in any case what should characterize soul's relation to its activities in the body. Soul is then brought nearer to the life of Intellect by higher virtues, the purificatory virtues mentioned in Plato's *Phaedo* (69bc). These virtues are wisdom, courage, moderation and justice acting now, not as what gives measure, but as what concerns soul in itself, purifying it so that it comes nearer to the life of Intellect (3.11–21).

(iv) VICE   As virtue concerns the correct relation of soul to body ('political' virtue) and the turning away of soul towards the life of Intellect ('purificatory' virtue), so, on the contrary, is vice a disorder in soul's relation to the body in which it identifies itself with, and allows itself to be dominated by bodily passions and desires, to the extent of being infected and drawn to the lack of measure, the total indetermination of matter that underlies these passions and desires (1.8 [51].4.5–34; 13.18–21). Plotinus believes, however, that soul cannot destroy itself in its moral degradation and descent into the complete obscurity of evil/matter (1.8.9). Soul remains, in its original self, good and incorruptible: it is in its self-projection downwards at its lower levels, in association with the body, that vice appears (4.14–32; 14.27–49).

(v) PHILOSOPHY   The return through the grades of virtue to the life of Intellect presupposes habituation and practice (Plato, *Republic* 7.518e; 1.3 [20].6.6–7; 2.9.15.14–17). We can imagine that to the extent that philosophical schools in late antiquity could function as places of moral education, where members found a community aiming at the moral transformation of their lives, Plotinus' school may have had the effect of moral habituation in the lives of its members. However, the return of soul to the life of Intellect also involves, more importantly, soul's discovery of its origins and its nature. Indeed the reaching of self-knowledge *is* a return to the life of Intellect: to *know* oneself and one's origins is to *live* otherwise. The intellectual instruction practised in Plotinus' school can thus be regarded as aiming at bringing souls to self-knowledge, nearer to the life of Intellect. Plotinus' treatises reflect this: in exploring philosophical problems, in reasoning through puzzles about the world and about soul, in providing arguments leading towards knowledge, Plotinus' texts help rational soul to set aside its confusion and error and reach a better understanding of itself and its origin (5.1.1.27–8). His arguments, in his texts, can function as a 'leading up'

(*anagōgē*) of soul (1.3.1.1–6) and his teaching and writing as a 'road' and a 'way' (6.9.4.15) to the Good. The arguments in Plotinus' texts can take the form of discussions, questions, answers, objections, new answers, in an evolving dialogue, perhaps originating sometimes in Plotinus' teaching, but now becoming a dialogue with and in the soul. To the extent that these arguments and these texts are expressions of discursive thinking, they must lead the soul approaching the life of Intellect beyond discursivity to the non-discursive knowledge lived in and by Intellect (above (b), iii).

(VI) THE LIFE OF THE *SPOUDAIOS*   If soul reaches the life of Intellect, what does such a life imply, in particular for individual soul to the extent that it remains in charge, so to speak, of a body? If Plotinus did indeed consider himself to be such a soul (4.8.1.1ff.), then, to judge from Porphyry's description in the *Life*, while remaining in Intellect, living the life of Intellect, Plotinus also exercised 'political' virtues such as moderation and justice in his relations with others in the limited circle of his school and Gemina's household, and he may have planned to extend this in his project of Platonopolis. Plotinus himself suggests, not only that the progress from 'political' virtues through the 'purificatory' virtues towards the life of Intellect means that the lower virtues are presupposed for access to this higher life, but also that the lower virtues remain potentially in the soul's possession, being activated as circumstances require (1.2.7.10–12 and 19–21). These circumstances include presumably what is involved by soul's relation to the body, to its own body, to others as bodies ensouled and to other parts of the life of the world. Porphyry is perhaps overdoing it when he portrays Plotinus as being ashamed of and neglecting his body (*Life* ch. 1), for Plotinus recommends rather taking care of one's body, as is necessary, as the instrument of the soul (1.4.4.25–6; 14.19–22; 16.17–19). This can hardly mean misuse and mistreatment of the body. The desire to exercise good governance which is part of soul's natural goodness may explain why this care for one's own body extends further. Soul prior to body and free of body exercises a providential action in conjunction with the providential governance of the world by World Soul (4.8.2.19–26). If so, then the perfected individual soul, in control of its bodily affairs, will also tend to extend its care for lower things, as circumstances permit. A further relevant aspect is the original 'sisterhood' of souls, as members of the same transcendent community (4.3.6.13; 4.8.3.14–19; 4.9.3.1–9). The predicament of souls misdirected and in perdition must concern the good soul in a position to act. More generally, applying the principle of double activity, we might say that a soul which is good will realize good actions. This aspect of Plotinus' ethics might be called an 'ethics of giving'. It is an aspect that has been occulted in modern studies through an exclusive emphasis on the otherworldly,

religious or mystical side of Plotinus' thought (his 'ethics of escape'). The most concrete example of this ethics of giving is Plotinus' own writing, a work surely intended as a contribution for the benefit of souls.

The good soul may undertake good actions, but the occasion and outcome of these actions are conditioned by the larger world-context in which these actions take place (4.4.43.16–24; 6.8.5.1–27). As in the case of the Stoic sage, Plotinus' good soul may find that things turn out otherwise, since the actions take place in a domain governed by other causes, in particular and above all by the providential order brought about by World Soul. This providential order can be understood as a 'law of nature' which ensures cosmic justice. An exemplification of this justice is found in the reincarnation of souls through which souls find the just consequences of their actions. Matricides, for example, will be born again as mothers who will be murdered by their child (3.2.13.14–15).

(VII) UNION WITH THE GOOD   If the life of Intellect represents the closest relation to the absolute Good, the One, that can be reached through knowledge, the desire of this Good can only be fully satisfied by a union with it going beyond knowledge. Porphyry placed at the end (and culmination) of his edition, the *Enneads*, three treatises which lead the reader to the Good, 6.7, 6.8 and 6.9. In these texts Plotinus describes ways of thinking which may serve to lead us to the One and in so doing must be surpassed, as must all thought and discourse. In following these ways, we remove what separates us from the One, waiting in silence on an ultimate union with it which does not seem to involve our annihilation (6.9.7; 11.38–42; 6.7.34; 36.6–21).

Now leaving behind all learning, educated up and established in the beautiful, in which he is, up to this stage he thinks. But carried out by the wave, as it were, of Intellect itself, lifted up high by it as it swells, so to speak, he suddenly saw, not seeing how, but the sight, filling the eyes with light, does not make him see another through itself, but the light itself was the sight seen. (6.7.36.15–21)

The concepts and language which Plotinus uses in evoking the ascent of the soul to union with Intellect and then with the One would become very influential in the mystical traditions of the Islamic world and of medieval Byzantine and Latin Christianity. Plotinus himself was interpreting and developing the descriptions of the ascent of the soul to the vision of the Forms, of the Form of Beauty and the Form of the Good, given by Plato in the *Symposium*, *Phaedrus* and *Republic*. Plotinus considered that the means for the ascent of the soul are provided by philosophy, which, in leading us to knowledge, leads us to a higher level of life. Thus 'theory' and 'experience' are not separated in the soul. The ascent of the soul through philosophy is a return to where soul, in its higher

part, always is and lives, in Intellect and in its source in the One. In evoking this ascent and this higher life, Plotinus does not give the impression that he is merely speculating, or guessing.

(e) Plotinus and later Platonism

Platonism after Plotinus, as a philosophical movement, was shaped by many different influences, by the work of Platonists earlier and later than Plotinus, for example by Numenius, Porphyry, Iamblichus, as well as by changing political, social and cultural circumstances such as the increasing Christianization of the institutions of the Roman Empire. On a number of issues, later Platonists did not accept Plotinus' views, his views, for example, on part of the soul as remaining in the intelligible world, on matter as absolute evil and the primary cause of evil, on time, on Aristotle's categories. Yet we might nonetheless identify some areas where Plotinus' contribution was of fundamental importance. Among these we might count Plotinus' radical claim that there is one unique first principle, the One, constitutive, mediately or immediately, of the existence, order and form of all else in reality. The difficulties which this radical claim involved – how indeed could the diverse multitude of things come from one cause? – provoked the development in later Platonism of theories entailing increasing complexity in the structure of reality, the recourse to more and more mediating levels of being, the use of mathematical concepts of order so as to facilitate the transition from the One to the manifold world. And Plotinus' rejection of artisanal (demiurgic) accounts of the way in which things are constituted by a first principle was decisive in later Platonism, stimulating the elaboration of other concepts of constitutive causality.

In Christian theology, if Plotinus' claim that there is only one truly first principle could appear to fit with the belief in God as sole creator, yet this creator involved inner complexity, as the Trinity, and the act of creation was not that whereby the Plotinian One gives rise to what comes from it, as a secondary activity accompanying the primary activity which it is. Nevertheless, the Plotinian pattern of the constitution of things from the One by a process of derivation from (*proodos*) and return to (*epistrophē*) the transcendent first cause provided Christian theologians with a way of understanding the relation between creator and creation.

Another area where Plotinus may be considered to have made a fundamental contribution is that concerning the transcendence of the first principle. The metaphysical transcendence of the One, its unknowability and ineffability, would also be emphasized in later Platonism, to the extent that it would lead to the negation of any structure of co-ordination linking the One with other levels of

being. Yet in pushing this transcendence to its limits, Damascius, for example, still stays close to Plotinus' view that in thinking and speaking about the One, we are thinking and speaking about ourselves in our deficiency. Both the radical transcendence of the Plotinian One, and the recourse to mediating levels in later Platonism, would be taken up by Christian thinkers, in particular in the Greek-speaking East.

Finally we might mention Plotinus' practice of philosophy as a way of leading the soul to the Good which it desires. Here Plotinus brought the powerful inspiration of Plato to bear on the practical orientation characteristic of philosophical schools in the Hellenistic and imperial periods, thus giving considerable impetus to the teaching of Platonism. In later Platonism, however, the formalism of scholastic structures and the recourse to other means of ascent, such as theurgy, considerably reshaped Plotinus' approach. And, of course, the way for the soul to reach the Good in Christian theology would follow other paths than those afforded by the study of Plato and the practices of pagan religion.

PORPHYRY AND HIS SCHOOL

ANDREW SMITH

1 LIFE AND WRITINGS

Life[1]

Porphyry was born in 234 in Tyre, of probably wealthy parents. His original name, Malchos, which suggests a non-Greek or at least mixed Greco-Syrian background, was Hellenized to Porphyry (Malchos means 'king'). This seems to have occurred through his teachers and fellow students rather than at his own instigation. He may have studied locally at Caesarea, where he is said to have at least seen Origen, before enrolling with Longinus in Athens (cf. 12T).[2] It is doubtless with the polymath Platonist Longinus that he developed his own taste for learning and scholarship in literature and history as well as in philosophy. He joined Plotinus in Rome in 263, a bold but not altogether unorthodox move as Plotinus was at this time clearly making a name for himself both in Athens and further afield, judging by Longinus' interest in his work and a number of adherents of international origin, such as Amelius. This encounter with Plotinus had a major impact on Porphyry's Platonism as he slowly began to accept and enthusiastically defend many of Plotinus' new interpretations. It is, however, important to realize that he would hardly have regarded Plotinus as the harbinger of a totally new phase in Platonic philosophy, a status first accorded to him by Proclus over a century later (Procl. *Theol. Plat.* 1.1, vol. 1.6.19). For Porphyry, Plotinus was another, if highly thoughtful and stimulating, exponent of the Platonic tradition that we, following Proclus, rightly see as taking a new

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[1] The account of Porphyry's life relies on his own introduction to the *Enneads* of Plotinus, known as the *Life of Plotinus*. Other sources add little. Eunapius in his account of Porphyry supplies only the additional detail that he set up a school in Rome after Plotinus' death (*Vit.soph.* 4.1.10, pp. 8, 9–11), but in view of his otherwise total reliance on Porphyry's *Life of Plotinus* this may be mere speculation on his part.

[2] Except where otherwise indicated the fragments of Porphyry's works are cited from Smith 1993 (P = the reference number of a work, F = fragment, T = Testimonium; figures following the comma refer to line numbers).

direction with Plotinus. Neither Plotinus nor Porphyry would have registered such a profound turning point. This is important when considering the integrity of Porphyry's continuing relationship with pre-Plotinian ideas and ways of thinking. We should also bear in mind that he was with Plotinus for only five years. Indeed, the preface to his edition of the *Enneads* betrays his awareness of being something of an outsider, although it is also clear that he quickly won the confidence and friendship of Plotinus.

While in Rome he evidently succumbed to a bout of very severe depression and took extended leave in Sicily on the advice of Plotinus. He returned to Italy on hearing of his death in 270 but it is unclear how long he stayed there or whether he returned to Sicily and even to Syria, although he had certainly not lost contact with his homeland.[3] His marriage relatively late in life to the wealthy widow Marcella is also difficult to place geographically, and while a good proportion of his published work was completed after the death of Plotinus, it is equally difficult to ascertain whether he was working alone or with a formal circle of pupils.

His death may be put in 305 at the latest since according to the *Suda* (Πορ-φύριον 4.178, 14f = 2T, 4) he lived until the time of Diocletian.

Writings

His publications were voluminous and varied, embracing works of historical, literary, religious, and exegetical scholarship, investigatory treatises and a core of philosophical commentaries, logical and metaphysical works. Although it may reasonably be argued that he was more engaged in particular genres and topics at various stages of his career, it seems likely that throughout his active life he maintained a broad interest in the manifestations of Hellenic culture as a whole and in those non-hellenic elements with which it engaged and which influenced it. The fact that most of his output survives only in fragmentary form and that very few works can be dated with any kind of certainty makes an overall assessment of his intellectual development both difficult and prone to misleading interpretations. One view traces a movement from an early period of scholarly preoccupations under Longinus and a 'superstitious' interest in religion to a period of 'rationalist' criticism of religious practice along with the adoption of Plotinian metaphysics and a concomitant move away from 'Middle Platonism'. The ancient tradition of Porphyry's 'change of views' and even 'vacillation' on

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[3] There is a letter (to be dated between 268 and 273) of Longinus to Porphyry from Phoenicia (*Life of Plotinus* 19) and within it a reference to a previous meeting in Tyre when they discussed the work of Plotinus. Cf. Smith 1987: 720.

a number of issues[4] is cited in support. Certain key works are then inserted into this overall pattern. In particular *Philosophy from Oracles* is dated early and regarded as uncritical acceptance of pagan religious practice and *De regressu animae* and the *Letter to Anebo* are put late and interpreted as severely critical and negative in their attitude to religion. But the dating criteria for these works is lacking and, more importantly, the nature of their contents has been demonstrated to be not so polarized as had previously been maintained.[5] In addition the hostility and even misunderstanding of ancient witnesses may easily have led to a misrepresentation which characterized Porphyry as vacillating or recanting earlier views. A more recent trend has, therefore, developed from which a less dramatic and more complex picture of Porphyry's career has emerged. This stresses his intellectually inquisitive nature throughout his career and his continuous commitment to traditional religion albeit with reservations about theurgy. A corollary to this is the reaffirmation of the consistency of Porphyry's links with pre-Plotinian Platonism. What to previous scholars has seemed to indicate Porphyry's conversion from earlier Platonism is now seen to be more a matter of emphasis and style rather than some radical turning point. Many of the doctrinal and life issues and attitudes of pre-Plotinian Platonists are Porphyry's concerns too. It is Plotinus who may in hindsight appear to be the exception.

Since it is not possible to draw up a chronologically[6] accurate schema of Porphyry's publications, a grouping according to subject matter will provide the most helpful picture.

Literary and historical works

Many of these were probably composed in the early period under the influence of Longinus though none can be dated with accuracy other than a work on

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[4] Confusion of soul and *nous* (Iamblichus *apud* Stob. 1.365, 17–19 = 441F10–14); Eunapius notes many 'contradictions' (*Vit.soph.* 4.2.6, p.10, 7–10 = 1T, 104–5); wavering between superstition and philosophy, acceptance and rejection of theurgy (Aug. *Civ.Dei* 10.9 = 289F); modern scholars have noted a change of mind on transmigration of human souls into animals and on the identification of the Demiurge with Soul or Intellect.

[5] In particular it may be noted that *Philosophy from Oracles* includes criticism of prophecy (340F, 340aF, 341F, 341aF) as well as praise of 'spiritual' sacrifice (Aug. *Civ.Dei* 19.23, 107–33 = 346F) and that the *Letter to Anebo* is not as openly hostile to religion as maintained by Iamblichus.

[6] The following works may be dated (roughly) on the basis of some evidence: the *Life of Plotinus* in 301 cf. *Life* 23.13; the following may be placed after his arrival with Plotinus in 263: the Plotinus editions and commentaries as well as *De abst.*, and *On What is in Our Power* (dedicated respectively to Castricius and Chrysaorius from Plotinus' circle); *In Tim.* since he defends the Plotinian doctrine that the thoughts of Intellect are not outside Intellect (Proclus *In Tim.* 1.294, 2–4 = 51F Sodano). The *Isagoge* and shorter commentary on the categories were composed in Sicily and therefore after 268 (Ammonius *In Porph. Isag.* 27.12–22 = 28T and Elias *In Porph. Isag.* 39.8–19 = 29T); the *Letter to Marcella* belongs to the latter part of his life (*eis to gēras apoklinonti* 273.13 Nauck) but not as late as 303 as suggested by Des Places 1982: 89 who connects Porphyry's journey in the interests of the Hellenes (275.19) with the preparations for the Diocletian persecution of 303.

plagiarism (*Philological Lecture* 56P).[7] Most interesting are the works on Homer where we are fortunate to have two large extant pieces: the first book of the *Homeric Zetemata* and the short essay on *The Cave of the Nymphs*. The latter has much more philosophical content, but this is not to say that the larger work did not contain more philosophical content than is apparent in the extant continuous piece which mostly deals with details and grammatical issues, its method being to cite passages from elsewhere in Homer in accordance with the Aristarchan principle of interpreting Homer by Homer. It is also possible that the work described as *On the Philosophy of Homer* was a companion or supplementary work to the *Zetemata*. The *Cave of the Nymphs* which interprets the cave of *Odyssey* 13.102–12 as symbolically representing matter, is particularly instructive about Porphyry's style of exegesis. On the surface it appears to be disordered whereas what Porphyry is doing is presenting us with a variety of interpretations with liberal citations from authors who supported them before finally recommending one interpretation. This style of approach and presentation is one that we will find in many works of Porphyry and one which distinguishes him from the more monolithic and disciplined method of Iamblichus and Proclus, on the one hand, and which, on the other, links him more with the traditions of pre-Plotinian Platonism. Stobaeus preserves for us a number of fairly extensive fragments which he has taken from what may be a separate work *On the Styx* or part of another treatise either on Homer or, in view of its philosophical content, from a work on the fate of the human soul. A number of works on rhetoric[8] and the treatise on plagiarism remind us that the majority of students in the philosophical schools took only the foundation courses, which were centred primarily around rhetoric.

Platonic commentaries

Similarly, his Platonic commentaries must have been relatively diffuse compared with the single-minded approach of Iamblichus and Proclus. Considerable fragments of his *Timaeus* commentary survive, mostly in Proclus. Comments on passages from other Platonic dialogues suggest that he wrote commentaries on the *Republic*, *Phaedo*, *Sophist*, *Philebus*, *Cratylus* and *Parmenides*. These commentaries would appear to have paid close attention to philological as well as philosophical issues and to have demonstrated an openness to different available

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[7] *Philological Lecture*, representing a discussion held on the feast of Plato's birthday celebrated in the Academy of Longinus.

[8] *Against Aristides*, *On the Art of Minoukianos*, *Peri Staseōn*, *Collection of Rhetorical Enquiries*, *Grammatical Problems*.

interpretations. The latter would also account for the wealth of information about the interpretations of other thinkers which Porphyry included.

Aristotelian commentaries

Apart from a possible commentary on the *Metaphysics*, of which our one piece of evidence speaks significantly of notes on book Lambda (Simplicius *De caelo* 503.22–34 = 163F), his main concern was with the *Physics* and the logical works. He is the first Platonist to have composed full-scale commentaries on Aristotle. Although the stimulus for this task seems to have arisen from the wish to serve the needs of a particular student[9] there is no reason to doubt, given the extent and scope of these works, that Porphyry would have regarded them as a contribution to consolidating the basic logical foundation of Platonic instruction. The same may be said for a commentary on the *Nicomachean Ethics* (165–6F from Arabic sources). As well as the *Isagoge*, his own introduction to Aristotelian logic, he wrote a short and long commentary on the *Categories*, commentaries on *De interpretatione* and *Sophistici elenchi*, an introduction to categorical syllogisms and a commentary on Theophrastus' *On Affirmation and Negation*.

Religious works

In this category we may include the treatises *On Statues*, *On Divine Names* (title only), *On the Philosophy from Oracles* and the *Letter to Anebo*, the latter of which survives in citations and summaries from Iamblichus' combative reply, *On the Mysteries*. Other evidence for Porphyry's interest in religious matters is provided by mention of a treatise *On the Works of Julian the Chaldaean*. It seems likely that Porphyry was one of the first to resurrect interest in the *Chaldaean Oracles*, a hexameter poem composed in the second century CE and containing a mixture of popular Platonism with theological and religious elements in the service of a ritual of salvation termed 'theurgy'. While Porphyry may have doubted the full efficacy of the ritual of salvation, a number of comments which may go back to this treatise bear witness to a general interest in their programme as well as a fascination for their theological system. Augustine (e.g., *Civ. dei* 10.27.8–25 = 287F, cf. also 286F, 288F, 288aF) records some of these hesitations in what he calls Porphyry's work *De regressu animae*, which does, however, seem to have been an independent treatise rather than part of another work. Finally his attitude to Christianity is largely measured by *Against the Christians*, a

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[9] Chrysaorius, for whom cf. Elias *In Porph. Isag.* = 29T.

lengthy work which was repeatedly banned by the Christian authorities, a tactic which eventually proved successful since the very few genuine fragments that survive have to be supplemented by the evidence for anti-Christian arguments contained in the polemical work of later Christian authors.[10] The most that can be said of these is that they probably were the kind of arguments which Porphyry included in his work, but many of them would, in any case, not have been original to him, for they can be traced back to Celsus in the second century.

Ethical and generally exhortatory works

Apart from the *Sententiae* which probably had a practical function (see below) a number of other works are primarily concerned with giving practical advice on living the philosophical life. The *Letter to Marcella* was written to his wife, whom he married late in life, during a period of enforced absence. It consists of an intrically woven web of citations and commonplaces which advocate a respect for conventional religion along with philosophical care of the soul. In this context there is neither need nor place for the One and a complex concept of Intellect. The same is true of *De abstinentia*, a moderate plea for abstention from eating meat as part of the early stages of the soul's ascent. Fragments also survive of a letter or treatise which deals with providence, *Logos [treatise?] to [against?] Nemertio*s (*Pros Nēmertion logos*, 276–82F [from Stobaeus]), of a treatise *On What is Within Our Power* (*Peri tou eph' hēmin* 268–71F) and of another *On Knowing Oneself* (*Peri tou Gnōthi seauton* 272–5F).

Metaphysical writings

Arguably Porphyry's greatest contribution to metaphysics is his edition of Plotinus' *Enneads*. Although there were other versions in circulation, that of Porphyry would appear to have been the definitive one, authorized by the master himself. Porphyry's organization of the treatises into six sets of nine did some violence to the text (for example, the splitting into four of one long treatise – 2.9; 3.8; 5.8; 5.5) but this is compensated by his own careful account of his editorial methods. More interesting is his division of the treatises into sections which are intended to help the reader in his ascent from the physical world to Soul, Intellect and finally to the One.[11] It is a method of induction which also

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[10] Primarily from Macarius Magnes.
[11] 1–3 on physics and ethics, 4–5 on soul and intellect, 6 on the One.

characterizes the *Sententiae* and in a sense responds to the exhortatory structure of Plotinus' own teaching, a feature that is seen in many of the individual treatises in which he exhorts his students to follow an upward path of ascent to the highest principles. Porphyry himself tells us (*Life* 26.29–37 = 190T) that in addition to providing headings he included in his edition commentaries on those sections which colleagues had found difficult to understand. Unfortunately nothing survives of these notes.[12] But we may suppose that they aided the circulation and acceptance of Plotinus' ideas.

The most substantial survival from his metaphysical works, the *Sententiae*, is also closely related to the text of the *Enneads*. It consists of forty-two independent sections, some of several pages, others of three or four lines, all of them relatively condensed in style and often paraphrasing or even citing *verbatim* the *Enneads*. Unfortunately, it is beset by problems: it is clearly only a fragment as the manuscript breaks off abruptly; nor is it absolutely certain that the format and order in which it is now preserved are original to Porphyry. Recent study of the text has, however, revealed more clearly its purpose, relationship to Plotinus and, more importantly, the sophistication and originality of the composition. By carefully combining long citations, summaries, reminiscences and short phrases from Plotinus he has assembled a skilful mosaic of major Plotinian ideas drawn in the main from 2.6 (on impassivity), 5.3 (on intellect) and 6.4 and 5 (on the omnipresence of being). The work can be seen to concentrate on the transition from the material world to transcendent reality both in its doctrinal content and in its pedagogical and exhortatory style, thus amply fulfilling in practical terms the title 'launching points to the Intelligibles'; an emphasis that would also explain the comparatively meagre coverage of the One in the work. Can we detect any differences between Porphyry and Plotinus in this work? Although there are some differences, they appear to be more of style and manner than of substance and may often be explicable in terms of the restrictions imposed by the succinct nature of the work. That said, it must be observed that the resulting formalization of what in Plotinus is expressed with greater fluidity and qualification marks a stage towards the more severely tabulated complexities of Proclus' metaphysical structure.

Other works dealing with general metaphysical questions and of which only the titles or meagre fragments remain include *On Principles* in two books,[13] *On*

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[12] It is unlikely that they are to be identified with the *Sententiae*. Nor do the additions to the text of the *Enneads* in the Arabic *Theologia* seem to go back to him (cf. now D'Ancona 2003: 81–8). It seems likely that the references to these commentaries by Eunapius (189T, 192T) and to his contribution to the Arabic *Theologia* in the preface of that work derive ultimately from his own comment in the *Life*.

[13] Title from the *Suda* and one report from Proclus dealing with the relationship of Intellect and the One (231T, 232F).

Incorporeals,[14] *On Matter* in six books,[15] two (?) works on the unity of Plato and Aristotle,[16] and a series of treatises dealing with the soul.[17] Of all of these only the *Summikta Zetemata*[18] can with certainty be dated after his encounter with Plotinus and, of course, the two treatises on the identity of Intellect and its objects which were read as seminar papers in the school of Plotinus (Porphyry *Life* 18.4–19).

2 THOUGHT

The One

The total transcendence of the One is arguably one of the most innovative of Plotinus' ideas and one not without its difficulties, as is confirmed by the constant attention paid to it by later Platonists. Iamblichus' recourse to an especially transcendent One beyond the normal One is adequate confirming testimony. It should come, then, as no surprise that in Porphyry, too, there may be detected some evidence of an attempt to deal with the relationship of the One and its immediate product in his own terms. How far this really differs from Plotinus is debateable, for the *Sententiae* at least profess an orthodox Plotinian transcendence. But elsewhere he refers to some kind of intermediary stage between the One and fully fledged Nous. In the *Hist. phil.*, for example, he refers to a Nous that is pre-eternal (*proaiōnios*, 223F, 7) and is designated as *autopatōr*, which indicates that Intellect is self-generating in the sense that it turns back on the One to constitute itself as an Intellect. This 'pre-eternal' phase must be contrasted with the description of Nous proper a few lines later as 'eternal'. And yet in this same passage Porphyry is also concerned to stress the distinction between the One and Nous: just as the One is not to be 'numbered with' (*sunarithmeisthai. . . . sunkatatesthai*) the Intelligibles, he argues, so Nous is distinct from Soul. The same idea seems to be reported by Proclus who, in a reference to Porphyry's treatise *On the Principles*, claims that he had proposed that Nous had in itself 'something pre-eternal' and that this 'pre-eternal' linked (*sunaptein*) it with the One and that the eternal was 'second

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[14] Title only from the *Suda*, 233T.

[15] Title in the *Suda* and a long passage in Simplicius on matter citing Moderatus (236F).

[16] Titles only: 238T, 239T, though there is some doubt as to whether they are different works. One of them was addressed to Chrysaorius which, therefore, suggests a date after 263.

[17] The contents of these are discussed later. They include *Against Boethos on the Soul*, *On the Faculties of the Soul*, *On Perception* and *To Gauros on the Ensouling of the Embryo*. An Arabic source cites a title *On Sleep and Awakening* (265T) and the *Suda* lists a work entitled *Against Aristotle on the Soul Being an Entelechy* (240T).

[18] Considerable fragments mostly from Nemesius *De natura hominis* 256–63F.

or rather third in rank' (Proclus *Theol. Plat.* 1.11 p.51, 4f. = 232F), though the latter remark looks more like Proclus' interpretation. The two passages need not be inconsistent; for 'linking' and 'being numbered with' are not the same. Porphyry is clearly trying to explain the close connection of the One with Nous while maintaining their distinction. It seems that Porphyry also made a similar but more complex suggestion in the context of the *Chaldaean Oracles* on which he had written a commentary. For he apparently identified the One with 'the Father of the Intelligible Triad' (367F). Damascius takes Porphyry to task for effectively putting the One and the intelligible world on the same level: Porphyry had numbered with the Intelligibles (*sunarithmoito tois noētois*) the One which is unco-ordinated (*asuntaktos*). The polemic is undeniable, not least in the repetition of terminology used by Porphyry himself. But how justified is Damascius, for in the *Hist. phil.* he had explicitly denied that the One is to be 'numbered with' Intellect? It must first be said that Damascius is referring to a context in which Porphyry is interpreting the Oracles. But, given their pre-Plotinian origin, he might well not have found a transcendent One in them, but was doing his best to interpret them in a Plotinian way.[19] And secondly we should also recall that Plotinus himself often appears to suggest an intermediary between the One and Intellect, for example, when he refers to what has been termed an inchoate form of Nous, i.e., Nous before it has turned back in contemplation of the One to be completed by it. Such talk might appear loose and subversive to Damascius, and might point to a dangerous compromise in both Porphyry and Plotinus. A more complex and specific background to this controversy may be found in an attempt by Porphyry to exploit the interpretation of the first and second hypotheses of the *Parmenides* as a means of expressing the dual aspects of the One as totally transcendent and as cause of all. The importance of all this lies less in the accusations than in the clear evidence it provides of the vigorous ongoing inquiry into the functioning of the One.

An anonymous *Commentary on the Parmenides* has also been interpreted as making an important contribution to this debate, although it is difficult to see at what stage it should be inserted. Like Porphyry it, too, attempts to bridge the gap between a first principle which is described as *huparxis/to einai monon* and a second described as *ousia/to on*. But the very complex and sophisticated schema of relationships which Pierre Hadot ascribes to the commentary as its way of creating this bridge do not appear in the text itself and can be read into

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[19] In fact an anonymous *Commentary on the Parmenides* (for which see below) has similar problems with this oracular triad at the beginning of fragment 5. The oracle, he thinks, appears to make the Father transcendent and outside the triad but then goes on to say too much about him by including him in the triad. Presumably the oracle reflects the sort of pre-Plotinian flexibility and lack of precision about the transcendence of the highest deity.

it only by appealing to the Trinitarian speculations of Victorinus[20] and placing great weight on Lydus' report (366F) of a set of three triads in Porphyry's interpretation of the Oracles.[21] It is also to be noted that Synesius, who was probably influenced by Porphyry, also exploits the notion of an intermediate entity in his use of Platonic and Chaldaean terms to express the Christian Trinity (*Hymn* 2.108–9; 3.53–4.). But if we do not feel able to follow Hadot either in his ascription of the commentary to Porphyry or in his systematic interpretation of its ideas we might, at least, claim that Porphyry may have prompted, within a continuing school tradition of *Parmenides* interpretation of which the *Anon. Com.* represents an example, the development of ideas that led eventually to the sort of complex speculations found in Victorinus and, in a simpler form, in Synesius.

Intellect

Porphyry's first engagement with Plotinus in Rome led to a determined criticism of the doctrine that the intelligibles are identical with Intellect (*Life* 18.8–9).

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[20] These are of two kinds: the very philosophical passages in *Trin.* which seem to have performed the function of raw material and the ideas from these incorporated in the fully formed doctrine of the trinity in the treatise and the hymns. See ch. 30, below.

[21] For this schema see Hadot 1968 and 1965. The relationship between the One (*huparxis/existence*) and Intellect (*Nous*) is expressed by exploiting the intermediate principle of *dunamis/power* which is not necessarily to be regarded as an independent entity with the same status as the One and Intellect but as an aspect of procession. Each 'aspect' is also present at all levels: thus Intellect and power are in a sense contained in the One (*huparxis/existence*) while *Nous/Intellect* contains something of the One and also the *dunamis* which emanates from it. This *dunamis* can, in turn, be regarded as a triad insofar as it contains something of the One by being derived from it and something of intellect by being its immediate cause. This results in an ennead:

triad 1	**huparxis**	dunamis	Nous	The One
(triad 2	huparxis	*dunamis*	Nous)	
triad 3	huparxis	dunamis	**Nous**	Intellect

In this structure the only independent realities are existence and Intellect in the first and third triads respectively. *Power* in the second triad is not an independent reality but has a special status. Its origin is surely, in the system of Plotinus, the external power of the One/indefinite Dyad/inchoate Intellect and the pre-intellect of Porphyry. In Synesius it is the Holy Spirit. See also Aug. *Civ. dei* 10.23 = 284F citing Porphyry *De regressu animae* on 'something between' God the Father and the paternal intellect. It should be noted, however, that this detail cited by Augustine is clearly in a Chaldaean and religiously salvific rather than straight metaphysical context. Lydus reports that Porphyry interpreted the Oracles as positing an enneadic structure of three triads at the head of its system (366F) but this does not necessarily mean that he put an ennead at the summit of his own metaphysical system. The term *huparxis* is found only once in Porphyry (223F, 17) in a metaphysical context referring to the One but without a contrast with Intellect. It should also be noted that Damascius (367F cited above) does not actually imply that Porphyry used this term. Thus the strong distinction of 'existence' and 'Being' which is found in Marius Victorinus and which is also exploited in the *Anon. Comm.* appears to play no vital role in the attested works of Porphyry.

Something of this controversy may be detected in 5.5 which must have been written after this event. Porphyry's initial problems with the doctrine were evidently due less to specific objections than to a general lack of information and understanding of Plotinus' position,[22] since Plotinus did not answer his queries himself but delegated this task to Amelius. Porphyry's dogged determination appears in his composition of a riposte to Amelius and his final acceptance of Plotinus' view only after a further intervention by Amelius. Porphyry was clearly being very thorough before abandoning a doctrine which he had presumably carried with him from his time with Longinus who was himself familiar with but unmoved by this whole debate. This critical, but not hostile, thoroughness may be seen again in connection with the doctrine of soul and is a characteristic which may be identified in other aspects of his work and one that may and has been mistaken for vacillation.

After his conversion to Plotinus' view that the intelligibles are not outside Intellect, Porphyry seems to have held an orthodox Plotinian view of the second hypostasis. There has been some concern expressed about a possible contradiction or change of mind about his identification of the Platonic Demiurge, now with Intellect, now with Soul. But Plotinus can be equally ambiguous. When speaking accurately both identify the Demiurge with Intellect, but in a looser sense Soul can be accorded demiurgic functions as it stands as an immediate intermediary between the corporeal and incorporeal worlds.

Did Porphyry telescope Soul and Intellect? This is a view which has been maintained recently and, of course, Iamblichus appears to criticize him for just this (441F). But in the *Sententiae* he makes a very clear distinction between the three hypostases (cf. *Sent.* 30 and 31). Like Plotinus (6.4 and 5) he may conflate intellect and soul when distinguishing them is not necessary to the immediate exposition. This is a factor which is sometimes more prominent in Porphyry who is often writing on a more popular level. Lastly, it should be noted that the distinctively Plotinian doctrine that our souls have not descended entirely, which Porphyry probably held, need not imply that the soul or its highest part is identical with Intellect (cf. *De Abst.* 1.39, p. 115, 9).

Soul

Porphyry himself recounts that he occasioned a three-day discussion after raising the issue of the manner of soul's presence to body (*Life* 13.10–11). It may be that the treatises on the omnipresence of being (6.4–5 [22–3]) and on problems of

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[22] Porphyry in the *Life* records Plotinus' own words to this effect ('he does not know what we hold' 18.13–14) and makes no attempt to correct the criticism.

the soul (4.3–5 [27–9]) provide a context for this discussion. Although another of Plotinus' students objected to this kind of debate and demanded straight lectures, Plotinus was more than happy to accede to Porphyry's request, as it was consistent with his own inquiry-based approach to philosophical issues. This concern of Porphyry for the presence of soul (or indeed the incorporeal in general) to body is strongly represented in the *Sententiae* and forms a distinct topic in the *Summikta Zetemata*[23] in which the 'mixture' of incorporeal and corporeal is explored in terms of Stoic notions of mixture, with the Stoic idea of interpenetration being given a metaphysical interpretation based apparently on an idea of Ammonius, the teacher of Plotinus. In both works,[24] too, the terms *schesei* ('by relationship')and *parousiai* (by presence) are employed by Porphyry to indicate presence of soul to body in preference to *ousiāi* (by being). The latter would imply that the soul is itself present whereas *parousia* suggests that the soul is not in but 'beside' the body, obviously in a non-spatial sense. This relationship is then further interpreted in terms of *energeia* or *dunamis*:

And so whenever an intelligible is in a relationship of space or something which is in space, we say by a misuse of language[25] that it is there because of its activity there, seizing on the space rather than the relationship and the activity. For while we ought to say 'it is active there', we say 'it is there'. (*Summikta Zetemata* 261F, 57–62)

In the *Sententiae* the basic idea of presence by activity or power suggests connections with the Plotinian theory of double activity.[26] The notion of two-fold activity is found again in his treatise *On the Powers of the Soul* in which the soul may be considered as having 'life in itself or in relation' (*zōēn tēn te kath' hautēn kai tēn kata schesin*). It is only in the latter, the embodied state, that one can talk of parts of the soul which are said to exist alongside (*paruphistatai*, 253F, 114–15). Similarly in his treatise *Against Boethos* he claims that it is not the soul itself or the soul power in itself that is present in body but another derived power. This is to be compared with the heat in a heated object or the light in the air. Neither the heat nor the light are identical with the heat of the warming fire or the fire itself nor with the sun's own light or the sun itself. The *Summikta Zetemata*, presenting a different context, locates the theory of soul's presence in a complex set of arguments and an *aporia*. The basic premises are (a) body and soul are a

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[23] It is interesting how these ideas were taken up by Bishop Nemesius of Emesa, our principal source for the *Summikta Zetemata*, in his *De natura hominis*, which exploits many ideas from Porphyry in its attempt to deal with the human nature of Christ.

[24] For *skhesis* see *Sent.* 3 p. 2, 4; 29 pp. 18, 9; 19, 2; *Summikta Zetemata* 261F, 43; 48; 56f. For *parousia* see *Sent.* 27 p. 16, 16; *Summikta Zetemata* 260F, 27.

[25] *katachrēsis*; cf. also 220F, 5 of the One when the restrictions of negative theology are ignored.

[26] *Sent.* 4 p. 2, 6–9 *hē gar rhopē deuteran tina dunamin hupestēse prosechē tois sōmasin* ('for the inclination produced a second power related to bodies').

unified entity;[27] (b) the soul as 'life' is immortal and therefore unchangeable. The combination of soul and body is first presented in the context of the three different types of Stoic mixture: total fusion (*sunchusis*), juxtaposition (*parathesis*) and blending (*krasis di' holou*). Each is dismissed as inadequate to maintain the soul's unity with the body at the same time as its unchanged identity. Plato's doctrine of the soul using a body is invoked as the final provocation to an *aporia*.

Strikingly, it is at this point that Ammonius is introduced as the teacher of Plotinus to provide the solution to the problem, which seems to turn on the demonstration of the incorporeal nature of soul as life and life-giving. From these two attributes are derived both the changelessness of soul (as being life) and its unity with the body (as giving life). These lead to the conclusion that the soul is fully united with the body (as in fusion) but retains its own identity (as in blending). The overriding of the Stoic categories of mixture by the combination of the characteristics of opposing types is summed up in the provocative phrase 'unfused unity' (*asunchutos henōsis*). This is comparable to the way in which the sun provides light throughout the air. Further proof for the soul's preservation of its own identity is to be found in its activity of prophecy when it appears to separate itself from the body. If the structure of this demonstration goes back in its entirety to Porphyry, which is highly likely, it demonstrates a rigorous form of systematically expressed inquiry which is quite different from Plotinus' approach to the problem in 4.3–5. None of these ideas goes unmentioned by Plotinus at some point[28] and the reference to Ammonius (who was Longinus' teacher too) seems to invoke Plotinus on whom he had such a great influence. But the systematic exploitation of the mixture theory, which does not have to have been part of Ammonius' contribution, is likely to be Porphyry's own way of proceeding. The reference to the soul in prophecy also suggests the interests of Porphyry rather than Plotinus.

In the other two works on the soul which we have cited (*On the Powers of the Soul* and *Against Boethos*) different approaches are employed. The former is in the form of a doxographical inquiry about the concept of 'powers of the soul'. In the extant fragments Ariston of Chios, Numenius and Nicolaus are dealt with. The inquiry involves the use and meaning of the term 'part' when used of the soul. The doxographical material, however, is not merely a list but is carefully used by Porphyry to delineate the different applications of these important terms so as to lead up to his own view, which is placed in the tradition of Aristotle, Nicolaus and Longinus. Plato appears not so much

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[27] Derived (259F, 126) from the observation that we can observe a 'sympathy' operating within the living being. Cf. *Ad Gaur.* 10.4 (mixing), 11.4 (sympathy).

[28] For light see especially 4.3.9–14 and for mixture and soul 4.7.8².

as a factor contributing to a correct analysis but rather as a case that has to be explained. The tripartite soul has, claims Porphyry, primarily an ethical role (as in Aristotle, he says) and then proceeds to add the traditional Aristotelian list of soul faculties as an interpretation of Plato's more general view. Most of the extant fragments of the treatise *Against Boethos* are centred on passages of Plato and it is only in one or two places that we can detect the polemical purpose of the treatise as a whole. From these we gather that Porphyry considered the argument for immortality of the soul drawn from its similarity to the divine (Plato, *Phaedo* 79a) as the strongest proof for immortality (242–4F).

The treatise also attacks the Peripatetic denial of the soul's own movement.[29] That the soul is self-moved is not only a standard piece of Platonic doctrine but also one that is essential to the psychology of Plotinus and Porphyry, both of whom exploit the notion of the soul's own internal and essential movement as the direct cause of its external efficacy through a derived activity. It is then not surprising that Porphyry points out the manifestations of soul's internal movement in wishes, considerations and acts of the will. A similar idea had also been noted in his treatment of Alcmaeon where he refers to the movement that the soul imparts, the action of intellect and acts of the will (243F). The power of external acts to manifest the inner workings and nature of the soul is obviously important for Porphyry, both as revealing a real connection and as an exhortatory device as may be seen in *Against Boethus* which seems to have been as much exhortatory as polemical in tone.

Soul and the astral body

The idea of an astral body which derives from a conflation of Plato's soul star bodies and Aristotelian and Stoic *pneuma* theories was of considerable

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[29] 247F. There is still some dispute as to the addressee of this treatise, whether it is a Stoic Boethus or the Peripatetic otherwise known in Porphyry's writings. The extant fragments could be construed either way since their argument seems to be primarily aimed at treating the soul purely as a quality or affection of the body with no independent existence, a doctrine which could reasonably be construed as common to Peripatetics, Stoics and Epicureans, whereas Porphyry wants to make a clear distinction between the soul itself and the embodied manifestation of soul. Even if the treatise is directed against the Aristotelian Boethus we may still distinguish Aristotle himself from his successors (Plotinus does this, for example, in 3.6) who 'misinterpret' him. There has also been doubt expressed as to the authorship of 249F because of its harsh anti-Aristotelian language in view of the fact that Porphyry is supportive of Aristotle as opposed to his followers (Karamanolis 2006: 296–7; who ascribes the passage to Atticus). But Aristotle is not named explicitly, the passage also attacks parallel anonymous (or perhaps just generic) Stoic and Epicurean views, and the 'Aristotelian' *entelecheia* theory of soul is rejected in 247F. There are, however, grounds for accepting the validity of a treatise entitled *Against Aristotle on the Soul Being an Entelechy* (Smith 1992).

importance for Porphyry. It appears in a number of contexts and with several functions:

1 as a substrate to soul, a sort if etiolated matter;
2 as a power in its own right closely connected with the faculty of *phantasia*;
3 as an enabling factor for theurgic intervention.

The most basic concept is that of a substrate for soul. This may be exploited, for example, to deal with the question of a spatial Hades as in *Sent.* 29, which explains that after death when the soul is separated from the conventional physical body which ties it to physical space it continues, however, through its quasi-material *pneuma* to experience spatial relations, though of a different order. The same theory also helps to reconcile the aspiration to separate soul and body and the function of soul to give life to a body. For the lower soul continues its function of giving life but now to the *pneuma* as substrate rather than the physical body. Similarly the contentious question about the fate of the irrational or lower soul after death may exploit the same idea.

The function as substrate treats the *pneuma/ochēma* as analogous to matter and therefore as lifeless in itself. But Porphyry also appears to have exploited the *pneuma* background of the idea (e.g., the Stoic identification of soul and *pneuma*, the Aristotelian physiological functions of *pneuma*) to endow or conflate his *pneuma* with soul-power. Augustine refers to Porphyry's distinction of soul into '*anima spiritalis*' and '*anima intellectualis*' (*Civ. dei* 10.9 = 287F; 290F). The former appears also in Synesius as *pneumatikē psuchē* or *pneuma psuchikon* (*De insomniis* p.156.8–9). The conflation with soul particularly concerns *phantasia* with which the *pneuma* is identified as a form of 'life' ('and this seems to be a sort of life').[30] A similar idea is found later in Hierocles who may have been influenced by Porphyry (*C.A.* 26.4–8). This close connection of a soul faculty with the astral body may have helped to elucidate the way in which the latter could in some way manifest psychic dispositions as appears to be the case in *Sent.* 29 in which the state of purification of the soul is reflected in the nature of the *pneuma*.[31] It could also serve, in the opposite direction, to transmit the effects of theurgic rites to the soul. It is also worth mentioning at this point that Porphyry associated the faculty of *phantasia* with prophecy and dreams, e.g., in

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[30] *kai eoiken hautē zōē tis einai*, *De insomniis* p. 150, 12 and p. 155, 12–13 where *phantasia* is described as the *okhēma* of the soul phase above it, thus combining the notion of faculty and substrate, and, in the case of animals, as their *logos* or reason.

[31] A similar idea occurs in *Ad Gaur.* 42.5–6 where *daimones* are said to be able to project their *phantasiai* onto their own *pneumata*, and see *De antro nymph.* ch. 11 for a similar phenomenon with the *pneumata* of human souls after death.

the *Letter to Anebo*.[32] How far Synesius' developed description of this activity
as a special faculty for communication with the divine may be traced back in
its entirety to Porphyry is difficult to say.[33] And even if Iamblichus was not
entirely satisfied with Porphyry's account of prophecy as his comments in *Myst.*
3.14 testify, this is not because Porphyry rejected the phenomenon, but because
he hesitated to trace its operational cause to a transcendent rather than cosmic
level.

A subsidiary question concerning the point at which an embryo is ensouled
adds to our understanding of Porphyry's psychology as a whole. The treatise
addressed to a certain Gaurus which is ascribed to Galen in the manuscript
edition has been clearly shown to be of Porphyrian authorship. The debate was
traditional, and though not specifically dealt with by Plotinus he does highlight
some of the extra problems raised by the complexity of Platonic metaphysics. In
the end he does not appear to be entirely consistent in his treatment, but this may
be because he does not deal with the issue directly but by occasional remarks in
broader contexts. The issue raises the relative contributions of the World Soul
and the individual soul, at the higher and lower levels, to the initial formation of
the body and its provisioning with the appropriate faculties.[34] Porphyry argues
that the individual soul enters the body at birth through the 'providence' of
the World Soul[35] although this may amount to no more than providing the
environmental conditions which affect individual births. Up to that point, the
life of the embryo is more like that of a plant than an animal. This involves
Porphyry's acceptance that the bodily organs are completed only at birth. The
contribution of the father's soul is to provide the initial life principle or *phusis*
through the seed, which after being implanted is then supported by the female's
soul through her body. The female not only provides physical nourishment but,
as well as the father in the initial stages, actually makes a contribution to the
development of the *logoi* of the embryo's *phusis*.[36] But it is this latter which is
the primary cause of the development of the embryo's physical state. The Stoic

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[32] In Iamblichus *Myst.* 3.14, 132.4–5 he refers to those who prophesy *kata to phantastikon* (with
the faculty of *phantasia*). In *Summikta Zetemata* 259F, 130 he cites prophetic activity in dreams as
evidence for non-bodily dependent activities of the soul.

[33] *De ins.* 4–6.149–55. See Synesius' own comment in *Ep.* 154.737a Herscher that he had gone beyond
traditional teaching.

[34] 1.1.11, 8–15; 6.7.7, 8–16. World Soul provides an outline which is filled in by the individual soul.
5.7.2 involves the soul of the parents in determining characteristics.

[35] In 48, 3 the providence of the World Soul ensures that the embryo has its 'steersman'. At 50, 2 the
whirling motion (*dinēsis*) of the universe is given as a contributory factor in aiding the individual
soul to find a 'suitable' body through sympathy.

[36] See 42.14–15 where the mother's soul is even said to be the 'craftsman' of the embryo, and 48, 7
where the mother's soul has an enhanced role beyond that of the father's.

mixture theory is employed in this context to explain not the presence of soul to body but the way in which the soul of father and mother can intimately co-operate with the *phusis* of the embryo (47.20–1). But Porphyry is clear that the embryo's psychic state is that of a plant rather than an animal. Nor may it be described as potentially animal in the sense of having faculties which are dormant, but potentially animal only in the sense that it is suitable for the eventual reception of the appropriate soul faculties.

Transmigration of souls

It would appear that Porphyry accepted the traditional view that souls transmigrate to other bodies after death. The necessity of the doctrine rests on the nature of the soul and the universe as being eternal. Souls are not created but always have been and therefore they must be recycled unless there is an infinite number which was unacceptable. It is possible that Porphyry proposed the possibility of a final release from embodiment for the philosopher, but this is more likely a misunderstanding. More vexed is the question whether human souls could enter animal bodies, as a literal interpretation of Plato would require. The concept involved difficulties for the role of reason when seen as a human distinguishing mark. A relatively simple solution was to interpret the Platonic passages in a metaphorical manner. But although Porphyry sometimes confusingly uses the language associated with a metaphorical interpretation, close scrutiny of the texts suggests the sort of complex compromise later perfected by Proclus in which the distinction of rational and irrational (or animal) soul is upheld but the rational soul is said not to enter fully into the animal body, but to transcend it.

Sense-perception

From the scattered comments that survive it would appear that Porphyry's theory of sense-perception is not unlike that of Plotinus. He apparently privileged sight and hearing above the other senses and like Plotinus locates the primary cause of sense-perception in the soul rather than in any purely physical contact. While dismissing Stoic and Epicurean physical theories of sense-perception (264F, Nemesius *Nat. hom.* 59.13–18; *Ad Gaur.* 48.22) he does not necessarily discount them as partial accounts of how an external stimulus can present an object for sensation. The ultimate identification of physical objects is, however, an activity of the soul which depends on the soul having all the *logoi* or forms of sensible objects (*Sent.* 16). And the individual which has all the forms in

it is identical to Soul (or World Soul)[37] which has all the forms as part of its function of forming the universe. Thus our perception (as opposed to sensation) of the physical world is dependent on the forms within the soul. Like Plotinus Porphyry stresses the active rather than passive nature of sense-perception. For the point of contact between soul faculty and physical object of perception is an 'activity' rather than a '*pathos*' of soul even though we may speak of '*pathē*' and accommodations (*Sent.* 18). The involvement of *sumpatheia* (*Ad Gaur.* 48.28) recalls Plotinus' use of this concept in his theory of sense-perception. In fact, Porphyry goes so far as to speak of 'assimilation' when discussing the soul–body relationship (*Sent.* 35.40.15–16). Porphyry's account of the exact workings of the internal processing of sense data is less clear but was a topic to which he devoted some attention. A number of passages from his commentary on the *Harmonics* of Ptolemy provide the most detail (*In Ptol. Harm.* 15.18–28). Here he makes a sharp distinction between reason (*logos*) and sense-perception which acts as reason's instrument (19.15). It is only when reason is involved that a full judgement, for example, on the difference between two sounds can be made, which Porphyry distinguishes from the sort of cursory distinction involved in mere sensory discrimination.[38] The transition from perception to knowledge is described in four stages: sense-perception transmits the forms of sensibles to the soul; opinion (*doxa*) receives and expresses them in *logoi*; *phantasia* puts them into picture form with the involvement of reasoning (*logismos*) which constitute a concept (*ennoia*). Lastly this is consolidated into knowledge (*epistēmē*) (13.15ff.).

Like other later Platonists, Porphyry treats the faculty of *phantasia* in an Aristotelian manner as an intermediary between sense-perception and thinking, but does seem anxious to give Platonic credentials to his interpretation (see *Sent.* 16; 43, p. 54.18–19; 55.5–6; 255F).

The physical world/Nature

Porphyry's interest in the physical world is primarily from the metaphysical perspective with its concern for principles (*archai*) (Simp. *In Arist. phys.* 9.10–27 = 119F). The issue on which we are best informed is his view of matter, particularly in the context of his interpretation of the *Timaeus*. Like Plotinus (6.7.1–2), he argues strongly against interpreting Plato as meaning a temporal creation of the world or any kind of process. Plato's account in temporal terms

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[37] The identification of individual soul and Soul is implied by Porphyry in 264F (see Lautner 2007) and stated in his *Timaeus* commentary (fr. 75 p. 65.4–6 Sodano).

[38] 19.1–3. He also distinguishes sensation and perception in *Ad Gaur.* 39.10–40.28 when differentiating the plant-like nature of the embryo from that of an 'animal' and trying to explain why Plato (*Tim.* 76e–77c5; 28a2–3) appears to attribute *aisthēsis* to plants.

is for the sake of instruction only. In his elucidation of what he takes to be Plato's reference to matter, he is very concerned to avoid the kind of dualism which he thinks is involved in the interpretations of earlier Platonists such as Atticus and Plutarch. The nature of matter was clearly an important topic for Porphyry since it is discussed not only in his commentaries on the *Timaeus* and Aristotle's *Physics* but also in the *Sententiae* as well as being the subject of a special treatise. He evidently rejected the commonplace Platonist listing of matter as one of two or three primary principles, which suggested that matter had some kind of independent status, in favour of Hermodorus' rejection of matter as a cause, which he cites in his commentary on Aristotle's *Physics*. Simplicius (*In Phys.* 247.30–248.18 = 146F), who provides this information, is probably reflecting Porphyry when he goes on to characterize matter as an auxiliary cause (*sunaition*), the standard later Platonic view. At any rate, Porphyry's citation of Hermodorus is calculated to demote matter from being an active cause. Porphyry clearly follows Plotinus in a strict monism which rejects an independent matter and claims that it is a product, ultimately, of the One, but through the agency of Intellect and Soul. It is probably this view that leads him in his treatise on matter to cite Moderatus' advocacy of a transcendent source of matter (Simplicius *In Arist. phys.* 230.34–231.24 = 236F). This concern to neutralize matter may be discerned in his curious proliferation of 'levels' between the ordered universe and pure matter. This makes its appearance both in his interpretation of the *Parmenides* and of the *Timaeus*. It involves the insertion between the cosmos and pure matter of two extra 'levels' or aspects, that of 'disordered body' and that of 'ordered matter', the former incorporating the 'disorderly motion' and the latter the 'traces of the forms of the elements' of the *Timaeus* (Proclus, *In Parm.* 1053.36–1054.37 = 170F and Philoponus, *Aet. mund.* 546.3–4 on *Timaeus* 53b2). The effect of these insertions is to negate the notion that it is matter that is disorderly and therefore in some way has qualities which actively impede its reception of form and to reject the idea floated by the followers of Atticus that Plato's 'traces' pointed to a pre-cosmic phase which contained in the 'traces' a potentiality or suitability for a chronologically subsequent reception of form.[39]

Porphyry argues specifically against this notion of matter with traces as a meaningful intermediary between a disorderly matter and an ordered cosmos (Proclus, *In Tim.* 394.16–22). It is for this reason that he places Plato's disorder at a higher level, thus distancing matter from all qualification while still accounting for Plato's 'traces'. As well as combating, in the detailed exegesis of the *Timaeus*,

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[39] Proclus, *In Tim.* 394.17 *epitēdeia*. Cf. Calcidius 302.17–18 and 345.1–5; 11–12 possibly reflecting Porphyry's interpretation.

what he saw as dangerously dualistic tendencies, Porphyry also seems to have marshalled a series of general arguments against the position of Atticus.[40] To these he adds a number of analogies in which the Demiurge is identified as the immediate source of matter: like a craftsman, he does not imprint form on matter but removes excess to allow form to appear; he creates in a way similar to human *phantasia* which can cause an internal emotion to be revealed as an external physical phenomenon or like the human seed which is without bulk but can produce a physical body. The same general principle of matter's dependence is maintained but in a more complex form when, in advocating a single rather than multiple universes, he distinguishes conceptually the general production of matter from an intelligible cause and its particular deployment within the cosmos (Proclus, *In Tim.* 1.439.29–440.16 = 55 Sodano commenting on *Timaeus* 31a3–4). A similar idea lies behind the argument in *Sententiae* 33 that bulk is in place but the body of the cosmos is everywhere.[41]

Plato and Aristotle

Though not the first to suggest a general agreement between the thought of Plato and Aristotle, Porphyry is one of the clearest advocates of a tradition which was frequently taken up later. He is the first Platonist to write extensive commentaries on Aristotle and he also composed treatises which would appear to have advocated the thesis of agreement. In addition we can point to the evidence of writers like Psellus and Boethius who are indebted to Porphyry as a source. More specifically we can point in Porphyry to an absence of serious criticism of Aristotle and, more positively to systematic attempts to accommodate his thought particularly in his treatment of causes.[42] In the realm of psychology where there would appear to be a serious point of divergence, he appears to reconcile them partly by distinguishing Aristotle from more radical followers and also by a generous interpretation of the role of active intellect as including human intellect and surviving death (cf. Simplic. *An.* 247.23–6). In the treatise *On the Powers of the Soul* he puts Aristotle into the category of those whose views help him to formulate his interpretation of Plato and presents us with a Platonically conceived Aristotle who is said to hold a tripartite view of the

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[40] Proclus *In Tim.* 1.391.4–396.26 = 51 Sodano: if matter and god are independent principles there must be a further principle to differentiate them to avoid an infinite regress or chance; two principles implies that evil is coeval with good; everything must come from one principle.

[41] See also *Sent.* 30 with its distinction of the ways in which individual souls and the World Soul relate to their bodies.

[42] Cf. *In Ptol. Harm.* 45.21–49.4 where apparent disagreements are explained by a difference of perspective, e.g., looking at the cause or the caused. Cf. Psellus *Theol. opusc.* 97.379.25–9 Gautier; *In phys.*; and the interpretation of 'creation' in the *Timaeus* commentary.

soul in an ethical context. He can then go on to adopt into his interpretation of Plato the Aristotelian list of soul faculties. His doctrine of the faculty of *phantasia*, too, is largely Aristotelian (see above) but put into a Platonic context.[43] One of his most enduring legacies was to give a secure place to Aristotelian logic in the Platonic school curriculum. This was achieved by reducing its metaphysical significance; the Aristotelian categories, for example, do not refer to the inner being of things but only to their external form. But, unlike Plotinus who reduced their reference merely to words, Porphyry was prepared to allow them, as significant expressions, the status of referring to objects in the physical world. Yet none of this need imply that for Porphyry Plato and Aristotle were in accord in every detail.

Religion

Porphyry's interest in religion is attested not only by the number of treatises he devoted to religious matters (including his attack on the Christians) but also by his engagement with the issue of the relationship of religion to philosophy. The elucidation of his views on these two strands is made difficult both by the fragmentary nature of the sources and the difficulty of discerning whether some of the treatises involved really did constitute separate and independent works.[44] The resulting speculations have then provided grounds for disparate claims for the overall intention of the combined fragments and works. The following analysis is based on the acceptance of *Philosophy from Oracles* and *Against the Christians* as separate works and on the view that Porphyry made no radical changes in his attitude to religion. The importance of his engagement with pagan religious practice can be measured by the fact that his letter to the Egyptian priest Anebo prompted a vigorous reply from a fellow Platonist, Iamblichus. What is represented in this exchange of views is a virtual debate within paganism, more precisely within Platonism, of the relationship between philosophy and religion.

Religious and theurgic rites

A central issue is divine causality. Porphyry was deeply concerned that the transcendence of god would be seriously compromised if it was claimed that

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[43] 278F, 11–12 where he links memory and *phantasia* but cites Plato, *Philb.* 39a with its image of the scribe and painter. Cf. *In Harm.* 13.27–31 with similar context of scribe and painter and *Ad Gaur.* 42.29.

[44] For example: is *De regressu animae* a part of *Philosophy from Oracles*? Is the latter to be identified with the treatise *Against the Christians*? Does the *Chronology* form part of *Against the Christians*? Possibly, but chronological material appears also in *Hist. phil.*

god took a direct part in religious rituals. Such involvement was tantamount to god descending into the physical world. Moreover, the language of ritual seemed to imply that men could command and control the gods. Iamblichus tried with greater success than Porphyry to find an answer to these problems by producing in *De mysteriis* a nuanced explanation of the divine and human contributions in ritual acts. In addition he berated Porphyry for confusing philosophy, theology and theurgy by discoursing about them in the same terms.

Theurgy, which was of particular concern to him, denotes a ritual practice intended to bring the soul into union with the divine. Its source was the *Chaldaean Oracles* which appear to have been brought to light again by Porphyry, probably in his researches into oracles, and even elicited a commentary from him. Porphyry found their ideas challenging in the context of his search for a way of bringing the soul to god – he could call it salvation – which would be open to all men and nations and not restricted to philosophers. But it is important to note that in this debate with Iamblichus 'theurgy' appears to include all religious phenomena that involve effective ritual acts; i.e., not only theurgic rites of salvation proper, but traditonal cult practices such as sacrifice, prayer and divination.

One of the chief instruments used by Iamblichus in saving religious phenomena is the distinction of different modes of discourse for philosophy and theurgy. Without that distinction, argued Iamblichus, Porphyry was hopelessly entangled in purely philosophical criteria. The result, according to Iamblichus was that he demoted all religious ritual. This seems to be true insofar as he denies that religious rites can lift the soul to the noetic level, but he shows even more hesitation about theurgy than about traditional religion to whose practice he remained well disposed. This may be due to the exaggerated claims of theurgy and its frequent confusion with magic.

Magic

Porphyry was, however, clearly opposed to what he termed '*goēteia*' (magic). Magic and what, for want of a better expression, we may term religion or traditional religion had long been distinguished, though often in a rather blurred manner. Porphyry, like Plotinus (4.4.40–4), accepted the efficacy of magic as a natural phenomenon which worked through the force of sympathy. But while rejecting the direct involvement of the (transcendent) gods in rituals, he does, however, admit that some divine forces are active within the physical cosmos. These are the *daimones* which can be subdivided into the good and the bad. Magic (*goēteia*) which uses the natural sympathies of the physical universe also

employs the assistance of evil *daimones* (*De abst.* 2.41.5). They help, for example, in the preparation of charms, but are deceitful and try to appear as gods. It is they who take in the odours and smoke of sacrifice (*De abst.* 2.42). And it is they whom the sorcerers summon because of their own inner impurity (*De abst.* 2.45). A similar picture appears in *De regressu animae* where sorcery involves *daimones* and is restricted in its efficacy to the material world and the provision of purely material benefits. Porphyry does not seem to have been altogether clear about the distinction between theurgy, black magic and beneficent magic, but it is evident that the word *goēteia* brought with it both for him and other ancient writers a sinister overtone which was absent from the more neutral *magia* or even *theurgia*.[45] It is equally clear that magic is in *De abstinentia* distinguished from traditional religion.

Traditional religion

Porphyry accords a general efficacy to religious rites. Although according to his analysis the earliest form of sacrifice was of inanimate things like crops, and animal sacrifice arose from a disorder in human affairs,[46] he can state as a view he evidently agrees with that the reasons or aims of any sacrificial act are to give thanks to the gods, to honour them and to seek benefits (*De abst.* 2.24, 1). The seriousness of the sacrificial intent is also stressed.[47] Intent and moral probity are essential if religious ritual is to have any value. Throughout the *Letter to Marcella* we can point to expressions which, unless they are literary artifice or meaningless platitudes, strongly suggest that Porphyry was at ease with traditional religious conventions. The gods do not overlook us but are present as our saviours (*Marc.* 4.107.8–9 Buffartigue). At a more lofty level god is invoked as a helper in securing genuinely spiritual benefits for the soul (*Marc.* 12 and 13). In the *Letter to Anebo*, Porphyry searches for ways of accounting for the efficacy of ritual actions but without any clear success in reconciling the transcendency of the divine with the physical actions of ritual. But although transcendent metaphysical explanations of the workings of religious ritual are not to be found in Porphyry, this does not mean that he rejected their efficacy.

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[45] See especially Porph. fr. 286F6–7 (= Aug. *Civ. dei* 10.9–10) *quam vel magian vel detestabiliore nomine goetian vel honorabiliore theurgian vocant.*

[46] E.g., famine *De abst.* 2.9, 1. The superiority of non-animal sacrifice is also favoured by Delphi: cf. the story of Clearchus *De abst.* 2.16 and his interpretation of Plato *Laws* 716d, 717a as referring to animal sacrifice.

[47] *De abst.* 2.61, 1. Although this is in fact a citation from Theophrastus it is so totally integrated into Porphyry's own text as to express his own sentiments.

We may point to an analysis of the psychosomatic effects of abstinence from meat. It occurs in his frequent discussions of the effect of physical excess on the soul and its removal through abstinence. Although Porphyry frequently contrasts ritual purity with moral and intellectual purity, he also frequently expresses the connection between the two, not in a symbolic sense nor in the sense of divine efficacy, but as an efficient psychosomatic connection e.g., in *De abst*. 2.44 he argues that ritual purification in the sense of purifying ourselves or abstaining from certain physical entities has a physical effect on the body which in turn affects the soul. Although such abstinence may be regarded in a purely secular context, it is clear that Porphyry has a high regard for religious communities as providing a framework, and of course a religious one, which fosters abstinence and separation from the restrictions of the physical.[48] The link, as so often expressed in this treatise, is the effect of bodily excess on the passions and the efficiency of the rational powers. A curious, but neverthe- less, theoretical principle is expressed in terms of the exclusion of opposites (4.20.3). The structuring of this psychosomatic connection may be seen to operate through the semi-physical *pneuma* and faculty of *phantasia*, which pro- vide a link between the purely corporeal and the incorporeal elements of our experience. What he does not do is to offer any explanation of the efficacy of ritual that makes it dependent on god. These explanations, being purely natural ones or at most involving the intervention of *daimones*, of necessity put the rituals of traditional religion on the same level of effective operation as magical actions which also depend on natural forces, *daimones* and their manipulation by the magical practitioner. But when Porphyry is discoursing purely within the context of traditional religion, as in *De abstinentia* and the *Letter to Marcella*, he distinguishes it from magic, by claiming that it is rightly performed only when the performer's intentions and state are pure.[49] Porphyry thus accepts traditional ritual, when seen in its own context, and even alludes to its efficacy. Moreover, like Plato, Porphyry links traditional piety with the security and well-being of the city-state. Of course he means by traditional piety sacrificial cult which does not involve the slaughter of animals and is performed by priests who have observed strict laws of abstinence and who act on behalf of their fellow citizens who cannot or are not expected to behave with the same strictness (*De abst*. 4.5.3).

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[48] E.g., the four examples given in *De abst*. 4: Brahmins, Essenes, Egyptians and Magi. Porphyry may well have gone on in the lost part of book 4 to include the Pythagoreans.

[49] In one passage (*De abst*. 2.43.2), however, he seems to reject totally all animal sacrifice on the grounds that it involves the placating of malicious demons. Here his explicit reference to 'civic' religion looks very much like a rejection of traditional religion. But of course elsewhere he even allows the good man to sacrifice.

Philosopher and non-philosopher

In both *De abstinentia* (e.g., *De abst.* 1.27) and the *Letter to Marcella* (ch. 11) a distinction is made between the conduct expected of the philosopher and that of the ordinary man. It is clearly parallel to the distinction of levels at which each operates. The philosopher acts at the level of intellect. It is only philosophers who are expected to limit themselves to non-animal sacrifices (*De abst.* 2.3). In fact at best their sacrifices should be beyond even this. Their sacrifice is a pure heart and virtue. But they are not to neglect ritual altogether. In fact the Pythagoreans are said to have sometimes sacrificed even animals (*De abst.* 2.28.2).

When it comes to the intimacy of personal advice, for example, to his wife Marcella, a similarly delicate balance may be observed. In this context he is not concerned with the issue of abstinence from eating meat but with the more basic opposition of philosophical and ordinary life, the contrast between the intellectual prayer of the philosopher and the verbal or ritually enacted prayer of traditional religion. The former is clearly higher in the hierarchy. Indeed ritual and prayer without virtue are useless and a good man can honour and become like god through virtue alone, i.e., the highest level is reached only through virtue (*Marc.* 16.284.24–5). But this does not rule out traditional piety. And so Porphyry can go on to encourage his wife in its practice: 'the greatest fruit of piety is to honour the divine in the traditional way' (*Marc.* 18.286.3–4). And in a well-phrased understatement he neither affirms nor denies the benefits of reverencing the altars of the gods which 'when honoured do no harm, and when neglected bring no benefit' (*Marc.* 18, p. 286, 6–8). But in the end it is the internal disposition, intention, purity and clarity about the real nature of the divine that are the determining factors. As the chain of citations demonstrates (*Marc.* 19), it is a traditional piety modified by Pythagorean strictures, but it is active, ritual piety nonetheless.

Iamblichus' dispute with Porphyry is probably the source of the distinction between philosophers and hierophants made by Damascius in which Plotinus and Porphyry are placed amongst the former, Iamblichus and Proclus amongst the latter (*In Phaedonem* 123.3). It is, however, a categorization that misrepresents the great difference between Plotinus and Porphyry, for what is really important to appreciate in Porphyry's position is that he is genuinely concerned with religion and impressed by it, unlike Plotinus who is relatively indifferent. We might recall in this context Porphyry's reaction, in his *Life of Plotinus* (*Life* 10.33–4), to Plotinus' rejection of Amelius' invitation to do the temple rounds; although the anecdote is intended to damage Amelius'

perceived standing with Plotinus, Porphyry is somewhat bemused by Plotinus' refusal.[50]

Porphyry tries to accommodate the role assigned to religion by Plato, but, in the tradition of Hellenistic inquiry, possibly much influenced by Plutarch, raises and tries to resolve the metaphysical problems which a closer inquiry reveals. I do not think that at any point there is a question of insincerity on Porphyry's part when he upholds or encourages religious practice, i.e., that he is simply trying to avoid social or legal sanctions; nor does he accept religious practice as simply socially or psychologically useful, but like Plato thinks it is in some way objectively effective. His problem is that his inquiries have taken him beyond the point reached by Plato or even Plutarch. He is no longer able to support with ease two value systems, religious and philosophical, in completely independent compartments. The catalyst to this inquiry may well have been the emergence of theurgy. From the start theurgy was a philosophico-religious construct, taking both its means of expression and its goals from Platonism and religion. For a man who, like Porphyry, had a profound respect for religious systems it was not possible simply to ignore it. Theurgy appeared to offer the possibility of reaching the same goal of unification with the divine as philosophy, but by means of ritual. It therefore raised the question of divine causation in ritual in a more demanding and explicit way than traditional religion. It is not surprising that Porphyry should then extend the inquiry about causality to all aspects of religion. Because of his failure to find a clear metaphysical solution to this issue, Porphyry instead reasserted the pre-eminence of the philosophical way and restricted the efficacy of religious ritual to a lower level. Theurgy, because of its greater insistence on the efficacy of the human agent, remained suspect to him and appeared close to magic. Traditional rites were equally restricted in scope in his eyes, but because they were deemed to be less metaphysically demanding and, of course, because they were a long recognized constituent and expression of civic life, could be accorded an honourable place in human society and even in the life of the philosopher.

Relationship to Christianity

The fragmentary remains of Porphyry's extensive treatise *Against the Christians* give ample witness to both his philosophical and scholarly objections to Christianity.[51] The effectiveness of his criticism may be measured from the

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[50] See also Porphyry's account of Plotinus' reaction to his reading of a 'mystical' poem 'you have shown yourself at once poet, philosopher and hierophant' (*Life* 15.1–2).

[51] Fragments of *Against the Christians* are cited from the edition of von Harnack 1916, with F preceding the fragment number.

official condemnations[52] and counter-attacks which it provoked.[53] Whether it is to be associated in any way with the great persecution of Diocletian (302–3) remains unclear.[54] But it is more likely that the work was written before this time during Porphyry's Sicilian period.[55] In it he turned his considerable acumen and knowledge of literary and historical method to a close scrutiny of the Bible of which he shows a very detailed knowledge, although there is no reason to suppose that his familiarity with the Scriptures lends support to the story that Porphyry had once been a Christian himself. This is probably a Christian invention intended to discredit him.[56] He successfully demonstrated, for example, that the Book of Daniel, an important element in the Christian claim to be the successor of Judaism, should be dated to the second rather than the sixth century BCE, and was therefore subsequent to the events which it claimed to prophesy (F43, from Jerome, *Comm. in Daniel*). The targets of his criticism included the exegetical method of Christian writers, their blindness and uncritical belief, the untenability of the *logos* doctrine, the eternity of the universe, the resurrection of the body and the creation of the soul at the moment of birth.

Although Porphyry and other Platonists regularly used the tool of allegorical exegesis, this differed according to Porphyry from Christian practice in which the interpretation often does not fit the words, there is a lack of clarity[57] and the literal meaning is impossible or repugnant.[58]

[52] Edict of Constantine connected with the Council of Nicaea, 324 CE (Socr. *Hist. eccl.* 1.9 Migne *PG* 67 88B7–C11); 435 CE (*Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum* 1.1.3.68.8–17); 17 February 448 of Theodosius and Valentinus (*ACO* 1.1.4 p. 66.3ff.); 18 April 448 (*ACO* 1.1.4 p. 67, 2f.); 451 CE (*ACO* 2.3.2 p. 89.14–16); 536 CE Synod of Constantinople (*ACO* 3 p. 121.22–6).

[53] We know that the following wrote specific counter-attacks which survive in meagre fragments: Methodius, bishop of Olympus (died 311?); Eusebius, bishop of Caesarea (260/65–339/340), whose counter-attack is known to us only from citations in Jerome; and Apollinarius of Laodicea (310–390).

[54] In the letter to his wife Marcella, written during a period of forced absence, Porphyry speaks of the 'need of the Hellenes'(Porph. *Marc.* 275, 19 Nauck) which might suggest that Porphyry was on official business. It is unlikely that the letter was composed as late as 300–3; yet it is difficult to find a context other than a religious one for the phrase 'need of the Hellenes', for the term 'Hellenes' comes certainly by the time of Julian some sixty years later to imply Greek pagan culture as opposed to Christianity. As a distinguished pagan intellectual with a wide interest in religious matters it would not be surprising if Porphyry's advice had been sought on this occasion.

[55] The received opinion on the date of composition that it was written before Plotinus' death is based on Eusebius' remark (*HE* 6.19.2 = 30T Smith) that it was composed in Sicily. But Cameron 1967: 382–4 has argued for a date after 270, Barnes 1973 for as late as 300.

[56] Cf. Socr. *HE* 3.23 Migne *PG* 67 444C6–445A6. For this sort of fabrication cf. Rist 1988: 407–15 and especially 412–13.

[57] The parables are seen as confusing, rather than as helping to clarify the teaching of Christ. They are also seen as being too mundane to express lofty notions: F54 Macarius.

[58] E.g., the tale of Jonah and the whale. How could a man spend three days in a whale and come out with his clothing intact? F46 (Augustine *Ep.* 102). Origen (*Contra Celsum* 7.19) admits that a literal meaning is sometimes impossible. An example of where the literal meaning is repugnant is taken from the Book of Hosea (1.2) where God orders the prophet to marry a whore: F45 (Jerome).

A more general criticism which embraces several of the points already raised is the charge of doing violence to the literal meaning of the text. Didymus took the bull by the horns and defended Origen on precisely this point by claiming that this was a legitimate method.[59] In this context he cites Porphyry's criticism: Porphyry had apparently illustrated this type of illegitimate allegorization with a *reductio ad absurdum* in the form of an obviously inappropriate and violent interpretation of the *Iliad* in which he compares Hector with the devil and Achilles with Christ. Such an interpretation, presumably, is to be seen as obviously forced and false since it has nothing whatsoever to do with the original. Indeed, Homer is the example *par excellence* of pagan literature; any correspondences that can be drawn are, therefore, entirely gratuitous and display no necessary connection.

A traditional criticism of the Christians had been that of their blind belief. The Christians did not use demonstrative argument (*apodeixis*) but belief alone (*pistis monē*) or irrational belief (*alogos pistis*). This charge had already appeared in Celsus – 'they do not want to give or receive a reason for what they believe'.[60] It is interesting to note here the refinement in the notion of belief (*pistis*), which in Plato comes very low indeed in the epistemological scale. The later Platonists, here partly following a developing tradition, distinguished the kind of belief which is a form of conviction consequent on demonstrative argument, an idea of Aristotelian origin, from mere belief, that is without *logos* or reason. Another expression used for this irrational belief is 'unexamined belief', which recalls the Platonic-Socratic maxim in the *Apology* that the 'unexamined life' or 'life without examination' is not worth living (Plato, *Apology* 38a5).

Unfortunately not a great deal survives of Porphyry's more specifically metaphysically based objections to Christianity. But sufficient pointers exist to suggest that he would have accepted and probably articulated arguments which are known to us only from later sources.

The incarnation posed a basic problem for a Platonist. How can the transcendent God be immanent? It is in the context of this problem of transcendence that Porphyry attacked the Christian *logos* doctrine, or at least a version

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Cf. also F69 (Macarius), a criticism of John 6.53 'eat my flesh, drink my blood'. Although pagan allegory sometimes defends the obscurity of the literal text, it is significant that for the pagan the obscurity is overcome by the use of reason. In fact, myth is used to sharpen the reason (cf. Sallustius *On the Gods and the Universe* 3). Origen, however, stresses that in the end we need to be specially helped by God to see some hidden meanings (cf. *Contra Celsum* 4.50), an idea that Porphyry evidently attacked. Cf. Didymus *Comm. on the Psalms*, Tura Papyri, p. 308, 11–14, commenting on Ps. 43.2.

[59] Didymus, Tura Papyri, p. 281.

[60] Origen *Contra Celsum* 1.9. It is found in F74 (Macarius) and in F73 (Eusebius but without a name) as well as in F1 (Eusebius, an unnamed fragment which von Harnack designates as Porphyry's prologue).

of it.[61] The argument as it survives is based on the originally Stoic notion that *logos* or 'expression' occurs in two forms: the unexpressed or internal *logos* (*endiathetos logos*) and the expressed *logos* (*prophorikos logos*). This Stoic idea had been transmuted by Plotinus (or even earlier) from an epistemological into a metaphysical principle which he employed to express the relationship of subordination between the One, Intellect and Soul (e.g., *Enneads* 1.2.3.27–30; 5.1.3.7–8. Cf. Dodds 1963: 234). Now this grouping of three realities or hypostases was sufficiently similar to the Christian Trinity to be exploited by Christian theologians. But it differed, of course, fundamentally in that the Platonic hypostases were subordinate to each other and not co-ordinate as orthodox Trinitarian doctrine eventually demanded. In his criticism of the notion of *logos* in John's Gospel, Porphyry seems to be arguing that the doctrine so applied has no meaning since the *logos* of John falls into neither category of *logos*, i.e., internal or expressed; in other words the *logos* or son is neither the original nor the derived *logos*. Porphyry rightly sees that orthodox Christianity did not teach a subordinate son. One of the chief complaints of all anti-Christian polemic is the identification of Christ as God.

An interesting reflection of the influence of the Platonic triad is to be found in Arianism, the heresy of the Christian Arius who taught that Christ is subordinate to the Father. In the imperial condemnations of the works of Porphyry his name is constantly linked with that of Arius and in the edict of 324 the followers of Arius are referred to as 'Porphyrians'. What possibly lies behind this is their perceived use of Platonic ideas, particularly subordinationism (as mediated through the works of Porphyry) and, more precisely perhaps, the views of Porphyry in which the divinity of Christ is rejected though he can be equated with a 'hero', which in pagan terms means a divinized mortal. We can glean more about the attitude of Porphyry to the figure of Christ from a number of oracles cited by him in *Philosophy from Oracles*. One of the more interesting sets of oracles recorded by Porphyry deals with the status of Christ and the God of the Hebrews. Clearly, the pagan world in general readily accepted the God of the Hebrews, but could not accept the divinity of Christ (Aug. *Civ. dei* 19.23 = 343F; 344F). The Father God of the Hebrews could be accommodated in his transcendence to the Platonic first principle. Porphyry could accept that the supreme, transcendent God could be given different names in different traditions. He was also, like Celsus, impressed by the antiquity and tradition of Judaism. Christ was different. He was time-bound and restricted to a particular place by his incarnation. But, as we have already noted, it was the Christians

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[61] F86 (Theophylact *Enarr. in Joh.* Migne *PG* 123 1141). Cf. also F68 and F77 (Macarius); F85 (Augustine).

rather than Christ whom Porphyry chose as the main target of his attack. The pagan world was in general less certain about Christ, an uncertainty which is apparent from the *Philosophy from Oracles* in which Christ is sometimes honoured as a wise man whom the Christians mistakenly worship as a god (345F; 345aF; 346F).

What status did Christ have in Porphyry's eyes? It has been argued that a major theme of the third book of *Philosophy from Oracles* was an attempt to 'steal' Christ, as it were, for the pagans, dissociate him from the Christians who had betrayed his teaching, and set up a rival religious system to that of Christianity. But this goes too far. *Philosophy from Oracles* is preserved only in fragments. And from these there is no compelling evidence that Christ was a major topic in the third book. The passages on Christ would naturally have attracted the attention of Christian writers who, by giving them so much prominence, probably distort the tenor of the book as a whole. Nevertheless, Porphyry is aware that he is stressing an unusual line. And we know that Hierocles, for example, was not so favourable to Christ but criticized him as a magician and charlatan, comparing him unfavourably with the pagan Apollonius of Tyana (Eusebius *Adv. Hierocl.* 1–2).

The eternity of the universe; the resurrection of the body; and the rejection of the creation of soul at the time of birth are issues which, though the centre of a later debate, may well have been raised by Porphyry. The denial of the eternity of the universe was almost certainly aired by him,[62] and by Celsus before him who declared that 'the world is uncreated and indestructible'.[63] Synesius' last problem was with the resurrection, whether of Christ himself or of the individual body on the Last Day. Despite the fact that the Platonists accepted the notion of a quasi-corporeal body attached to the soul after death (see Porphyry, *Sent.* 29), this body indicated for them not a perfecting of the human body as an integral part of our being, but the regrettable lingering of a physical attachment around the souls of those who had not fully purified themselves from the concerns of this world. The ultimate reunion of soul and body in the Christian sense goes against the whole Platonic tradition of striving to separate the two so that the soul can be freed from the distractions of the body to live in its own element.[64]

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[62] F34–5 (Macarius); F89 (Macarius); see also F90a, an unnamed passage in Nemesius *Nat. hom.* where Porphyry is often cited. F91 from Augustine is also relevant.

[63] Origen, *Contra Celsum* 4.79. Cf. also Sallustius, *Concerning the Gods and the Universe* 7.1–2 (trans. Nock).

[64] On this topic the argument against God intervening in the natural order to facilitate the resurrected body (F35 Macarius) is a basic philosophical principle and may, therefore go back to Porphyry. See also F92 (Augustine). Also F94 (Macarius), which deals with the resurrection of the dead, uses arguments about what is possible for God which can be traced back to Porphyry through Didymus.

School of Porphyry?

The only direct evidence that Porphyry founded or ran a school is the testimony of Eunapius which may be mere speculation based on the *Life of Plotinus*, which otherwise seems to be his sole source of information (*Vit. soph.* 4.1.10, p. 8, 9–11 = 1T64). The fact that Porphyry addressed treatises to individuals and took up the task of commenting on Aristotle's logical works may indicate no more than the desire to serve the needs of individual students like Chrysaorius for whom the *Isagoge* was intended as an introduction (Elias, *In Porph. Isag.* 39.8–19 = 29T). The phrase 'those around Porphyry' used by Iamblichus, Proclus and Simplicius may indicate nothing more than those who agreed with him[65] but does suggest a recognizable group of followers. Iamblichus may have been a formal pupil, but the evidence is far from clear.[66] In the case of Iamblichus, however, Eunapius, although a not well-informed source, says that he 'attached himself' to Porphyry, a phrase which suggests formal contact.[67] Given the small scale and somewhat informal operation of some of the late philosophical schools even short-term study visits should not be ruled out as constituting school activity. But more important, perhaps, than establishing the existence and nature of a formal school, is the undoubted phenomenon of his influence both in the Latin West and the Greek East. Whether this was achieved through careful publishing or oral teaching or both is difficult to discern. But Augustine's famous encounter with the books of the *Platonici* is good evidence for the power of the written word. Porphyry's commentaries not only firmly rooted the logical works of Aristotle in the curriculum of the Platonic schools but provided an important source of information and exegesis on which Iamblichus and Proclus would later draw. It is not impossible that the *Anon. Parm.* is also the product of a follower of Porphyry working in an informal seminar situation with a group in Rome reading the *Parmenides*.[68] This would then be the most appropriate place to say a few words about this work.

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[65] See 34T. The phrase 'Porphyrians' (38T, 39T) clearly refers disparagingly to Christians who were perceived as using his doctrines.

[66] He is described as the teacher of Iamblichus in the *Suda* (4.178.16 = 2T, 3) and Iamblichus as his student in David (*In Porph. Isag. Proem.* 92, 2 = 6T). The treatise *Peri tou gnōthi seauton* is addressed to an Iamblichus (273F, 18) and Iamblichus himself says in his *De anima* that he had 'heard' Porphyry and many other Platonists (*tinōn akēkoa Platonikōn hoion Porphuriou kai allōn pollōn* = 446F Smith and Iamblichus F24 Finamore and Dillon) but 'heard' is not precise (cf. Dillon 1973: 10 n.4) and the addition of 'many others' weakens the meaning further.

[67] *Porphuriōi prostheis heauton, Vit. soph.* 5.1, 2.10.21–11.2 = 33aT. In a further ambiguous phrase an Anatolius with whom Iamblichus also studied is described as *deutera pheromenōi* which ought to mean 'ranking next after' Porphyry but could mean 'standing in for' Porphyry. The latter would lend support to the notion of a formal Porphyrian school.

[68] One notes here that Proclus' own *Parmenides* commentary betrays no trace of his familiarity with the contents of the *Anon. Com.* and that the major influence seems to be in the West (Victorinus). Locating it in this context would also explain the many Porphyrian verbal echoes.

Anonymous Commentary on the Parmenides

This fragmentary commentary on Plato's *Parmenides* was discovered in 1873 in a palimpsest in the library of Turin and was copied before being destroyed in a fire in 1904. There are six fragments consisting altogether of fourteen folio pages. They cover *Parmenides* 133a–143a and so the first to the middle of the second hypotheses of the second part of the dialogue. These are the hypotheses which were interpreted by Plotinus and Porphyry as referring to the One and Intellect. There is disagreement on the date and possible authorship of the commentary. Dates range from pre-Plotinian to the time of Plutarch of Athens. P. Hadot has strongly argued for Porphyrian authorship but this has been contested.[69] The difficulty of dating is due to the mixture of apparently pre- and post-Plotinian ideas and the many verbal echoes of 'Porphyrian' vocabulary. The fragments mainly represent an attempt to reconcile a totally transcendent with a second principle and appear to oscillate between stressing total transcendence of the first principle and some form of co-ordination of the second with the first. No final clear position is adopted, at least, in the section which survives. The fragments begin with an affirmation of the immense power of the One or first principle as source and cause of all. Its transcendence is emphasized: it is beyond multiplicity and even designation as One and may be reached through a form of ecstasy (1, commenting on *Parm.* 137a–c3). This principle or god differs from mind. In fact, we cannot even apply the category of difference to him, for the application of such categories is a mark of human weakness. He transcends knowledge and ignorance but has a sort of pre-knowledge (*gnōsis*) (2, on *Parm.* 139b–140b). The One is not in time (3, on *Parm.* 141a5). Although oracles declare that god contains power and mind(s) and so, though transcendent, forms a triad, the approach of negative theology is to be preferred (4, on *Parm.* 142a – negations). The commentary in moving on to the second hypothesis of the *Parmenides* (142b) introduces a second One that participates in Being and is derived from the first One which is without substance. Two Ones are thus distinguished: the first is beyond Being (*ousia*) but may be identified with existence (*to einai*), it 'is active' (*energei*) but is not 'activity' (*energeia*) (5). Finally (6) two aspects of 'Intellect' are extracted from *Parm.* 143a: one operates by turning in on itself and is to be identified with the One alone, the other, to be identified with the One-Being, does not turn in on itself. What we appear, then, to end up with is a first principle which is all transcendent but nevertheless has an internal intellectual

[69] Hadot 1968 and for doubts see Bechtle 1999, Edwards 1990, Smith 1974, 1987, 2007. Beutler argued for Plutarch of Athens. Bechtle stresses the 'pre-Plotinian' elements and argues for a pre-Plotinian date. Smith places the commentary in the post-Porphyrian period under the influence of Porphyry.

activity, and a second principle which is intellect proper. The first is unity, the second shares in unity; the first is totally singular and beyond Being, the second is multiple and participates in Being. What is more difficult to decipher is the precise way in which the two relate to each other to effect a reconciliation of transcendence and a causal link.

3 CONCLUDING ASSESSMENT

The very limited survival of Porphyry's vast output makes it difficult to come to any comprehensive assessment of his career. The situation is especially acute with the less popularizing aspects of his philosophical activities. The judgement of E. R. Dodds that he had no original metaphysical ideas at all seems over harsh. Porphyry was not the sort of person to accept the views of others without thinking them out carefully for himself, as is witnessed by his encounter with Plotinus over the status of intelligibles and the relationship of soul to body. The outstanding mark of his intellectual style is this spirit of relentless and thorough inquiry which he clearly combined with considerable philosophical acumen. He also had a reputation for clarity of exposition and was a respected and influential commentator on both Plato and Aristotle. His contribution to the establishing of Plotinus' thought in both the Latin West and the Greek East must be credited as a major achievement.

It is probably more helpful to see him as a contemporary rather than successor of Plotinus. For he belongs firmly to the same philosophical *milieu* from which Plotinus raised himself, and even after the espousal of Plotinus' ideas, continued to exploit much of the outer trappings, at least, of that tradition. This is in no small measure due to his greater involvement than Plotinus in the totality of Hellenic culture, philosophical, religious and literary.[70] In this respect he might be compared with Plutarch (of Chaeronea), though he was a much more serious philosopher. Although the almost total loss of his most serious metaphysical writings renders any final judgement on his philosophical status tendentious, there can be no doubt that his reputation and influence establish him as a figure of major cultural importance in the history of Greek civilization and the tradition of western thought.

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[70] For his reputation as a polymath see 6T = David, *In Porph. Isag.* 92.2–6.

IAMBLICHUS OF CHALCIS AND HIS SCHOOL

JOHN DILLON

I LIFE AND WORKS

The sources available for our knowledge of Iamblichus' life are highly unsatisfactory, consisting as they do primarily of a hagiographical and ill-informed *Life* by the sophist Eunapius, who was a pupil of Chrysanthius, who was himself a pupil of Iamblichus' pupil Aedesius; nevertheless, enough evidence can be gathered to give a general view of his life-span and activities.

The evidence points to a date of birth around 245, in the town of Chalcis-ad-Belum, modern Qinnesrin, in northern Syria. Iamblichus' family were prominent in the area, and the retention of an old Aramaic name (*yamliku-[El]*) in the family points to some relationship with the dynasts of Emesa in the previous centuries, one of whose family names this was. This noble ancestry does seem to colour somewhat Iamblichus' attitude to tradition – he likes to appeal on occasion for authority to 'the most ancient of the priests' (e.g., *De an.* §37), and was plainly a recognized authority on Syrian divinities (cf. Julian, *Hymn to King Helios* 150cd).

As teachers, Eunapius provides (*VP* 457–8) two names: first, a certain Anatolius, described as 'second in command' to the distinguished Platonic philosopher Porphyry, the pupil of Plotinus, and then Porphyry himself. We are left quite uncertain as to where these contacts took place, but we may presume in Rome, at some time in the 270s or 280s, when Porphyry, on his return from Sicily, had reconstituted Plotinus' school (whatever that involved). If that is so – and it is plain that Iamblichus knew Porphyry's work well, even though he was far from a faithful follower – then it seems probable that he left Porphyry's circle long before the latter's death, and returned to his native Syria (probably in the 290s) to set up his own school, not in his home town, but rather in the city of Apamea, already famous in philosophical circles as the home of the second-century Pythagoreanizing Platonist Numenius. There he presided over a circle of pupils, including a local grandee, Sopater, who seems to have supported him materially, and as long as Licinius ruled in the East, the school flourished. After

the triumph of Constantine, however, the writing had to be on the wall for such an overtly Hellenic and theurgically inclined group, and on Iamblichus' death in the early 320s the school broke up, his senior pupil Aedesius moving to Pergamum, where the Iamblichean tradition was carried on quietly for another generation or so. The Emperor Julian, we may note, sought to take on Aedesius as his mentor, but Aedesius, preferring the quiet life, prudently directed him to his own pupil Maximus of Ephesus.

Iamblichus was a prolific author, though unfortunately only his more elementary works survive intact – apart from the *Reply to the Letter of Porphyry to Anebo* (popularly known, since the Renaissance, as *On the Mysteries of the Egyptians*). Chief among these was a sequence of nine, or possibly ten, works in which he presented a comprehensive introduction to Pythagorean philosophy – an indication of his view of Pythagoras as the spiritual grandfather of Platonism. Of these, we still have the first four, beginning with a *Bios Pythagorikos* – not simply a 'life of Pythagoras', but rather an account of the Pythagorean way of life, with a biography of Pythagoras woven into it – and followed by an *Exhortation to Philosophy*, a treatise *On the General Science of Mathematics*, and a commentary on the *Introduction to Arithmetic* of the second-century Platonist Nicomachus of Gerasa. The doxographical portion of a treatise *On the Soul*, and extracts from a series of philosophical letters, the most philosophically significant being the *Letter to Macedonius on Fate*, also survive in the *Anthology* of John of Stobi.

Other than those, however, we have considerable evidence of commentaries on works of both Plato and Aristotle, fragments of which survive (mainly) in the later commentaries of Proclus. We have evidence of commentaries on the *Alcibiades*, *Phaedo*, *Phaedrus*, *Sophist*, *Philebus*, *Timaeus* and *Parmenides* of Plato, and the *Categories* of Aristotle (this latter preserved extensively by Simplicius), as well as the *De Interpretatione*, *Prior Analytics*, *De caelo* and *De anima*. He is also on record as having composed a copious commentary on the *Chaldaean Oracles* (in at least twenty-eight books), and a *Platonic Theology*. The *Reply to the Letter of Porphyry to Anebo* mentioned above is an odd production, consisting of a response to a polemical open letter by Porphyry attacking the practice and theory of theurgy, which Iamblichus, taking on the persona of a senior Egyptian priest, Abammon, elects to defend.

2 PHILOSOPHY

Iamblichus' philosophical position is essentially an elaboration of the Platonic system propounded by Plotinus (and Porphyry), though strongly influenced by such sources as the Pythagorean pseudepigrapha and the *Chaldaean Oracles*. He

accepts the triadic system of principles, or hypostases, the One, Intellect and Soul, propounded by Plotinus, but he introduces complications at every turn.

First of all, in an attempt to resolve the contradiction between a One which is utterly transcendent but which also constitutes the first principle of all creation, he postulates a totally ineffable first Principle above a more 'positive' (i.e., causally efficient) One, which itself presides over a dyad of Limit and Unlimitedness, thus distinguishing the two antithetical aspects which Plotinus sought to embrace in his concept of the One. This we learn from a passage of Damascius' *De principiis* (§43, 2.1.1ff. C–W), in which he tells us that Iamblichus set out such a system in his *Chaldaean Theology*:

After this let us bring up the following point for consideration, whether the first principles (*archai*) before the first noetic triad are two in number, the completely ineffable (*hē pantē arrhētos*), and that which is uncoordinated (*asuntaktos*) to the triad, even as the great Iamblichus maintained in book 28 of his sublime *Chaldaean Theology;* or rather, as the majority of those who came after him preferred, that after the ineffable and single causal principle there comes the first triad of the intelligibles; or are we to descend even from this hypothesis and say, following Porphyry, that the single first principle of all is the Father of the intelligible triad? (My trans.)

There are a number of problems here which need to be teased out. First of all, it seems at first sight odd of Damascius to make a contrast between a principle which is 'completely ineffable' and one that is *unco-ordinated* with a following triad. One would expect the second principle to be *co-ordinated* with what follows it. However, the oddity is explained by what follows. Those who come after Iamblichus, notably Syrianus and Proclus, accept the completely ineffable first principle, but make their second One the monad of a primary triad, rather than distinguishing between it and the monad of that triad. Iamblichus preferred to preserve a distinction here, for reasons which Damascius gives in what follows (2.11–3.2): this second One needs to be able to preside over both Limit and Unlimitedness, and to serve as 'the cause of the mixture', as portrayed at *Phlb.* 23cd, so it cannot itself be identical with the monad, which represents Limit. We must presume that Syrianus and Proclus viewed the situation otherwise, and preferred to subsume the causative element into the monad itself; but we can at least appreciate Iamblichus' concern to have his One preside over both elements of this pair equally.

At any rate, Limit and Unlimitedness in turn generate a third principle, the Unified (*to hēnomenon*), which constitutes an ontological link with the next hypostasis, that of Intellect (*Nous*), as whose highest element it can also be viewed. Inhering in the Unified we may also discern a multiplicity of 'henads', which serve as unitary prefigurations of the system of Forms which are the

contents of Intellect. What, one might ask, is the justification for postulating such prefigurations of the Forms, which are themselves, after all, thoroughly unified within Intellect? One stimulus may be discerned as being a concern for what E. R. Dodds, with reference to Proclus, has termed 'the principle of continuity', requiring that reality should exhibit no sudden leaps, as from unity to multiplicity. This leads to the postulation of a succession of intermediate entities, and such is certainly the role filled by the henads.

The origin of the concept of henads has actually been a matter of dispute, as between Iamblichus and the later Athenian school, but the remarks of Proclus in his *Commentary on the Parmenides* (6.1066, 16ff. Cousin), as part of his critique of previous interpretations of the subject matters of the hypotheses of the second part of the *Parmenides*, seem clear enough (he is criticizing Iamblichus under the guise of 'some of those we revere'). Iamblichus has just been presented as postulating the subject of the First Hypothesis as 'God and the gods':

Necessarily then, if indeed the divine is above being, and all that is divine is above being, the present argument [sc. the First Hypothesis] could be either only about the primal God, who is surely the only entity above being, or else it is about all the gods also who are after him, as *some of those we revere* would hold. So they argue that since every god, inasmuch as he is a god, is a henad (for it is this element, the One, which divinizes all being), for this reason they think it right to join to the consideration of the First God the discussion of all the gods; for they are all supra-essential henads, and transcend the multiplicity of beings, and are the summits of beings. (My trans.)

The reference to the henads as 'gods' may seem confusing, since for Iamblichus, as for his successors, there are gods at the intelligible level also, but the reason is that all entities in the realm of the One are *ipso facto* divinized – as Proclus indeed specifies here. Other passages of Proclus, notably *In Parm.* 7.36.8–28 Klibansky and *Theol. Plat.* 3.21, confuse the issue somewhat further by describing Iamblichus' 'gods' as *noeta*, 'objects of intellection'. This, however, only points up a basic, though somewhat confusing, feature of Iamblichus' metaphysics, namely that the lowest element of a higher hypostasis also serves, from a different perspective, as the highest element, or 'monad', of the next lower (cf. Iambl. *In Tim.* fr. 54 Dillon). Thus the Unified, whose contents are the henads, may also be viewed as the One-Existent, or *hen on*, which presides as monad over the realm of Intellect, and whose contents are described as 'the monads of the Forms' (cf. Iambl. *In Phlb.* fr. 4 Dillon), which may be taken as the henads *qua* objects of contemplation by Intellect, a contemplation which results in the unified multiplicity of the Forms within Intellect. Such is the complexity which the relatively simple metaphysical system of Plotinus has now attained, within a generation of his death.

The realm of Intellect, in its turn, also undergoes elaborate subdivision in Iamblichus' system, first into a triad of three 'moments' or aspects, Being, Life and Intellect proper, and then into a subordinate series of three triads (again, of Being, Life, Intellect) arising out of each of these.

First there is a set of three triads of intelligible gods (*noetoi theoi*). This is followed by three triads of intelligible-intellective (*noetoi kai noeroi*) gods; and this in turn by a hebdomad of intellective gods, consisting of two triads and an entity termed the *hupezōkōs*, the 'membrane', a concept borrowed from the *Chaldaean Oracles* (on which, as we know, Iamblichus composed an extended commentary), which has the function of constituting a barrier between the spiritual and material worlds. It is at this third level, among the Intellective Gods, that the Demiurge, identified with Zeus, holds 'the third rank among the Fathers', that is to say, the first intellective triad, composed of Kronos, Rhea (who is strictly speaking a Mother!) and Zeus himself. The curious circumstance that the intellective divinities constitute not three triads, but a hebdomad, may have something to do with the fact that these gods constitute a paradigm for the heavenly gods, who form a hebdomad, the *hupezōkōs* performing a similar role to that of the Moon.

Our source for this degree of elaboration, admittedly, is given by Proclus (*In Tim.* 1.308.18ff.) as an essay of Iamblichus' entitled *On the Speech of Zeus in the Timaeus*, which Proclus contrasts with the simpler scheme which Iamblichus presents in his *Timaeus Commentary*, but there seems no reason to believe that he is inventing this. Iamblichus thus becomes the ancestor of the complex system of the later Athenian school of Syrianus and Proclus. The impulse for such elaborations seems to stem from a consciousness of the complexity of the spiritual world, and of the many levels of divinity which inhabit it, but it may not be entirely fanciful to suggest that it was to some extent stimulated by the ever-increasing degree of complexity manifested in the imperial administrative system from the late third century on, following the reforms of Diocletian and his successors.

Something should be said, in conclusion, of two features of the realm of Intellect, Eternity (*Aion*) and the Paradigm, which serve as elements binding the whole multiplicity together. For Iamblichus, *Aion* would seem to be simply *to hen on*, or the Monad of the noetic realm (or indeed, more properly, *to aei on*, cf. *In Tim.* fr. 29), in its capacity as measure, or structuring principle, for that realm, in the same way that, as we shall see, Time is the measure of the psychic realm. In fr. 64 of his *Timaeus Commentary*, à propos the exposition of his theory of transcendent Time, Iamblichus lists the various characteristics of Eternity, stressing its uniformity, infinity, simultaneity, and permanent presentness (*to hen kai apeiron kai ēdē on kai homou pan kai en tōi nun menon*), in such a way as to bring out its archetypal position vis-à-vis Time.

As for the Paradigm (as the object of the Demiurge's contemplation), in a comment on *Tim.* 28c (= *In Tim.* fr. 35 Dillon), Iamblichus on the one hand identifies it with the highest element in the noetic world, 'Being Itself' (*auto to hoper on*), which we may take as equivalent to One-Being, but on the other hand he is reported by Proclus (*In Tim.* 1.336.16ff. = Iambl. *In Tim.* fr. 36) as declaring it to inhere in the Demiurge, which may only, after all, be an assertion that the whole noetic world is subsumed into the Demiurge (cf. *In Tim.* fr. 34), insofar as he transmits it to the physical world (through the mediation of Soul) in the form of *logoi*.

The realm of Soul, likewise, exhibits complexity in comparison with the system of Plotinus. Iamblichus makes a distinction between pure, or unparticipated, Soul (*amethektos psuchē*), which serves as the Monad of the psychic realm, and participated Soul, which is in a way the sum-total of individual souls. Some individual souls, likewise, transcend any contact with body, while others are destined to be embodied, and even these descend into body on various different terms. The highest element of Soul, however, as we learn in *In Tim.* frs. 55 and 56, is linked to what is above it through participating in the lowest element of Intellect, participated (*methektos*) Intellect:

The Soul participates in Intellect, insofar as it is intellectual (*noera*), and through it unites itself even to the Divine Intellect (sc. the summit of the intelligible world, *to hen on*); for by participating in Intellect, the Soul of the Universe (*hē tou pantos psuchē*) ascends to the Intelligible. (Fr. 55)

Thus is the Iamblichean universe bound together. In his exegesis of *Tim.* 36c (in the fragments just mentioned), Iamblichus interprets the outer circle of which the soul is made up, the 'Circle of the Same', as actually referring to this participated Intellect. That implies, presumably, that, in cognizing an intelligible Form, one grasps the sameness linking individual things, which is a prerequisite for rational discourse.

In his treatise *On the Soul* (cf. in particular §§6–7 Finamore and Dillon), Iamblichus sought to differentiate himself from his predecessors Plotinus, Amelius and Porphyry, on the issue of the relation of the soul with what is above it, postulating a less direct contact with Intellect and the One, and a corresponding need of theurgy, or 'sacramental' ritual, to secure personal salvation. He may thus be reasonably accused of making Platonism much more of a religion, a characteristic which endeared him in particular to the Emperor Julian, a generation after his death. However, all he really seems to be objecting to is the distinctive postulate of Plotinus that an element of the human soul – or, arguably, the *true* human soul – 'remains above', that is, does not in fact lose contact with the intelligible realm. His objections to this are well set out by Proclus at *In Tim.* 3.334.3ff. (= Iambl. *In Tim.* fr. 87), in connection with

an exegesis of *Tim.* 43cd. Iamblichus is not being quite fair to Plotinus here, perhaps, but he professes to fail to see how, if the highest element of our souls actually remains impassive, we could not be cognizant of this:

But if when the best part of us is perfect, then the whole of us is happy (*eudaimon*), what would prevent us all, the whole human race, from being happy at this moment, if the highest part of us is always enjoying intellection, and always turned towards the gods? If the intellect is this highest part, that has nothing to do with the soul. If it is part of the soul, then the rest of the soul must also be happy. (My trans.)

We may note that Iamblichus has no objection to the idea that there may be an element within us which is in touch with the divine realm, so long as that is not postulated to be an element of the soul. Indeed, he himself postulates within us, not just an intellect, but even a correlate of the One, which he terms, the 'One of the soul', or, using Chaldaean terminology, 'the flower of the intellect' (*anthos tou nou*) – presumably signifying the supreme element of intellect, which somehow also transcends it. We hear of this latter through Damascius (*Princ.* §70, 2.104.17ff.), who is quoting from Iamblichus' *Commentary on the Chaldaean Oracles*. Strictly speaking, this *anthos tou nou* is able to cognize only the highest element of the noetic realm, wherein lie the 'monads of the Forms', but that brings it close to the One.

On the other hand, we have from Hermeias *(In Phdr.* 150.24ff. Couvreur = Iambl. *In Phdr.* fr. 6) his exegesis of *Phaedrus* 247c, where the issue is the correct identification of the 'helmsman' (*kubernētēs*) of the soul. Here Iamblichus feels the need to make a distinction between the 'helmsman' and the 'charioteer', and, since the charioteer is plainly the intellectual element of the soul, the helmsman must be something else:

The divine Iamblichus takes the 'helmsman' as being the One of the soul; its intellect is the charioteer. The term 'spectator' (*theatēs*) is used not to signify that it directs its gaze on this object of intellection as being other than it, but that it is united with it and appreciates it on that level. This shows that the 'helmsman' is a more perfect entity than the charioteer and the horses; for it is the essential nature of the One of the soul to be united with the gods. (My trans.)

This identification of the helmsman with a special 'one-like' faculty of the soul implies that the 'realm above the heavens' (*huperouranios topos*), in which True Being is to be viewed is not just the intelligible world, as intended by Plato, but rather the realm of the One. That is an unnatural interpretation of the text, but one possible for a Platonist to make, if one distinguishes it from the realm in which the heavenly ride of the myth takes place (248a ff.), during which the charioteer (*not* the helmsman) views the Forms. At any rate, that is how Iamblichus is taking it, and for the grasping of it he must postulate

a special faculty of the soul, which would be a source of non-cognitive, or supra-cognitive, contact with the One.

Nonetheless, it is Iamblichus' view that the essence of the soul is quite distinct from that of the intellect. His position emerges forcefully in what remains of his treatise *On the Soul* (e.g., §7), and in certain passages of Pseudo-Simplicius (very probably Priscianus), *In De anima*, which reports his views. What emerges from these latter passages (e.g., *In De an.* 5.38–6.17; 89.33–90.25) is that Iamblichus postulated a truly hybrid essence for the soul. According to the latter passage:

> But if, as Iamblichus thinks, a distorted and imperfect activity cannot proceed from an impassible and perfect substance, the soul would be affected somehow even in its essence. Thus also in this way it is a mean not only between the divisible and indivisible, or what remains and what proceeds, or the intellective and the irrational, but also between the ungenerated and the generated. It is ungenerated in accordance with its permanent, intellectual and indivisible aspect, while it is generated in accordance with its procession, divisibility and association with the irrational; it possesses neither its ungenerated aspect purely, as an intellectual entity does, since it is not indivisible or permanent, nor its generated aspect as the lowest entities do, since these never completely exist. (Trans. Finamore and Dillon)

This goes on some way further, driving home Iamblichus' very distinctive view of the soul's median position. The basis of his dispute with Plotinus is not a belief that we cannot attain enlightenment and union with the gods, but rather that we do not start with one foot, so to speak, still in the higher world; we must work our way up to it the hard way, with the help of theurgy, as it is not, strictly speaking, with our soul that we attain this union, but with some higher faculty, the activation of which requires theurgic intervention.

Within the realm of Soul, two salient features which must be noted are Time and Space. On both Iamblichus has distinctive views, relayed to us mainly by Simplicius in his *Commentary on the Physics*, but also by Proclus (= Iambl. *In Tim.* frs. 62–8 for Time; fr. 90 for Space). Iamblichus postulates, as a principle governing all particular manifestations of time, what he terms 'transcendent Time' (*exēirēmenos chronos*) as the immediate image of Eternity in the psychic realm. He defines it as 'that which contains and orders the measures of all motion within the cosmos' (fr. 63, from Simplicius), and, in a phrase which caught the attention of Proclus also (fr. 64), 'an order – but not in the sense of being ordered, rather of ordering' (*taxis . . . ou mentoi hē tattomenē, alla hē tattousa*). As for Space, he defines it (fr. 90, from Simplicius) as 'a corporeal power which supports bodies and forces them apart and gathers them up when they fall and collects them together when they are scattered, at once completing them and encompassing them about from all sides'. Between them, Time and

Space serve as the basic conditions which distinguish the realm of Soul from that of Intellect above it. All that is distinctive to Iamblichus here, perhaps, is the postulation of a transcendent Monad of Time, to act as the psychic correlate of Eternity.

It is significant, perhaps, that alone among post-Plotinian Platonist exegetes, Iamblichus does not choose to situate Soul in the third hypothesis of the *Parmenides* (cf. *In Parm.* fr. 2), but places there what he terms 'the higher classes' (of being) – *ta kreittona genē* – comprising angels, *daimones* and heroes, as needing to be found a place in the scheme of things following on Intellect and prior to Soul. Soul he apportions between the fourth and fifth hypotheses, the fourth concerning rational souls, the fifth 'those secondary souls which are woven onto (*proshuphainomenai*) rational souls' – a view of the lower, or irrational, soul which in fact brings him close to Plotinus.

In this connection, we may note Iamblichus' doctrine of the vehicle (*ochēma*) of the soul, which is quite distinctive (cf. *In Tim.* fr. 81), though he is not necessarily the originator of the concept as such (there is some evidence for its featuring, in at least some form, in the thought of some second-century Platonists, such as Atticus and Albinus: Procl. *In Tim.* 3.234.9ff.), and it was certainly a doctrine of Porphyry before him. This concept addresses the problem of the mode of contact between soul and body. Its relation to the irrational soul (*alogos psuchē*) is somewhat fluid, but it is best seen, perhaps, as a sort of 'receptacle' for the 'irrational' functions of the soul (including the passions, sense-perception, and even *phantasia*, or the image-forming capacity). These Plotinus was unwilling on the one hand to situate within the soul proper, but on the other, he seems to have disliked the concept of the *ochēma*, and makes only indirect references to it (e.g., *Enn.* 3.6.5; 4.3.15). Porphyry recognizes it, but regards it as a composite made up of planetary influences picked up like 'tunics' (*chitōnes*) during the soul's descent to embodiment through the heavenly spheres, and dissolving again into the spheres on the soul's reascent. Iamblichus, by contrast, is reported by Proclus (*In Tim.* 3.234, 32ff. = Iambl. *In Tim.* fr. 81) to have maintained the immortality of the *ochēma*, and its creation by the gods themselves, rather than just being formed by accretion from the heavenly bodies. It is less than clear what Iamblichus has in mind here, but it may be that he is asserting that the individual soul retains some archetypal form of 'lower' or sensory soul even in its disembodied state; otherwise we are driven to suppose that the *ochēma* is somehow 'parked' in the upper reaches of the cosmos, awaiting the return of its soul to incarnation. With the former alternative, however, we might see Iamblichus as postulating something like a Platonist equivalent of the Christian 'resurrection body', at least in the form that this doctrine was advanced by such theologians as Origen.

On the question of the soul's relation to the body, Iamblichus has a number of interesting things to say in his *De anima*. At §28. 379 Finamore and Dillon, he makes a distinction between the relation of higher souls to their bodies and those of human souls:

The association of all souls with bodies is not the same. The All-Soul, as Plotinus also believes, holds in itself the body that is appended to it, but it is not itself appended to this body or enveloped by it. Individual souls, on the other hand, attach themselves to bodies, fall under the control of bodies, and come to dwell in bodies that are already overcome by the nature of the universe. The souls of gods adapt their bodies, which imitate intellect, to their own intellectual essence; the souls of the other divine classes direct their vehicles according to their allotment in the cosmos. Furthermore, pure and perfect souls come to dwell in bodies in a pure manner, without passions and without being deprived of intellection, but opposite souls in an opposite manner. (Trans. Finamore and Dillon)

Who are these 'pure and perfect souls', one might ask? We have evidence here, in fact, of an interesting doctrine of Iamblichus, which he elaborates on just below, to the effect that there are fully three distinct modes in which classes of human soul relate to their bodies. The highest (and no doubt far the smallest) group are those who descend 'for the salvation, purification and perfection of this realm'; these are not polluted by their descent. This class, which would no doubt include such great teachers as Pythagoras, Socrates and Plato, are strangely similar to the *boddhisatvas* of the Buddhist tradition. There had of course been a recognition previously, in Pythagorean and Platonist circles, that some souls, notably that of Pythagoras, were special, but such souls had not, so far as we know, been formalized into a class.

The median class, comprising (presumably) the majority of embodied souls, has descended for the purpose of 'exercise and correction of its own character' (*dia gumnasian kai epanorthōsin tōn oikeiōn ēthōn*), implying, certainly, some degree of imperfection and past misbehaviour, but no great guilt; it is rather a portrayal of the normal human condition, as well as a recognition of the role of the physical cosmos as a necessary theatre for the moral and cognitive development of the human soul. Lastly, however, there is the class of those who are sent down here 'for punishment and judgement' (*epi dikēi kai krisei*), a category that may be postulated to explain the existence of apparently naturally evil and perverse individuals – a phenomenon addressed also by Plotinus in the course of his treatise *On Providence* 3.2–3 (cf. e.g., 3.2.4; 13). A similar three-way division is set out in *Myst.* 5.18:

The great mass of men, on the one hand, is subject to the domination of nature, and is ruled by natural forces, and directs its gaze downwards towards the works of nature, and fulfils the decrees of fate, and takes upon itself the order of what is brought about by

fate, and always employs practical reasoning (*praktikos logismos*) solely about natural phe-
nomena. A certain few individuals, on the other hand, employing an intellectual power
which is beyond the natural (*huperphuei tini dunamei tou nou chrōmenoi*), have disengaged
themselves from nature, and turned towards the transcendent and pure intellect, at the
same time rendering themselves superior to natural forces. There are some, finally, who
conduct themselves in the middle area between nature and pure mind, some following
after each of them in turn, others pursuing a mode of life which is a blend of both, and
others again who have freed themselves from the inferior level and are transferring their
attention to the better. (Trans. Clarke, Dillon and Hershbell)

These divisions are similar, as I say, to those in the *De anima*, but not identical. In
particular, the lower two classes are presented somewhat differently, the lowest
seeming here to comprise the general run of human beings, while the median
class (here subdivided, oddly, into three sub-classes) seems to represent a class of
intellectuals who, while not yet accomplished theurgists, are capable of moving
in that direction; and no class is represented as seriously sinful. We may see here,
perhaps, the outcome of a good deal of speculation, in later Platonist circles, as
to the reasons for differences in moral and intellectual capacity between human
beings.

    Apart from gods and mortal souls, the Iamblichean universe is replete with
various grades of intermediate being, termed collectively *ta kreittona genē*, 'the
superior classes (of being)', such as he saw as being the subject of the Third
Hypothesis of the *Parmenides*. If we turn to his comprehensive discussion of
the various grades of intermediate being in book 2 of the *De mysteriis*, we
find first a broad distinction being made between *daimones* and heroes (2.1–
2), which may perhaps owe something to the much earlier (and now lost)
treatise of Posidonius *On Daemons and Heroes*. Iamblichus identifies *daimones*
as representing 'the generative and creative powers of the gods', while heroes
represent 'their life-giving powers, which are directive of human beings'. The
contrast here seems to be between the bestowal of bare existence and that of
life; at any rate, Iamblichus states that the powers of *daimones* extend further
into the cosmos than those of heroes, who are concerned specifically with the
organization of souls (*hē tōn psuchōn diataxis*).

    This, however, is only a preliminary to a far more elaborate set of distinctions
which he produces (2.3ff.), in response to a query of Porphyry's as to how to
distinguish the epiphanies of the various classes of higher being. We are now
presented with a succession of archangels, angels, *daimones*, heroes and two levels
of sublunary archon, occupying the space between gods and men, each with
their distinct essences, potencies and activities.

    To go into the details of these would be beyond the proper scope of this
survey, but we should note another feature of Iamblichus' daimonology that is

distinctive, and which indeed seems to bring him near to certain Gnostic beliefs. We are informed by a scholion on Plato's *Sophist* (= Iambl. *In Soph.* fr. 1 Dillon) that Iamblichus held that the subject of the dialogue, that is to say, the Sophist, is the sublunary Demiurge. This being is portrayed as a figure who presides over the realm of nature, which he has created as a snare and delusion for souls who descend into it, but from which they can free themselves through philosophy and the exercise of dialectic (cf. Plotinus' exaltation of the role of dialectic in *Enn.* 1.3). To that extent he can be described not only as an 'image-maker' and 'sorcerer', but also as a 'purifier of souls' (*kathartēs psuchōn*). This figure may reasonably be assimilated to the 'greatest daemon' (*megistos daimōn*) whom John Laurentius Lydus (*De mens.* 83.13ff.) reports Iamblichus, in book 1 of his work *On the Descent of the Soul* (a work which doubtless elaborated on many of the themes that we have just been discussing), as placing over three tribes of sublunary daemons, and equating with Plouton or Hades. Here we find a somewhat different (though not necessarily incompatible) scheme to that set out in the *De mysteriis*:

According to Iamblichus, the tribe of *daimones* below the moon is divided into three classes. Of these that nearest to the earth is punitive (*timōron*), that in the air is purificatory (*kathartikon*), and that nearest to the zone of the Moon is salvific (*sōtērion*) – this class we know also as heroes. All these are said to be ruled over by a certain supreme *daimon*, who is probably to be identified with Plouton. (My trans.)

That this sublunary realm is in fact the realm of Hades/Plouton is a belief attested within Platonism as early as Xenocrates in the Old Academy (fr. 213 Isnardi Parente), so that is not, as such, an innovation, but the equating of Hades with the Sophist, and the accompanying description of his modes of deception, may indeed be original to Iamblichus.

An issue connected with the sublunary realm, and its relation to what is above it, is the doctrine of Fate, Providence and Free Will, and on this we may derive some enlightenment from various of Iamblichus' *Letters*, notably those to Macedonius, to Poemenius and to Iamblichus' own senior pupil Sopater. This topic, as Iamblichus sees it, primarily concerns the realm of Nature, which may be taken as that lower aspect of the World Soul which concerns itself with the generation and administration of the physical world. It is at this level that we find the sphere of operations of Fate (*heimarmenē*).

In the *Letter to Macedonius* (*Letter* 8 Dillon and Polleichner), we are faced to all appearances with a strictly determined world, on the Stoic model – as indeed one finds also in Plotinus (e.g., *Enn.* 3.2–3); but Iamblichus is also at pains to emphasize that the soul *in itself*, insofar as it emancipates itself from worldly influences and concerns, 'contains within itself a free and independent

life' (fr. 2). This is in fact more or less in accord with the doctrine of Plotinus, who also holds that what is for him the 'higher' soul is free from the bonds of Fate, though it is really only free to assent to the order of the universe. For Iamblichus, Fate itself is dependent on Providence (*pronoia*), which is a benign force guiding the higher, intelligible realm, of reality. In fr. 4, their relationship is set out as follows:

For indeed, to speak generally, the movements of Destiny (*peprōmenē*) around the cosmos are assimilated to the immaterial and intellectual activities and circuits, and its order is assimilated to the good order of the intelligible and transcendent realm. And the secondary causes are dependent on the primary causes, and the multiplicity attendant upon generation on the undivided substance, and the whole sum of things subject to Fate is thus connected to the dominance of Providence. In its very substance, then, Fate is enmeshed with Providence, and Fate exists by virtue of the existence of Providence, and it derives its existence from it and within its ambit.

This is all expressed in fairly impersonal terms, as is also the case in the *Letter to Sopater* (*Letter* 12), but in the *Letter to Poemenius* (*Letter* 11), we actually find an assertion of the benign guidance of Fate by the gods, to an extent that seems to accord more with theology than philosophy:

The gods, in upholding Fate, direct its operation throughout the universe; and this sound direction of theirs brings about sometimes a lessening of evils, sometimes a mitigation of their effects, on occasion even their removal. On this principle, then, Fate is disposed to the benefit of the good, but in this disposing does not reveal itself fully to the disorderly nature of the realm of generation.

We seem to discern here a role, though that is not stated in the present context, for the operations of theurgy.

We may now turn to a consideration of his ethical doctrines. Basically, Iamblichus does not deviate from the relatively austere, Stoicizing (as opposed to Peripateticizing) tendency in ethical theory advanced by Plotinus, and thereafter more or less universal in later Platonism, tending, for example, to the extirpation rather than the moderation of the passions, and advocating of 'assimilation to God' (*homoiōsis theōi*) – presumably with the assistance of theurgy – as the purpose (*telos*) of human life. In what remains of his *Letters*, we find many ethical sentiments expressed, on a relatively popular level, but there is little that is remarkable. He writes to his senior disciple Sopater on Virtue, on Ingratitude, and on Bringing Up Children, to Asphalius on Wisdom (*phronēsis*), to the lady Arete on Moderation, to Anatolius on Justice, and to Olympius on Courage. In the last instance, we find him making a good Platonic distinction between courage 'in the strictest sense', which is constituted by 'the sameness and stable condition of the intellect in itself', and that courage which derives from this higher kind,

which is concerned with the control of the passions in the area of what is and what is not to be feared. This seems to owe something to Plotinus' distinction of higher and lower levels of virtue in *Enn.* 1.2, as well as to Plato's *Laches*.

It is in fact Iamblichus' theory of the grades of virtue, itself merely a further elaboration of that propounded by Porphyry in *Sent.* §32, which constitutes perhaps his most distinctive contribution to late Platonic ethical theory. We learn of this from the so-called 'B' Commentary on the *Phaedo*, attributed to Damascius (113.14ff. Norvin). Iamblichus sets out a sequence of fully seven grades of virtue, amplifying Porphyry's four at either end. Prior to Porphyry's (and Plotinus') 'civic' level, he lists the 'natural' and the 'ethical', the former being those attributable to animals (e.g., lions are naturally courageous, storks just, and cranes wise), the latter to well-brought-up children and non-reflective adults; and, to cap Porphyry's highest level, the 'paradigmatic', Iamblichus postulates the 'hieratic', proper to the accomplished theurgist, who has attained union with the gods. In between these are the Porphyrian four levels, the civic, the purificatory, the theoretic and the paradigmatic.

Iamblichus' contributions to the development of logic are not of great significance, despite his composition of a commentary on Aristotle's *Categories*. He lavishes praise on the dialectic method in two letters, those to his pupil Dexippus (who himself composed a brief commentary on the *Categories*) and to Sopater, both *On Dialectic*, but in his commentary he is mainly concerned with defending Aristotle's coherence and correctness against the attacks of the earlier anti-Aristotelian Platonist tradition, including Plotinus in *Enn.* 6.1–3. The other salient characteristic of his exegesis of the *Categories* is what Simplicius terms his *noera theoria*, or 'transcendental interpretation', which essentially consists in trying to show that, contrary to what Plotinus would maintain, Aristotle's list of categories is true, in an analogical way, for all levels of reality. One example of this approach may suffice. It concerns Aristotle's assertion, at *Cat.* 4b20, that 'of quantities, some are discrete, others continuous' (Simpl. *In Cat.* 135.8ff. = fr. 37 Larsen):

Since the power of the One, from which all quantity derives, extends identically through all things, and demarcates each thing in its procession from itself, in so far as it penetrates totally indivisibly through all things, it generates the continuous, and in so far as it performs a single and indivisible procession without interval; whereas in so far as it halts in its procession at each of the forms and defines each and makes each of them one, in this aspect it produces the discrete. So in virtue of being the single dominant causal principle of these two activities it produces the two types of quantity.

Such an interpretation of the *Categories* might well be said to pertain rather more to metaphysics than to logic proper, but, as we can see from various remarks in

his letters to Dexippus and to Sopater, Iamblichus sees logic, or at least dialectic, as very much a means of reconnecting us to the intelligible world, and even to the One. The opening section of his *Letter to Sopater on Dialectic* (fr. 1 Dillon) makes his position clear:

All men employ dialectic, since this power is innate in them from their earliest years, at least in some degree, though some have a larger share of it than others. Something that is a gift of the gods [cf. *Phlb.* 16c] should by no means be cast aside, but should rather be fortified by practice and experience and technical training. For behold how during one's whole life it continues to be outstandingly useful: in one's encounters with one's fellow-men, for addressing them in accordance with the common notions (*koinai ennoiai*) and opinions; in investigating in the arts and sciences, for discovering the first principles of each; for calculating, prior to each action, how one should proceed; and for providing marvellous methods of preliminary training for the various philosophical sciences. (My trans.)

There is, of course, nothing particularly distinctive here. Iamblichus' position is very much a development of that taken up by Plotinus in *Ennead* 1.3; but it is an indication that logic was by no means neglected in the curriculum of his school.

3 IAMBLICHUS' SCHOOL

It is plain, from Eunapius' account, that when Iamblichus finally settled in Apamea, possibly under the patronage of his pupil Sopater, as mentioned earlier, quite a group of followers gathered round him, constituting what can reasonably be described as a school. It is even possible that the site of this school has been discovered by the current excavators of Apamea, in a large villa which boasts a fine mosaic of Socrates and the Seven Sages. At any rate, we learn from Eunapius (*Vit. Soph.* 458–9) that Iamblichus owned, or had the use of, more than one suburban villa. As to the school itself, we may quote Eunapius (*ibid.*):

He had a multitude of disciples, and those who desired learning flocked to him from all parts. And it is hard to decide who among them was the most distinguished, for Sopater the Syrian was of their number, a man who was most eloquent both in discourse and in writing; and Aedesius and Eustathius from Cappadocia; while from Greece came Theodorus and Euphrasius, men of superlative virtue, and a crowd of other men not inferior in their powers of oratory, so that it seemed marvellous that he should satisfy them all.

Apart from those mentioned here, we know of Dexippus, author of a short question-and-answer commentary on the *Categories*, to whom, as mentioned above, Iamblichus dedicates a letter, and whom Simplicius describes (*In Cat.*

2.25) as *ho Iamblicheios*; and a certain Hierius, teacher, along with Aedesius, of the notorious Maximus of Ephesus, one of Julian's chief gurus (Ammonius, *In An. Pr.* 31.16). The school in Apamea seems to have survived well enough as long as Licinius had control of the East (and indeed we have a series of interesting letters to Iamblichus, preserved among the letters of Julian, from an unknown former pupil who was on Licinius' staff), but after his defeat at the hands of Constantine in 324 it would seem that things became more difficult, and ultimately the school had to disperse. Sopater met a violent death in 326 through going off to Constantinople and getting mixed up in imperial politics, and it was left to Aedesius to carry on after Iamblichus' death. He moved the school to Pergamum, where he doubtless felt more comfortable, and he was succeeded on his death by Eustathius. Eustathius was a correspondent of St Basil (*Letter* 1, dated 357), at which time we find him established at Caesarea in Cappadocia, though the letter refers to his travels to Egypt and even to Persia.

We do not know how long the direct Iamblichean succession survived in Asia Minor, but more interesting, though still mysterious, is the question of what the link may have been between Iamblichus and the Athenian school of Plutarch, Syrianus and Proclus. There is on the one hand the figure of Theodorus of Asine (presumably the Theodorus from Greece mentioned by Eunapius), but he in later times became quite critical of Iamblichus (cf. Julian, *Ep.* 12 Bidez, to Priscus), establishing an allegiance rather to Plotinus' elder pupil Amelius, many of whose distinctive formulations he adopted. About Euphrasius we know nothing more, but the Priscus to whom Julian is writing in *Letter* 12 is a possible candidate for passing distinctively Iamblichean doctrines on to Plutarch, and so to Syrianus. At any rate, it is plain that for the Athenian School the most significant figure among their immediate predecessors was Iamblichus, both for his adoption of theurgy and for the greatly increased elaboration of his metaphysical scheme, which seemed to them to do justice to the true complexity of the intelligible world. As Proclus presents the situation, in his commentaries on the *Timaeus* and the *Parmenides*, the majority of Syrianus' distinctive exegetical positions are essentially elaborations of Iamblichean doctrines. Iamblichus may thus be regarded as the true father, for what that is worth, of later, post-Plotinian, Platonism.

4 A NOTE ON THEURGY

In the body of this chapter, the role of theurgical theory and practice in the thought of Iamblichus has been rather played down, as having, in my view, been in the past given too prominent a role in his philosophy, but it cannot at the same time be denied that Iamblichus himself accorded quite a prominent role

to the practice of rituals in ensuring the efficacy of philosophical speculation; and this after all reminds us that, for later Platonists, Platonism was a religion as well as a philosophical system.

There is a notable passage in Iamblichus' *De Mysteriis* which makes the point well:

Granting, then, that ignorance and deception are faulty and impious, it does not follow from this that the offerings properly made to the gods, and divine procedures (*theia erga*), are invalid, for it is not (primarily) intellectual activity (*ennoia*) that connects theurgists to the gods. Indeed what, then, would prevent those who are theoretical philosophers from enjoying theurgic union with the gods? In fact, however, the situation is quite otherwise: it is rather the correct performance of acts not to be divulged and beyond all conception, and the power of unutterable symbols, understood by the gods alone, that establishes theurgic union. (trans. Clarke, Dillon and Hershbell, lightly emended)

There is no doubt something of a polemical edge to this pronouncement, and Iamblichus is making it in the guise of a senior Egyptian priest, but nonetheless it will serve well enough as a manifesto for the sort of 'sacramental theology' which Iamblichus thought it proper to embrace as an essential aspect of his philosophical system. As he is careful to specify to Porphyry, however (see his extended exposition in *De Myst.* 1.11–12), the performance of such rituals is not to be taken as implying that the gods can in any way be constrained to do one's bidding – that is the pretension of 'vulgar' magicians. Rather, the gods, out of their infinite benevolence, are pleased to respond to rituals correctly performed, and performed with a suitably respectful attitude. Theurgy, in fact, is really a means of organizing the natural *sympatheia* of the world to concord with the benevolent providence of the gods. It may be viewed, therefore, as a sort of theologized science.

PART IV

PHILOSOPHY IN THE AGE
OF CONSTANTINE

INTRODUCTION TO PART IV

In the fourth century CE we can begin to see the tide shifting in favour of Christianity over paganism. The murder of Hypatia, daughter of the philosopher Theon of Alexandria, in 415, is emblematic of the ominous turn from mere intellectual controversy to political power struggles begun a century earlier. Prior to the tipping point that was Constantine's conversion around 312, Alexandria flourished as a polyglot and multicultural intellectual centre of the Mediterranean world. We have considerable evidence of Christians and non-Christians studying together under some of the famous philosophers of the time. Probably in early Alexandria even more than in Rome, there were genuine encounters of philosophy and religion. The writings of Philo and Clement are only two early examples of these. Lamentably, there is a dearth of extant philosophical material from Alexandria in our period, though we have accounts of an extremely active academic community. With regard to the natural and mathematical sciences, however, there is a substantial amount of material, focused principally on development of the scientific heritage of Ptolemy. Here we see, for example, in the practice of astrology a focal point for the confluence of philosophy, religion and science. The enduring theme of providence and fate, too, will be a battleground for opposing world views. It is natural to see in the Christian responses to the Hellenic views on these matters the lineaments of Biblical theology.

PHILOSOPHY IN A CHRISTIAN EMPIRE: FROM THE GREAT PERSECUTION TO THEODOSIUS I

ELIZABETH DEPALMA DIGESER

I PORTRAITS OF POWER

In the Piazza San Marco, attached to the great basilica's façade, is a porphyry statue of four tetrarchs, the Emperor Diocletian (284–303) and his three co-regents. Carved in Nicomedia c. 300 CE and transplanted by Venetian Crusaders, the four armour-clad figures in imperial purple stone are locked in a tight embrace, grizzled senior emperors clasping their junior colleagues. They portray the grim resolve with which Diocletian's inspired concept of divided rule met the tumultuous third century's military and political challenges, subduing Persians, beating back Germans and Sarmatians on the Rhine and Danube frontiers, and preserving comity among the regents through an artful series of marriages. Apportioning responsibility for territorial defence and administration among two Augusti (senior emperors) and their junior colleagues (Caesars) directed imperial attention to simultaneous problems in far-flung regions in a way impossible when one man ruled. Now Roman emperors governed from Trier, Milan, Nicomedia and Antioch.[1] Simultaneously, through marriages and religious titles, Diocletian's system staunched the problem of rivalry and usurpation which had plagued his predecessors across the past half century: the senior Augustus, Diocletian, was 'Jovius', literally the son of Jupiter; his co-Augustus, Maximian, was 'Herculius', the son of Hercules (Jupiter's legendary half-human son). As Caesars, the Jovian Galerius and Herculian Constantius each married their senior partner's daughter. Such alliances discouraged challenges to the senior tetrarchs; concurrently an effort to promote the emperors as the embodiments or images of the gods for whom they were named (see, for example, *PL* 10.2.1, 4.2, 3.5) built upon the emperor Aurelian's earlier efforts to link himself to a divine, protective companion, elevating him safely beyond any challenger's reach. After he came to see himself as champion of the Christian god, the emperor Constantine (306–37) discarded the divine Roman imperial names.

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[1] Thessalonika and Serdica also served as imperial seats.

500 km south of Venice's San Marco, Constantine's colossal portrait head has long surveyed the courtyard of Rome's Capitoline Museum. Like the porphyry tetrarchs, this marble visage also connects the fourth century with earlier developments. In this case, Constantine's upward tilted eyes imitate those of a third-century Ostian bust – perhaps depicting Plotinus – wearing the typical philosopher's beard of medium length. The philosopher's heaven-focused gaze instantiates Plato's guidelines for wisdom, according to Plotinus, 'that he who is to be wise' should draw 'his good from the Supreme, fixing his gaze on That, becoming like to That, living by That' (*Enn.* 1.4.16.11). The appropriation of this expression by the smooth-faced imperial portrait – for Constantine after 315 had traded his military stubble for a more Trajanic countenance, can illustrate, for our purposes, the extent to which Plotinus' teachings in the city where he used to lecture continued to inspire the portrait's elite audience. But the likeness, which once overlooked the dispensation of justice from the apse of the basilica down the hill, also suggests that the emperor, who had conquered the capital after a sign from the Christian god, would be guided by divine wisdom in legislating. For his part, Constantine would have been comfortable with a statue representing him – like Diocletian – as a ruler who strove to be the *imago dei*.[2] Thus, while subsequent emperors – all but one of whom were Christian – eschewed claim to divine parents, they were happy to portray themselves as ruling in the image of God, as the agents through which divine law came to shape Roman justice and legislation.

A striking difference between the porphyry portraits of the senior tetrarchs and the marble head of Constantine, the latter statue's clean-shaven face evokes portraits of Trajan, *optimus princeps*, and the first emperor, Augustus. Such representation suggested the empire's return to good rule – a not so veiled criticism of the anti-Christian policies that most of the tetrarchy had ultimately espoused. This distinction between the porphyry and marble portraits, then, points to another salient aspect of the fourth century, the alternation between periods of religious peace and conflict.

2 PHILOSOPHERS AND THE GREAT PERSECUTION

Indeed the fourth century began on a note of sharp religious conflict with Diocletian's edicts targeting Christian worship in 303. Although Christians had been tolerated for the last four decades of the third century, and Diocletian had appointed Christians to his court (Lact. *Mort.* 10), a coalition of philosophers, oracular priests, and administrators lobbied for their persecution between 299

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[2] Const. *OrSC* 26; Eus. *LC* 2. See Lact. *Inst.* 2.2 for human beings as *imagines dei*.

and 303. The group's motivations are difficult to discern, but their involvement reflects growing disagreement in these circles over (1) Christian appropriation of Platonist tenets and exegetical strategies to read Scripture and develop doctrine (e.g., that Jesus was the *logos*), (2) the seeming utility of sacrificial and divinatory rituals – especially involving blood sacrifice – for philosophers, philosophical aspirants and the general population, and (3) the putative effects that attending Christians had on traditional civic rites.

A cluster of concerns circulated around the types of sacrificial rituals that were most beneficent for the Roman community and who ought to be attending them. These issues divided the Platonist community in the third century's waning years.[3] On the one hand, Iamblichus advocated eating sacrificial meat daily for all philosophers but those few – one or two per generation – who 'had reached the most sublime heights of knowledge' (*VPyth.* 24.107). He also thought that all but this same small group should perform whatever rituals the gods had ordained, even blood sacrifice (*Myst.* 5.4, 11–12, 14–15, 18). Conversely in *On Abstinence*, Porphyry taught that all philosophical aspirants ought to avoid animal food, including sacrificial meat (*De abst.* 2.3.1), making explicit an asceticism that had flourished in Plotinus' school.[4] For Porphyry, blood sacrifice was unjust and directed only toward evil *daimones* (*De abst.* 1; 2.20.2; 2.26.5; 2.42.3; 2.58.1). Accordingly, civic rites involving animal sacrifice merely appeased these beings – a practice perhaps necessary for the wider community, but not the philosopher's concern (2.3). Moreover, people polluted by contact with blood or dead bodies could potentially disrupt sacred rites such as divination (2.43.1; 2.46.2; 2.47.3; 2.50.1). Although Porphyry's arguments were ostensibly to boost support among his followers,[5] they also potentially targeted Christians in the public sphere. On the basis of Gospel texts which would become canonical, Christian apologists such as Justin Martyr had claimed that the bread and wine consumed during the Christian liturgy were the flesh and blood of Jesus.[6] By the late third century, although the government excused their participation, Christians serving in government would have been expected to attend the sacrifices that were still part of the rhythm

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[3] Although the disagreement between the Iamblichaean and Porphyrian camps cannot be dated precisely, it can be fixed before the outbreak of persecution since Porphyry's marriage to Marcella occurred after he wrote *On Abstinence* (*De abst.* 2.52.3) but before his appearance at Diocletian's court in the winter of 302/3.

[4] Porph. *De abst.* 1.2 treats an ascetic regimen as something long practised by the community to which Porphyry and Castricius belonged.

[5] Porphyry wrote *On Abstinence* for his friend Firmus Castricius (1.1–4) who had deserted the practices of the Plotinian/Porphyrian community.

[6] Gospel texts: Matt. 26.26; Mark 14.22; Luke 22.19; John 6.53–6 (see also 1 Cor. 11.24); Justin, *1 Apol.* 66 (see also Ignatius of Antioch's letter to the Smyrnaeans 7, written in the early second century).

of urban life (Eus. *HE* 8.1; Lact. *Mort.* 10).[7] Such involvement in the public sphere made Porphyry nervous, remarking that 'since Jesus began to be honoured, no one ever heard of any public assistance from the gods' – perhaps the beneficent powers having been driven out by maleficent daemons, attracted by polluted onlookers (apud Eus. *PE* 5.1.9).[8] For his part, Iamblichus, less worried that polluted onlookers would jeopardize rites conducted by a pure priest (*Myst.* 5.4), nevertheless maintained the importance of sacrifice for the whole populace (*Myst.* 5.11–12, 14–15) and the possibility of divine anger if they were neglected (1.13; 5.7).

Circulating at the same time was a concern that Christians were inappropriately applying Platonist doctrine and exegetical strategies to Scripture and so reaching erroneous conclusions about Jesus' divinity. According to the *Ecclesiastical History* assembled by Eusebius of Caesarea shortly after 303 – and manifestly written in response to the persecution (cf. Eus. *HE* 8.1), Porphyry levied these precise charges against the theologian Origen of Alexandria and especially his followers (*HE* 6.19) of whom Eusebius himself was one.[9] According to Eusebius, these attacks came from Porphyry's 'writings against Christians', a collection usually entitled *Against the Christians*,[10] and probably written in the 290s. Porphyry seems to have been particularly keen to overturn the claims that Jesus was the *logos* incarnate. Another salient criticism was that, rather than allowing philosophy to guide them to truth, Christians deployed philosophical tools and concepts in subservience to an already preconceived faith (e.g., Porph. apud Eus. *PE* 1.1.12). Porphyry's anti-Christian attacks are echoed in the *Philaletheis* by the Roman administrator, Hierocles, who was active in Antioch and Bithynia during the persecution and presented these charges before Diocletian's court as part of the lobbying effort for persecution (Lact. *Inst.* 5.2–3; *Mort.* 16).[11]

While Porphyry was criticizing Christian hermeneutics, he had his own exegetical projects.[12] For example, asserting that '*omne corpus fugiendum est*', a theme antithetical to Iamblichus' theories about sacrificial ritual, Porphyry's

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[7] See also Canon 56 of the Council of Elvira.

[8] Although von Harnack 1916 includes this as a fragment of the putative *Against the Christians*, Eusebius' remark that it comes from the 'advocate of the *daimones* in our time' indicates that it came from the *Philosophy from Oracles*. Eusebius of Caesarea, *Evangelicae praeparationis libri XV*, trans. Gifford.

[9] Eusebius did not study with Origen directly, but his mentor, Pamphilus, studied in Alexandria with Pierius, sometimes called 'Origen Junior' (Jerome, *De vir. ill.* 76). Eusebius defended Origen (*HE* 6) as Porphyry's criticisms drew unfavourable Christian attention to the scholar's deep Platonism.

[10] For problems with this title see Beatrice 1991.

[11] The *Apokritikos* of Marcarius Magnes probably preserves a portion of Hierocles' text, contra Goulet 2003.

[12] Since the three major Christian authors responding to the Great Persecution as a contemporary phenomenon (Arnobius, Eusebius and Lactantius) all demonstrate awareness of this treatise, its composition before and role in the persecution is clear.

Return of the Soul asserts that the only activity that truly frees the soul is Plotinus' *verissima philosophia* which enabled a contemplative, even mystical return to God for certain philosophers (apud Aug. *Civ. Dei* 10.29.11). He derived these insights from a critical analysis of the *Chaldaean Oracles*, texts from which Iamblichus had developed his own ideas that theurgy might allow all people some form of divine union, set out in his response to Porphyry's letter to Anebo (i.e., *On the Mysteries*). Responding to Iamblichus, Porphyry concedes that some sacrifices might purify polluted people – including certain Christians (apud Aug. *Civ. Dei* 10.9.13–45). But he argues that the *Chaldaean Oracles*, properly read, indicate that only contemplation, not material sacrifice, led to communion with the divine, a path available to very few. No one path existed, Porphyry maintained along which all people might find salvation. This conclusion, he emphasized, was as true for those who saw theurgy as such a path (i.e., the Iamblichaeans) as for those who thought that Christianity was a salvific way (apud Aug. *Civ. Dei* 10.32). However pious Jesus was, Porphyry averred, he was not divine, and so his followers did not reach salvation but polluted their souls by worshipping a human being.

Not only was Porphyry involved in discussions regarding the role of sacrificial rituals in a soul's journey toward God, the proper strategies for reading sacred texts, and identifying paths toward divine union, in this period he also published his edition of Plotinus' teachings (the *Enneads*). He introduced this series with his *Life of Plotinus* which identified Plotinus as the third century's Plato and named its author as his designated post-mortem spokesman – a role which Iamblichus and Porphyry's fellow student Amelius might also have claimed (Porph. *VPlot.* 21.24). These activities and publications all point to ruptures in the Platonist community at the cusp of the fourth century, fissures between Platonist Christians and Hellenes, and breaches within the Hellene community itself. Would Christian and Porphyrian Platonists reject Iamblichaean innovations to ally around their rejection of traditional civic cult for themselves despite their deep-seated disagreements regarding the primacy of philosophy and the integrity of Origen's allegorical exegesis? Or, despite their conflicting views over the utility of sacrifice for philosophers, would Porphyrian and Iamblichaean Platonists find common cause in agreeing that sacrifice was necessary for the general community and that Christians, lacking philosophical integrity, were pernicious in the public sphere, whether because they were abstaining from the sacrificial rituals that protected the community or because their presence at divinatory rites adversely affected the messages that the beneficent deities intended to communicate?

In the end, the dispute left the philosophical schools and entered the public sphere in 299 when a haruspex saw some Christian ministers cross themselves

and found himself unable to read the auspices for Diocletian (Lact. *Mort.* 10). Blaming the auspices' failure on the Christians (as Porphyry had suggested in *On Abstinence*), the Roman augur joined other prophets whose discomfort with Christianity was obvious in their oracles. For his part, Diocletian immediately purged Christians from the army and compelled Christian courtiers to sacrifice (Lact. *Mort.* 10). But tensions continued to escalate over the next three years during which the eastern court was pressured to go further by Platonist-influenced administrators (e.g., Hierocles), by Platonists themselves (e.g., a philosopher at Diocletian's court) (Lact. *Inst.* 5.2), or by the priesthood of various Apolline oracles – most famously Didyma which persuaded Diocletian in 303 to issue edicts requiring Christians to 'return to the institutions of their ancestors' (Lact. *Mort.* 11, 34). In practice this policy simply enforced burning incense as a ritual act, primarily by compelling the Christian leadership to do so. Since Lactantius notes that altars were placed in courts 'so that every litigant might offer incense before his cause could be heard' (*Mort.* 15), the emperors' interest in renewing traditional rites extended beyond the Christian population.

The policy was a disaster. Not only did Diocletian's western colleagues refuse to implement his edicts fully, but Maximian's and Constantius' pro-Christian sons, Maxentius and Constantine, seized power after Diocletian and his Herculean colleague retired in 305 (Lact. *Mort.* 24, 26). Finally, Galerius issued a deathbed edict restoring Christian worship and replaced sacrifice with prayer as the proof of a citizen's loyalty (Lact. *Mort.* 34). This policy not only recognized the Christians' reasons for not sacrificing, encouraging them to offer the prayers for the empire's well-being that, as apologists had always argued, Christians were ready to give. But it also achieved a certain consensus as consonant with Porphyrian Platonists' reservations regarding blood sacrifice. The Iamblichaean position was not immediately discredited, however, for Maximin Daia, the eastern tetrarch, continued to pursue an anti-Christian policy supported by Platonist theurgists especially around Antioch. By 313, however, the ground had eroded from under the anti-Christian position. In 312, conquering under the sign of the Christian god (Lact. *Mort.* 44), Constantine ousted Maxentius from Rome, and within the year he and Licinius, Galerius' replacement, had reiterated the late emperor's edict of toleration and allied against Daia who was quickly defeated. After sharing power with Licinius for over a decade, Constantine attacked him, defeating him and attaining sole power in 324. Although the first Christian emperor's regime is often portrayed in bright Christian colours by those reading Bishop Eusebius' flattering portrait, that Constantine faced no serious opposition from Licinius' supporters suggests a more nuanced, tolerant approach in practice. For example, although Constantine's legislation brought

Christian worshippers and leaders to a position of equality under Roman law, his edicts also carved out a protected space for Platonists who preferred celibacy and venerated the sun. It is also possible that Constantine's putative edict against sacrifice (*to thuein*), if it was enacted, targeted blood sacrifice only. This is the meaning of *to thuein* as Porphyry defined it (*De abst.* 2.5.3) and would have garnered the support of Porphyrian Platonists. Being anti-sacrifice, in the aftermath of the arguments culminating in the Great Persecution, should not be confused with being 'anti-pagan' or anti-Hellene. Although the emperor's religious policies might have been construed as being anti-Iamblichaean, his request that Iamblichus' student Sopater become court philosopher after 324 – thus formalizing the advisory relationship Platonist philosophers had enjoyed with emperors since the age of the Antonines – was clearly a conciliating gesture aimed at the Iamblichaean community.[13]

3 DOGMATISM AND ORTHODOXY

Constantine's achievement of sole power as Christian emperor changed everything and nothing. His accession is, indeed, treated as a watershed by those who overlook the rapprochement between Christianity and Platonism in the late third century and who view Diocletian's persecution as the culmination of a sustained anti-Christian policy rather than an aberration. Following Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History* and *Life of Constantine*, such historians have seen the emperor's founding of Constantinople, a 'new Rome', as symbolizing a break not only politically with the empire's western capital, but also with its 'pagan' past. In fact, Roman history textbooks once ended with Constantine's accession.

Nevertheless, whether in the world of policy, addressed in this chapter's first section, or in the swirl of ideas, continuities with the trends of the third century are striking. The professional practice of philosophy at the cusp of the fourth century was, for example, still dominated by Platonists. In fact, the arguments exchanged among all Platonists before the Great Persecution can be seen as involving people staking their claim to be arbiters of orthodoxy, to identify Platonist dogma precisely. This push continued during Constantine's era, albeit in a different key, with the debate between Porphyrians and Iamblichaeans all but giving way to a century-long disagreement among Christians over how to understand the Trinity – debates in which the staunchly Platonist Cappadocian fathers would be intimately involved. These arguments drew on second- and third-century ideas to understand and define how a transcendent

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[13] Eun. *VSoph.* s.v. 'Sopatros'.

supreme divinity became accessible to humanity through some form of intelligible principle. Moreover, Platonism's increasingly religious and ritual character as well as the marriage between the Roman state and an episcopal form of Christianity meant that the question of handling dissenters was important for theologians, philosophers and the government to resolve. It was such a serious question that it preoccupied those philosophers who continued to advise the emperor, according to the tradition pursued since the Second Sophistic. This is clearly what the philosopher speaking at Diocletian's court in the winter of 302–3 was doing (cf. Lact. *Inst.* 5.2), and now across the fourth century this activity would involve not only philosopher-orators, such as Themistius, but also bishops who saw themselves as wearing the philosopher's advisory mantle. And while the pursuit of philosophy – whether in its Christian or Hellene form – more eagerly embraced asceticism and mysticism (trends already evident in Porphyrian circles), its practitioners remained committed to notions that had been dominant since at least the second century. Above all, the anchor for true philosophy – whether or not pursued in service to Christian faith – was Plato's texts and teachings. Accordingly, authors throughout the fourth century, especially those whose first language was Latin, endeavoured to provide translations of key dialogues (for example, Calcidius' translation of the *Timaeus*) as well as commentaries explaining them.

In embracing Christianity, Constantine hoped that Christian bishops would act as mediators between him and their communities, working parallel to and supplementing the mutually beneficial relationships that had long linked the imperial throne with other urban elites. Nevertheless, immediately after Licinius' defeat, Constantine learned that a doctrinal disagreement had riven the eastern Church: according to Alexander, bishop of Alexandria, his presbyter Arius was advertising the idea that the 'Son has a beginning' (Thdt. *HE* 1.4), originating in the Father's will as mediator between the Father and the world. That Arius' teachings were influenced by Alexandrian Platonism has long been granted; whether they drew on Hellenic Platonism is more controversial.[14] Arius gained followers from Egypt to Asia Minor, including lay people and prominent clergy such as Eusebius of Caesarea. Constantine quickly called a council of bishops to settle the question. Upon the emperor's suggestion,[15] the Council at Nicaea ruled that the Son was *homoousios*, of one substance, with the Father; it also anathematized the notions attributed to Arius that the Son was a creature, created *ex nihilo*, morally changeable, and a distinct *hypostasis* or *ousia*. Although Arians claimed that the term *homoousios* was suggested

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[14] As argued in, e.g., Williams 1985.
[15] Letter of Eusebius of Caesarea to his Congregation (Opitz 1934: 22. 7).

by Constantine's episcopal adviser, Ossius of Cordoba (who may be the dedicatee of Calcidius' Latin translation of Plato's *Timaeus*), the word may have had a Hermeticist or Platonist source. Constantine endorsed the creed's declaration that the Father and Son were consubstantial, condemned Arius' followers as 'Porphyrians' (perhaps because both camps had distanced the transcendent Father from Jesus Christ), and – again like Porphyrian treatises – ruled that their treatises be 'consigned to the flames' (Socr. *HE* 1.9). Nevertheless, Constantine became increasingly irritated by theologians, such as Bishop Athanasius of Alexandria, who refused to allow repentant Arians back into their communities. Ultimately, Athanasius was exiled to Trier, and the emperor allowed an Arian bishop to baptize him shortly before his death. Constantine's actions sat well with Eusebius for whom he was 'invested . . . with a semblance of heavenly sovereignty', an emperor who 'directs his gaze above, and frames his earthly government according to the pattern of that Divine original, feeling strength in its conformity to the monarchy of God' (*LC* 3.5).

Upon Constantine's death, his sons struggled to assert their exclusive claims to power, with Constantius II (337–61), the middle son, taking the East. Divided regnum continued as an effective way to handle incursions of Persians on the eastern frontier and the numerous peoples challenging the western river boundaries (Philost. *HE* 4.2). As the heir who ruled the longest, Constantius carried forward Constantine's initiatives in a variety of ways. For example, he continued to enhance Constantinople, providing a Senate for the new capital, with the orator, professor and philosopher Themistius as one of its first senators (Them. *Or.* 2). Constantius also ruled against blood sacrifice, invoking his father's name in support (*CTh.* 16.10.2), and removing the Altar of Victory from the Roman curia in 356 (Amb. *Ep.* 18.32). East and West became bitterly divided over theological issues, however, with Constantius supporting Arian doctrine and his brother Constans upholding the Nicene Creed. By 355, however, after Constans' death, Constantius asserted his new hegemony over the West by attempting to enforce the Arian theology that he favoured. Accordingly at Sirmium in 357 (where the aged Ossius of Cordoba was probably forcibly compelled to sign) and at eastern (Seleucia) and western (Ariminum) synods two years later (Ath. *HA* 42–6), Constantius' bishops pressured western prelates to agree that the Son was 'like (*homoios*, *similis*) the Father as the Scriptures teach' (Philost. *HE* 4.10), a doctrine that Bishop Liberius of Rome condemned. Attending both the latter two councils was Basil of Caesarea, who left the new ascetic monastic community he had just founded to assist the Cappadocian bishops in their support of the *homoousion* position. The emperor's heavy involvement in defining doctrine, together with the rough treatment of their prelates and perspectives, galvanized the West. In

Rome, Marius Victorinus, the city's professor of rhetoric,[16] an African transplant whose portrait statue stood in Trajan's forum, who had earned senatorial rank, and whose expertise in Greek enabled him to translate a number of significant Platonist texts, became increasingly drawn to studying Christian literature (Aug. *Conf.* 8.2). Some time before the Council of Ariminum, Victorinus came to profess Christianity openly and decided to devote his rhetorical skills and philosophical rigour to writing Trinitarian theses supporting the *homoousion* position. Both in methodology and in perspective, Victorinus' work continued thus to be shaped by his earlier Platonist background, especially in his understanding – which drew heavily on Porphyry – that God's one *ousia* is manifest in three *hupostases*. This concept would have the potential to bring the two feuding theological positions together.

4 JULIAN (361–363) STOKES OLD FEARS

In addition to religious dissent, the West came to oppose Constantius politically as well. Late in his reign, after his brothers had died, Constantius had appointed his nephew Julian as his Caesar in the West (355), where incursions of Alamanni (Amm. Marc. 16) made an imperial presence necessary. Julian was thus called away from his philosophical studies in Athens, leaving a milieu in which he had studied Platonism together with the Cappadocian Christians Basil of Caesarea and his friend Gregory Nazianzen (Soz. *HE* 5.2; Socr. *HE* 4.26). In 360, Constantius requested some of Julian's troops – ostensibly to help his own campaign against Persia; but the men, many of whom were Gallic recruits, claimed that they did not want to travel east and proclaimed Julian emperor instead. Julian acquiesced, and began moving east (Amm. Marc. 16.12, 20.4). Civil war was avoided, however, when Constantius died unexpectedly, naming Julian as his successor, according to Ammianus Marcellinus, soldier historian and Hellene. Ammianus' chronicle records the perspective of a contemporary and even an eye-witness for Julian's reign (Amm. Marc. 16.10.21; 23.5.7; 31.16.9).

After Constantius' death, Julian moved quickly to put his own imprint on Roman power. He claimed that he was restoring Roman values, that he was the 'repairer of the world' (*CIL* 9.417). As soon as he and his troops arrived in Constantinople (Amm. Marc. 22.2–5), Julian publicly renounced the Christianity to which he had previously publicly adhered, espousing and promoting instead the Iamblichaean form of Platonism which he had secretly followed since his

[16] Hier. *Chron.* s.a. 354; *De vir. ill.* 101. Augustine's view of Victorinus as 'deeply embedded' in Rome's anti-Christian aristocracy has been challenged by Hadot 1971: 52–8, 235–52. But see Cooper, *Marius Victorinus* 24.

youth (Juln. *Ep.* 47.434d). From the start, Julian made clear how philosophy legitimized and would guide his reign. Through philosophy, Julian claimed as he began to move against Constantius, the gods had preserved him (*Ep. ad Ath.* 272a). In a direct challenge to Constantius, Julian asserted that the gods had chosen him as their son (*Or.* 7.230b), and they had raised him to the throne, as he confided in a letter to Maximus, so that he would 'restore their worship in its utmost purity and I obey them . . . with good will. For they promise me great rewards for my labours' (*Ep.* 8.415c–d). The Iamblichaean character of Julian's religious and philosophical beliefs is apparent, not only because of the affiliations of his teachers Priscus and Maximus of Ephesus (Juln. *Epp.* 2, 15, 16, 38).[17] But he also began to promote, for himself and for the entire empire, a return to blood sacrifice which included frequent feasting on sacrificial meat (Amm. Marc. 22.5, 12–14). Julian's actions adopted a sacrificial policy that even the tetrarchy had shrunk from implementing in its most pro-sacrificial edicts. And they ran contrary to the mores of contemporary Hellenes. Their startling character is clear from the lack of enthusiasm with which they were met by other Hellenes (Juln. *Misop.* 362a), including Ammianus, who describes the number and character of these sacrificial rites, including the divinatory rituals that sometimes accompanied them, as excessive (Amm. Marc. 22.12).

During the three short years of his reign, Julian directed his energy toward two goals: a military engagement with Persia that he reignited, although Constantius had signed a peace in 360, and what he saw as the restoration of traditional religions, a policy guided by his own Iamblichaean perspective. Modern historians have seen Julian's Persian campaigns as ways to cement the army's loyalty. Nevertheless, given the staunch support of the western troops that he already enjoyed, perhaps the fifth-century Church historian Socrates deserves some credence. He blames Julian's ultimately fatal exploits against the Persians on the prognostications of Maximus which 'deluded' him 'into the belief that his exploits would not only equal, but exceed those of Alexander of Macedon' (*HE* 3.21). And indeed, Julian had brought philosophers and theurgists along on the campaign (Amm. Marc. 25.3.23), a policy that not only perpetuated the Platonist notion that the philosopher should advise the sovereign, but also allowed them to influence the emperor through divination.

Julian's religious policy was two-pronged. On the one hand, it sought to restore what he believed to be traditional Greek and Roman practices drawing upon philosophy as the guarantor of their rectitude. On the other hand, the emperor strove to diminish the potency and appeal of Christianity which he

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[17] The letters to Iamblichus in Julian's corpus were written by another author, early in the fourth century: Barnes 1978.

saw as a new and illegitimate faith (*Gal.* 253a–e). At the beginning of 362, the emperor commanded that all temples be brought back to their former condition, together with their property (this is probably when the Altar of Victory returned to the Roman curia); at the same time, he invited a cadre of philosophers from various schools to court, including the Christian Basil of Caesarea, who declined (*Epp.* 26, 43, 44). Julian's public debates with these philosophers set out the architecture of his religious reforms. He argued that his divine patrons, Zeus/Helios, the Mother of the Gods, and Attis-*Logos*, her lover, were universal, sharing one divine essence, manifest in different *hupostases* (*Hymn to the Mother of the Gods*; *Hymn* 179c). Equating this Mother of the Gods, rightly understood through philosophy, with Rome's Magna Mater (*Hymn* 159a–161b), Julian then claimed in an edict that philosophy and belief in 'our' gods – that is, those of the Greeks and Romans – were one (*CTh.* 13.3.5; *Ep.* 36.423a). Julian also instituted policies intended to restore traditional religious practices to their former integrity and lustre. According to his letter 'To Arsacius', preserved by the fifth-century historian Sozomen (*HE* 5.16.5–15), however, the emperor wanted to model the practice of Greek and Roman cults along the lines of the Christian church, encouraging his correspondent as 'high priest of Galatia' to ensure that the priests in his region not only demonstrated humanity and piety, but also avoided taverns, theatres and trade, set up hostelries and widely distributed centrally provided charitable funds to the poor – all in direct parallel with Christian practice. Although this letter is probably spurious,[18] Julian's correspondence with the high priest, Theodotus, still suggests that the emperor took certain cues from Christian practice in his campaign to revive traditional cult. In this letter, he entrusts Theodotus, a fellow student of Maximus, with the 'government of all the temples in Asia, with power to appoint the priests in every city and to assign to each what is fitting' (*Ep.* 20.452d–453a), a role clearly modelled on the diocesan bishop. He also urges the priest to appoint people to these positions who are known for their 'fairness, goodness, and benevolence'. Although the emperor claims to 'avoid innovations in all things', and bemoaned how Romans had forgotten the customs of their ancestors, here, too, he took his cue from Christian practice, since ancient priesthoods had long been assigned more for reasons of family name or status, than for attributes of personal piety. Julian may well have also recognized the effective role as liaisons between the throne and urban communities that bishops had filled since the time of Constantine, a position that had replaced the old partnership between the emperor and the senatorial elite who then were the patrons of their local communities.

[18] Van Nuffelen 2002. Contra Nuffelen, Bouffartigue 2005.

Julian sought actively to undercut Christianity by a variety of measures. First, he rescinded all edicts against various forms of Christian practice and allowed numerous bishops, including Athanasius, to return from the cities whence they had been exiled for promulgating beliefs contrary to those of Constantius (*Ep.* 15). While this looks like a policy of toleration, and Julian may have been advised here by the Hellene orator Themistius (his urban prefect), Ammianus indicates that it had a more mischievous aim, since the emperor thought that 'freedom increased their dissension' (22.5.4) and so undermined the respect accorded the faith. Second, he attempted to return Jewish practice to its ancient sacrificial heritage by rebuilding the temple which the Romans had sacked during the First Jewish Revolt (66–70; Amm Marc. 23.1.2–3). Ostensibly, this construction – never completed – was to ensure that ancient Jewish ritual practice could resume.[19] Julian would have been aware, however, that the temple's restoration might undermine Christians' belief that Jesus had foretold the destruction of the temple (Matt. 24.2). Not only did this prophecy give Christians faith that some of Jesus' other predictions would come to pass, but the prophecy also suggested that the temple would remain in ruins until Jesus' second coming (Socr. *HE* 3.20). Third, Julian authored a treatise *Against the Galilaeans* (as he called Christians), a rhetorical and philosophical attack against Christianity, which, drawing on Porphyry, adopted an Iamblichaean perspective. Arguing that those who believed that Jesus was a god had deserted 'us . . . and the Greeks', Julian claimed that Christians had actually abandoned the universal God (*Gal.* 235b, 200a). Fourth, he 'deprived' Christian clerics 'of the immunities, honours, and provisions which Constantine had conferred; repealed the laws which had been enacted in their favour, and reinforced their statutory liabilities' (Soz. *HE* 5.5). Finally, and most egregiously in the eyes, not only of Christian but also Hellene intellectuals (Greg. Naz. *Or.* 4.100; Amm. Marc. 22.10.7), Julian barred Christians from teaching rhetoric and literature on the grounds that teachers 'ought not to harbour in their souls opinions irreconcilable with what they publicly profess' (*Ep.* 36.422c). From Julian's perspective, since only the correct practice of philosophy led to the divine, following such a path depended on Greek *paideia* learned at the feet of a master who comprehended not only the meaning of the words, but also the deeper truths they signified. The contemporary and later Christian view of this edict was that it was a form of 'persecution' (Socr. *HE* 3.12), for they saw it as evidence of Julian's desire to undermine Christianity by severing it from the broader culture. In response to this edict, a number of famous teachers resigned their posts, including the chair of rhetoric

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[19] Note that Nuffelen 2002 also identifies as spurious Julian's letter to the 'Community of the Jews' which touches on this issue.

at Athens,[20] Prohaeresius, under whom Julian had probably studied and to whom he offered an exemption. In Rome, Marius Victorinus stepped down (Aug. *Conf.* 8.5.10); as did Ausonius, who would become tutor to Gratian, son of the future emperor Valentinian.

The outcry against Julian's religious policy began even before his death. Gregory Nazianzen, who in early 362 had announced his intention to lead 'the true philosophical life', by which he meant that he had taken up an ascetic vocation at Basil's monastery instead of being ordained, turned his attention to writing a series of invectives against the emperor. Reacting primarily, but not exclusively, to Julian's edict against Christians teaching the classics,[21] Gregory decided that he needed now to enter the public life of a priest – which was also to say the public role of a philosopher – because of the current 'war' attacking 'the sublime and divine word' about which 'the entire world in our day philosophizes' (*Or.* 2.35, 53–6, 69–70). The death of Constantine's last heir on retreat from Persia ignited an outpouring of responses to the emperor's policies. Branding Julian as 'the Apostate', Gregory responded to *Against the Galilaeans* by arguing that the emperor's death in battle showed unambiguously that the Christian God was the true universal God. Accordingly, in Gregory's view, his philosophy was the only true form, and, consequently, Christian philosophy embodied Greekness at its most sublime (*Or.* 4.536, 637, 640). In Rome, the aged Marius Victorinus turned his prodigious exegetical talents to the letters of Paul, in so doing responding to Julian (and Porphyry) who had asked why Christians, having deserted the Hellenes, did not abide by Jewish law (Juln. *Gal.* 305d; Porph. apud Eus. *PE* 1.2). Basil of Caesarea, who with Gregory had studied under Prohaeresius with Julian at Athens – each demonstrating how little in practice the philosophical or religious affiliation of the professor had on the student – restated formally in his *Letter to Young Men* the view that had inspired Christian education since Origen and that would define learning throughout the Middle Ages, namely, that the virtues learned under the rhetor or philosopher were fundamentally important, but that they were truly achieved only through a Christian life (5.1, 4.1, 10.1). Far from reinvigorating, consolidating and systematizing traditional religion, therefore, Julian's reforms actually undermined these rituals, because, in integrating and systematizing pagan thought and cult, he gave Christians one target against which they could train their assault.

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[20] Jerome, *Chron.* s. a. 363; But see Goulet 2000, who argues that the evidence for the rhetor's Christianity is thin and that Julian's edict might have required evidence of piety that made even some Hellenes uncomfortable.

[21] The edict, *CTh.* 13.3.5, was posted in Spoletium on 29 July 362 (Amm. Marc. 22.10.7; Lib. *Or.* 18.15.7–60).

5 THE TWILIGHT OF A UNITED EMPIRE

After Julian's death on the battlefield, the army desperately needed to choose his successor so that they could retreat in good order. They nominated Jovian (363–4), Julian's officer of the guard. He led the army out of Persia after signing a humiliating treaty ceding land east of the Tigris. As a Christian following Julian, Jovian might have been tempted to settle a few scores, yet he apparently issued an edict of toleration, a policy that Themistius endorsed in an oration given upon his achieving the consulship (*Or.* 5). Within nine months, however, Jovian was dead, having delivered the army as far as Bithynia's eastern border (Amm. Marc. 25.10.13).

Upon Jovian's death, the army pushed on to Nicaea where civil and military officers met to choose the next emperor. In this case, they turned to Valentinian (364–75), a divisional commander. Given recent events, the troops pressured Valentinian to pick a co-Augustus; he chose his brother Valens (364–78; Amm. Marc. 25.10.6–9; 26.2.2–11). With Valens commanding the prefecture of Oriens and Valentinian everything else (26.5.4–5), the need for divided rule was amply demonstrated by the incursions and insurrections that both brothers faced. Across the eleven years of his reign, Valentinian faced off against Alamanni, Franks and Saxons in Gaul, Picts and Scots in Britain, Quadi on the Danube, and a usurper, Firmus, in Africa (29.5.1–55). After a serious illness in 367, Valentinian named his son Gratian as co-Augustus in order to designate a successor, even though the boy was just eight years old (27.8.1–5; 27.6.1–16). In the East, Valens had to deal almost immediately with a usurper, Julian's cousin Procopius, who had trumpeted his ties to the house of Constantine. After about a year, Valens got control of the situation, and Procopius met his death (26.6.11–14). The east faced external challenge on two fronts: Rome sparred with Persia over which state would control the throne of Armenia, a contest in which Rome ultimately took the upper hand (Amm. Marc. 27.12.11–12; 29.1.4; P'awstos 5.32–5, 37). In the end, more serious challenges came from Goths living north of the Danube frontier. Valens led a punitive campaign against them for supporting Procopius; this conflict ended with a treaty perhaps witnessed by Themistius as Constantinople's urban prefect in 369 (Amm. Marc. 16.10.3; 27.5.1; 31.3.4; 27.5.7–9; Them. *Or.* 10).

In 375, Valentinian died, leaving Gratian, now sixteen, to succeed him and the Empire itself in an increasingly fragile state. Having been tutored by the Gallic poet and orator Ausonius (died c. 395) since becoming co-regent, Gratian was closer to the aristocracy of his teacher's home province than to the army. Immediately, Merobaudes, one of Valentinian's generals, raised the dead

emperor's four-year-old younger son, Valentinian II (375–92), as co-regent, ostensibly to quell an army rebellion, but probably in practical terms to give the army more leverage over Gratian (Amm. Marc. 30.10.1–5). Within two years, problems on the Danube frontier had resurfaced, with the Huns pushing the Goths from behind. The Goths, in turn, petitioned Valens for permission to cross into the Empire, approval that he granted. Unfortunately, more Goths crossed than the Romans had anticipated, and unscrupulous soldiers, according to Ammianus, exploited the destitute Goths. Soon the Gothic forces rose in revolt, and although Gratian had mobilized to assist his uncle, Valens engaged the Goths precipitously and alone, underestimating their strength and tenacity. At the Battle of Adrianople (378), the Romans suffered a crushing loss and Valens lost his life (31.5, 8, 12–13).

Although the house of Valentinian faced similar military challenges in East and West, its approach to religious issues was different, apart from restoring the Christian privileges that Julian had repealed and – until the reign of Gratian – turning a blind eye to traditional cultic practices (*CTh*. 16.2.18; 16.2.21). Both Valentinian I and Valens, however, used charges of 'magic' to brand opposition members as traitors (Amm. Marc. 28.1.10–12), and, while this might have targeted theurgic practices, such accusations had been used to political advantage by emperors since the time of Augustus. For his part, Valentinian I refused to involve himself in religious controversies, a policy that earned him the praise of Ammianus Marcellinus (30.9.5). His brother Valens supported the eastern formula that the Son is 'like' the Father, and he nominated to important sees bishops who reflected his beliefs – a policy in which Valentinian I refused to involve himself despite pressure from eastern pro-Nicene bishops. Gratian, unlike his father, entangled himself directly in religious affairs. He became staunchly pro-Nicene, even recalling bishops whom Valens had expelled for opposing his homoian position (Soz. 7.1; Soc. 5.2). For his part, Valens became hostile to the growing monastic movement in the East, especially Egypt. Issuing an edict in 375 ordering the forcible conscription of monks, probably because of manpower shortages, Valens' attacks on monastics – many of whom had supported the Nicene Athanasius before his death in 373 – grew increasingly virulent across his reign (Jerome, *Chron*. s.a. 375). When he found it useful, however, and perhaps with the encouragement of Themistius (Socr. 4.32; Soz. 6.36–7), Valens was able to co-operate with bishops of opposing beliefs. For example, he developed a good working relationship with Basil, now the bishop of Caesarea and author of a vigorous refutation of Arianism, but whose ecclesiastical administration of Armenia worked in concert with Valens' own regional interests (Bas. *Ep*. 99; P'awstos 5.29; 4.4). Basil's situation sensitized him to the issues that had long divided the *homoios* and *homoousios*

factions, and, with his brother, Gregory of Nyssa and his friend Gregory Nazianzen, he began to argue that God's one *ousia* existed in three *hupostases*. Gregory of Nazianzen stated the Cappadocian position on the Trinity most bluntly in his *Oration* 31, claiming that 'the Godhead exists in separate beings undivided, like three mutually connected suns giving a single light' (*Or.* 31 [theol. 5] 12).

Valens' death at the Battle of Adrianople (378) brought profound changes to the whole Mediterranean world. Not only was the eastern Empire now extraordinarily exposed militarily due to the tremendous loss of life in the conflict against the Goths, but Gratian's appointment of Theodosius (378–95) as Valens' successor had profound religious implications for any expression of religious piety deviating from the Nicene Creed. Gratian realized that he could not manage the whole empire alone, as the Alamanni continued to threaten his own dominions along the upper Danube and Rhine borders. Theodosius' father had served Valentinian I as *magister militum*, and by 374 Theodosius was *dux Moesiae* and was embarking on a distinguished military career. Although his father had been executed shortly before the death of Valentinian I, Theodosius had considerable support, not only within Ausonius' circle, but also in the army.

Receiving reinforcements from Gratian, Theodosius' first task was to deal militarily with the Visigothic problem. By the autumn of 382, he signed a peace treaty with the Goths. Under this arrangement, the Goths could settle south of the Danube, but they were also required to serve the Roman army. In a stunning departure from Roman tradition, however, these Gothic *foederati* were allowed to serve under their own commanders. Although Themistius praised the emperor's wisdom and humanity in populating the country with former enemies who could serve as either farmers or soldiers (*Or.* 16), Theodosius' treaty meant that the imperial army ceased to be a Romanizing force. Instead, the Goths preserved their language and cultural autonomy under the terms of the settlement – an outcome with grave consequences after the emperor's death.

In the short term, however, the treaty served Theodosius well, for within the year, Gratian, his co-Augustus, was dead at the hands of the usurper Magnus Maximus (383–8), formerly *comes* in Britain. So long as he kept out of Italy where Valentinian and his mother Justina presided over the court at Milan, Maximus faced no resistance from Theodosius who was busy managing incursions of Ostrogoths and finally arranging a peace settlement dividing control of Armenia between Rome and Persia. Once the challenger moved into Italy in 387, however, forcing Valentinian and his mother to flee east for protection,

Theodosius was ready to engage Maximus militarily, defeating and executing him at Aquileia in 388. Within three years, another usurper had arisen, aided by the vulnerabilities of a young Augustus. In this case, Valentinian II, now twenty-one and wanting more autonomy, had quarrelled with Arbogast, a Frank and his *magister militum*. Neither Arbogast nor Theodosius had any interest in encouraging the youth's independence, and the youth was murdered. Arbogast's best protection as the prime suspect was to claim the throne. Since his Frankish roots precluded seizing power directly, he persuaded Eugenius, a professor of rhetoric, to seize the purple in his place. Accordingly, once again in 394, Theodosius reluctantly marched west, defeating Eugenius and Arbogast at the Battle of the Frigidus River. With the deaths of the two western pretenders, the reins of power were now firmly in Theodosius' hands, even though he shared the title 'Augustus' with his young sons, Arcadius (aged seventeen or eighteen) and Honorius (aged ten). The armies of East and West, however, had been severely taxed over the past dozen years.

As the Empire faced increasing internal tension militarily, thanks to the vulnerability of the young western emperors, religious tensions also escalated, with a hardening of attitudes toward forms of religious piety other than Nicene Christianity facing increasing pressure. In the West, Gratian renounced the pontifical robes and the title *pontifex maximus*, by which all emperors since Augustus had regulated traditional cult practice. Ruling from Milan, Gratian confiscated the endowments of the Vestal virgins and the ancient priestly colleges and removed the Altar of Victory from the Curia. Restored under Julian after Constantius had confiscated it, the altar had been the site of sacrifices inaugurating the Senate's sessions. Roman senators, many of whom still rejected Christianity, pressured the court for the altar's return, but Ambrose, the increasingly powerful bishop of Milan, the imperial residence, organized a petition that helped steel the emperor's resolve. Soon after Gratian's death, the Senate and Symmachus the prefect of Rome, repeated their request for the altar's restoration. '[E]veryone has his own customs, everyone his own rites. The Divine Mind has distributed different guardians and different cults to different cities,' Symmachus observed. Echoing an oration of Themistius to Valens (*Or.* 5.68d–69a), the Senator continued, 'We ask then for peace for the gods of our fathers and of our country. It is just that all worship should be considered as one. We look on the same stars, the sky is common, the same world surrounds us. What difference does it make by what pains each seeks the truth? We cannot attain to so great a secret by one road' (*Rel.* 3.4, 8, 10). Although Symmachus was articulating what had been, in effect, imperial policy toward traditional cult, he failed in his request, as Valentinian and the court proved themselves receptive instead to

the appeals of Ambrose whose two letters to the emperor bluntly outlined the bishop's point of view: far from appearing to sponsor paganism, the emperor's role was to further the interests of the church, fighting under arms for God (*Epp.* 17, 18).

In the East, Theodosius too became increasingly hostile toward traditional cult. Long attributed to the emperor's baptism during a serious illness in 380, Theodosius' reluctance to repudiate attacks on traditional temples and practice may have had more to do with the emperor's need for support from zealous bishops in important sees (such as Ambrose) as he struggled directly against challenges to imperial authority in the West, especially in the 390s. From the middle of the 380s, as the confrontation with Maximus grew more heated, Theodosius began favourably to receive petitions for the demolition of individual temples or their conversion into churches, and condoned unauthorized attacks on them. At Antioch, the esteemed sophist and rhetorician Libanius, who had eulogized Julian as a friend and had served as teacher to Basil of Caesarea, complained bitterly of the groups of monks who were allowed to destroy the rural shrines throughout the countryside (*Or.* 30.7–9). The pagan historian Zosimus, writing long after the fact, claimed that Maternus Cynegius, praetorian prefect for the East, had orders to close all temples. Although he probably exaggerates, Cynegius does seem to have exceeded his official authority in fanning the flames of anti-pagan violence. Helped by certain well-disposed imperial officials and fervent gangs of monks, urged on by local bishops, Cynegius encouraged the destruction of temples at Edessa, Apamea, and in Egypt. These exploits were the background against which Theophilus, Bishop of Alexandria, was able in 391 not only to accomplish the closure of the great library – now under the direction of the Platonist Theon, but also to achieve the destruction of the splendid temple to Serapis in Alexandria, one of the most sacred temples of the Empire, but a site that may also by the late fourth century have had strong ties to Iamblichaean Platonism. In the same year, Theodosius issued an edict prohibiting sacrifice and closing temples (*CTh.* 16.10.10–11), and the following year, he banned traditional cult activities entirely, even within private homes (*CTh.* 16.10.12).

At the same time, Theodosius, again to cement the support of the western bishops, began to move against those Christians who opposed the Nicene Creed. In 380, he issued a constitution – which at that time was targeted to his domains in the East – defining as orthodox only the faith of the bishops of Rome (*CTh.* 16.1.2). The next year (381), he decreed that all churches should be surrendered to Nicene bishops, and he called the Council of Constantinople, condemning Arianism, defining the faith along Nicene lines, and giving primacy of honour to

Rome's bishop. From this point forward, at least in the East, Arianism gradually faded away.

The delicate politics of Theodosius' era, when he governed the East as a strong military leader, but always had an eye on challenges to his vulnerable partners in the West, was fertile ground for Ambrose to assert his authority as the Nicene Christian bishop in Milan, home of the western court. Although Ambrose's influence seems like the culmination of the relationship between bishop and emperor established by Constantine, a Platonist tradition also undergirded Ambrose's authority – as it also would for Augustine who learned about Platonism from the bishop of Milan. Over a century before, Plotinus and Porphyry, drawing on the model of Plato's *Laws* – where the philosopher guides the sovereign in crafting laws in the image of divine law, thought that a philosopher who had achieved mystical union with the One had a responsibility to counsel the emperor (Plot. *Enn.* 6.9.7.22–6; Porph. *VPlot.* 12.23). Once Constantine came to the throne, this relationship was translated into Christian terms. 'The judgement of [Christian] priests', Constantine argued, 'should be regarded as if God himself were in the judge's seat. For these have no power to think or to judge except as they are instructed by Christ's teaching' (Optatus *Ap.* 5). Gregory Nazianzen, of course had also equated being a priest with a philosopher and so a public leader. By the end of the fourth century, Ambrose, a member of the Roman aristocracy, very highly educated in a Platonist curriculum, but also bishop of one of the imperial seats, had the opportunity to make the Platonist equation between philosopher, bishop, and imperial advisor complete.[22] The Altar of Victory debate offered a foreshadowing of his episcopal vision, but Theodosius gave him two opportunities to exercise this influence as well. In 388, he advised the emperor not to fund the reconstruction of a synagogue that a band of Syrian monks had torched in Callinicum, on the grounds that God would no longer give Theodosius victory over his enemies if he defended the Jews (*Ep.* 40). In 390, after a number of Thessalonicans had been massacred as part of a mishandled imperial response to the murder of a Roman general, Ambrose required Theodosius to do public penance before he would receive him into communion. In each case, Theodosius did the bishop's bidding. The emperor himself had more to gain from obeying rather than alienating his western bishop; but the bishop was also able to exercise a model of power that would prove influential throughout the West.

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[22] For Ambrose's thoughts on his role, see *On Duties* where he compares the celibate Christian priest to the ancient Hebrew Levite, a group whom Philo of Alexandria had equated with Greek philosophers and who had responsibilities to guide the state and protect the temple.

In 394, after the Battle of the Frigidus River, the Roman world looked like a commonwealth united under a single emperor and a single creed. It was officially Christian, but its faith had engaged in deep and influential conversations with Platonism. This image of unity was quickly shattered, however, when Theodosius died in 395, dividing the realm – which would never again be reunited – between his two underage sons. From that moment on, East and West began to develop along different paths.

THEMISTIUS

INNA KUPREEVA

I LIFE

Themistius was born c. 317 in Paphlagonia, probably near the town of Abunot-eich. He studied rhetoric and philosophy in Constantinople. His first teacher of philosophy was his father Eugenius, a Platonist, possibly of Iamblichaean persuasion, but with a strong interest in Aristotle which he passed down to his son. At the beginning of his career, Themistius taught in the city of Nico-media, and possibly elsewhere in Asia Minor, trying to establish his reputation as a philosopher. From the late 340s he taught in Constantinople, and around 347 entered the state service under Constantius II, who adlected him to the Senate in 355. After this, politics became Themistius' main career. He served as an advisor to Constantius II, who put him in charge of recruiting new mem-bers for the Senate and gave him a number of other key political and diplo-matic functions. Themistius retained his influence during the reigns of Julian, Jovian, Valentinian and Valens, and Theodosius.[1] In both his political and pri-vate speeches, he emphasized that it was as a philosopher that he was in service of the political regimes of Constantinople (the denial of philosopher's title in *Or.* 21 is ironic). In his political speeches, he frequently appealed to ideas of enlightened government, and religious and political tolerance, informed by the legacy of classical political philosophy.

  Themistius' school most likely offered training in both philosophy and rhetoric. His students would be young men of noble birth, normally preparing for some kind of a public career (of a state official or a teacher). Apparently, the breadth of his curriculum, which included 'astronomy, poetry and philosophy', made Themistius more attractive than other renowned teachers. Libanius, who taught rhetoric in Antioch, lost some of his students to Themistius. Themistius' school differed from the later Platonic schools in that its philosophical allegiance

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[1] The question of Themistius' tenure of a public office under each of these regimes is still a matter of controversy, and the literature is growing. For recent surveys, see Vanderspoel 1995; Penella 2000.

(e.g., to Plato or Aristotle) was less important than its emphasis on the overall importance of philosophy (and, perhaps, the emphasis on the priority of practical over theoretical philosophy). It is not clear how long he continued in his role of the head of school, but it is clear that he did for some time combine this role with his service to the emperors.[2] Most likely, he composed his paraphrases of Aristotle's works in the earlier years of his teaching.[3] He died probably around 388.

2 WORKS

Five authentic Aristotelian paraphrases by Themistius have been preserved, three – *On the Soul*, *Posterior Analytics* and *Physics* – in the original Greek and two – *On the Heavens* and *Metaphysics Lambda* – in both Hebrew and Latin versions. Several paraphrases are extant in fragments and testimonia in Greek, Arabic and Hebrew translations. These include the paraphrases of *Categories*, *Topics* and *Prior Analytics*.[4] The Arabic tradition has preserved a logical treatise *Against Maximus concerning the Derivation of the Second and Third Figures of the Syllogism*.

The paraphrase of *Parva naturalia* attributed to Themistius is composed by a late Byzantine author, probably Sophonias.[5] The paraphrase of Aristotle's *History of Animals* in Arabic is attributed to Themistius in MS Tashkent 2385. This attribution has been doubted by several scholars, but the argument in its favour has recently been revived by M. Zonta in the light of new evidence from the Semitic tradition.

The Arabic sources mention paraphrases of *Poetics* and *Ethics*.[6] The treatise *On Virtue* preserved in Syriac offers an original standpoint with regard to the subject. The suggestion of Ritter and Walzer that Al-Kindî's treatise *On Dispelling Sadness* is based on Themistius' lost work *Peri alupias* has been rejected by scholars.[7]

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[2] From Libanius' correspondence, we know of a man called Celsus who returned to Antioch in 361 having just completed his studies with Themistius.

[3] Dates 347–57 were suggested by Blumenthal 1990.

[4] The text published in *CAG* 23.3 (1884) by M. Wallies as Themistius' paraphrase of *An. Pr.* 1 is a late Byzantine compilation based on the extant commentaries by Alexander of Aphrodisias and Philoponus. Rose argues for its attribution to Sophonias (Rose 1867).

[5] *CAG* 5.6 (ed. Wendland), see Wendland 1903: v–xiii, cf. Rose 1867, Freudenthal 1869.

[6] No clear evidence that Themistius paraphrased any of Aristotle's ethical treatises has been found, but the question deserves further study. Themistius was certainly familiar with the main ethical and political ideas of Plato, Aristotle and Hellenistic philosophers.

[7] See Ritter and Walzer 1938, Pohlenz 1938; cf. most recently Adamson 2007: 150.

The suggestion made on the basis of Photius' report, that Themistius wrote commentaries apart from paraphrases as well as some exegetical works on Plato is most probably due to unfortunate wording.[8]

3 THEMISTIAN PARAPHRASE: GOALS, METHOD, AND SOURCES

Themistius revived and to a large extent reinvented the genre of Aristotelian paraphrase as an exegetical tool.[9] In the introduction to the paraphrase of *Posterior Analytics*, he distinguishes his method from that of major commentaries known in his time, and setting clear exposition rather than an independent investigation of controversial problems as its main goal:

That I should compose the commentaries on Aristotle's books after so many and so great commentators would seem to be close to a useless ambition. For there are not many things that our predecessors missed out, and demolishing the whole work for the sake of minor interferences is similar to wishing to recast Phidias' Athena in order to make better straps on her sandals. However, setting out and articulating the meanings of the texts written with fluency and supplementing as far as possible the concise style of the philosopher would seem to be both new and of some utility. For we have assumed that in this way the recollection will be made easy for those who have once learned the doctrine of Aristotle but cannot recover continuously because of the length of the commentaries . . . For many of Aristotle's books seem to have been designed for concealment, not least the current one, firstly because of his customary brevity, and secondly because the order of the chapters is not marked. So we should be forgiven if we explain at greater length some parts of the text (for we could not make it clearer in as many words), and transpose and replace others in order to make each of the chapters clearly defined. And it is not worth complaining if we presented some parts more concisely: for someone who set out to contrive an easy way of cognizing the useful things should not be wasting time on things which although merit an expert consideration do not really contribute to the demonstrative argument. (1.1–2.4)

Unlike the 'hupomnematic' commentaries (such as those by Simplicius and Alexander), the paraphrases contain no lemmata. Unlike the Alexandrian commentaries based on lecture notes, they draw no clear division between *lexis*

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[8] τούτου τοῦ Θεμιστίου εἰς πάντα τὰ Ἀριστοτελικὰ φέρονται ὑπομνήματα· οὐ μόνον δὲ ἀλλὰ καὶ μεταφράσεις αὐτοῦ εἴδομεν, εἰς τὸ χρήσιμον ἐπιτετμημένας τῶν τε ἀναλυτικῶν καὶ τῶν περὶ ψυχῆς βιβλίων καὶ τῶν τῆς φυσικῆς ἀκροάσεως καὶ ἑτέρων τοιούτων. εἰσὶ δὲ καὶ εἰς τὰ Πλατωνικὰ αὐτοῦ ἐξηγητικοὶ πόνοι, καὶ ἁπλῶς ἐραστής ἐστι καὶ σπουδαστὴς φιλοσοφίας (Cod. 74.52a15–21). The argument for Themistius' authorship of Aristotelian commentaries now lost was put forward by Carlos Steel (Steel 1973), who later withdrew his thesis. See also discussions in Rose 1867, Blumenthal 1979, Vanderspoel 1989, all arguing against the thesis.

[9] Prior to Themistius, Andronicus is said to have used the method of paraphrase for the exposition of Aristotle's *Categories*. Simplicius *In Cael.* 398.36, mentions the paraphrases by Nicolaus of Damascus.

and *theōria* and do not subdivide the text into separate lectures (*praxeis*).[10] The exposition is organized as a continuous narrative, with Aristotle's text not set out but embedded in the body of the paraphrase. Themistius is familiar with the earlier Aristotelian commentaries and with philosophical works of the Platonic tradition. Possibly he has access to the works of Stoic authors.[11] He certainly makes use of the commentaries by Alexander of Aphrodisias.

The paraphrases are normally longer than the paraphrased texts, but the added length is usually caused by the use of multiple expository devices; sometimes Themistius restructures Aristotle's text to make the argument clearer. Occasionally, Themistius makes an *excursus* from paraphrasing to state his position or discuss a more controversial question. These digressions are most important for reconstructing his philosophical views.

The genre of paraphrase is rarely used in the great Platonic schools of late antiquity. Themistian influence can be perceived in a revival of the method of paraphrase by Sophonias in the twelfth century, who attempted to combine this method with the method of hupomnematic commentaries.[12] Themistius' paraphrases, translated into Arabic, have influenced Ibn Rushd's Middle Commentaries on Aristotle.

(4) DOCTRINES

(a) Logic

Logic clearly occupies a central place both in the curriculum of Themistius' school and in his own interest in philosophy. One should not be misled by the fact that most of his logical paraphrases did not survive in Greek: this can be explained more by the nature of demand in late Greek and Byzantine schools. The character of Themistius' engagement with problems of logic and dialectic shows us that he was no mere disinterested expositor of the traditional doctrines.

Themistius' paraphrase of Aristotle's *Categories* was still known to Simplicius, who refers to it in the proem to his own commentary on the treatise (Simplic. *In Categ.* 1.9–10). Olympiodorus mentions Themistius' defence of Aristotle's

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[10] Cf. the contrast between the two types of commentary drawn in the Proem to Sophonias' *De anima* paraphrase.

[11] In *Or.* 4 (357) to Constantius, Themistius puts forward a detailed proposal of an institution provided with a scriptorium whose goal would be the preservation of the 'minor' authors (i.e., those philosophers and poets who are not included in the school curriculum). The philosophers named are Chrysippus, Zeno and Cleanthes.

[12] Resulting in several Themistian pseudepigrapha (Sophonias' authorship of the paraphrase of *Parva Naturalia* has been argued by Freudenthal 1869; for Sophonias' relation to the Greek paraphrase of *Prior Analytics*, see Rose 1867).

definition of the accident as 'that which is "in a subject"' against the objection according to which this definition also applies to an individual substance, such as Socrates, because the latter is in a place as 'in a subject'. The defence invokes the difference between the ways of being 'in something' (Olympiodorus, *In Cat.* 48.13–19). The Arabic version of the paraphrase was in circulation in the tenth century.

Themistius' *Topics* paraphrase was used by Boethius, who reproduced Themistius' division of topics in the second book of his treatise *De differentiis topicis*. About two dozen citations of Themistius in Averroes' *Middle Commentary on Topics* are yet to be studied.

The paraphrase of *Prior Analytics* is lost, but its existence is attested in the Greek tradition.[13] A considerable amount of first-hand testimonia seems to have been preserved in the Arabic and Semitic traditions.[14] The published fragments of Hebrew translation contain Themistius' critical discussion of Alexander's modal interpretation of assertoric propositions (*de inesse*),[15] where he explains that these propositions do not correspond to any specific modality, but can exhibit any of the three 'temporal' modes that correspond to the three meanings of 'the necessary' (absolute, conditional for inseparable attributes, conditional for separable attributes).

Themistius also discussed the problem of modality of conclusion in the syllogism with mixed modal premises (assertoric and apodeictic). He disagreed with Aristotle's claim that a syllogism in the first figure with apodeictic major and assertoric minor premiss will conclude in the apodeictic mode (Arist. *An. Pr.* 1.15). Against Alexander and those Peripatetics who defended this claim, he concurred with Eudemus and Theophrastus who formulated the rule according to which in the mixed modal syllogism the conclusion will always be in the mode corresponding to the weaker of the two modes in the premisses.[16]

In the treatise *Against Maximus Concerning the Derivation of the Second and Third Figures of the Syllogism* preserved in Arabic, Themistius defends Aristotle's theory of the perfect syllogism against the thesis that the categorical syllogisms in the

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[13] Themistius himself refers to it in *Or.* 21.37.5. Philoponus mentions Themistius' view stated apparently in the proem to the lost commentary, according to which the 'Analytic Books' is not an original work of Aristotle, but rather a result of his systematization of the rules and principles discovered by Plato 'in *Phaedo* and all the other dialogues' (Philoponus, *In An. Pr.* 6.14–18).

[14] In Arabic, by Averroes. Apparently, Themistius' paraphrase was still in circulation in the late fifteenth century, when Laurentius Maiolus was able to cite it by chapter in his treatise *De conversione propositionum cuiuscumque generis secundum Peripateticos*, Venice, 1497.

[15] Alexander *In An. Pr.* 1.2 (25.25–26.23). Themistius in Rosenberg and Mannekin 1988: 94–7. For problems with Alexander's modal interpretation, see Barnes *et al.* 1991: 79 n. 157.

[16] *peiorem semper conclusio sequitur partem*. This fragment shows that Themistius was familiar with Alexander's treatise *On Mixed Premises* ('Alexander the commentator has already collected all of their arguments, and the possible refutations of these [arguments], in one book').

second and third figures do not need any demonstration, nor reduction to the first figure. The treatise shows his good knowledge of earlier discussions of this subject.[17]

In the paraphrase of *Posterior Analytics*, Themistius explains the rationale for his method of exposition. This is also the paraphrase where this method is perhaps most strictly observed, including the final chapter. In his account of the cognitive states which contribute to our knowledge of the first immediate principles (sense-perception, memory, experience and the knowledge of the universal), Themistius closely follows the text of Aristotle (*An. post.* 2.19, 99b35–100a15). If there is any additional influence in the account of the intellect, it is the influence of Alexander of Aphrodisias in the account of the evolution of the intellect (*In An. Post.* 65.12–66.6). Themistius' awareness of Aristotle's debt to Plato in the logical corpus does not prevent him from criticizing Plato's theory of recollection as an account of the acquisition of the knowledge of principles (*In An. Post.* 4.17–5.4).

(b) Physics

Themistius' *Physics* paraphrase contains few original discussions, being designed as an advanced introductory text to the problems of Aristotle's *Physics*,[18] but some of the occurring digressions shed additional light on Themistius' overall philosophical position.

PRIVATION, FORM AND MATTER IN COSMIC PROVIDENCE   In the course of his exposition of Aristotle's analysis of change according to the principles of form, privation and the underlying subject, Themistius claims that privation – rather than matter as such – is the source and cause of evil.

The evils, then, originate from [privation] and by means of it. For it is because matter is disposed to receive privation and because it has the potentiality that it is weaker than needed to be able to retain continually the forms of which it partakes. (33.6–8)

Themistius uses this argument to explain his view of the relation between the first principle of the cosmos and matter. The first principle is described as

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[17] Possibly through lost works of Alexander. Themistius quotes Boethus and refers to Eubulides and 'Menelaus': 'Menedemus' suggested by Barnes 1999: 27 n. 9.

[18] The paraphrase of books 1–4 is more detailed than that of books 5–8. Todd gives the ratio by word count of Themistius to Aristotle in the books of *Physics* 1–8 as follows: 2.18, 1.84, 2.27, 1.99, 1.10, 1.12, 0.38 and 0.88, Todd 2003b: 4 n. 4. The paraphrase is well known to later Greek authors (Simplicius cites him by name thirty-six times, Philoponus in the extant Greek books seventeen), and circulated in the Arabic world (cf. Peters 1968 ad loc.).

'the first cause', and more specifically as 'the first form' of which the matter partakes by desiring the good and the divine.

Why (*pothen*), then, does it partake of them? Because it desires the divine and longs for the good: and by 'the good' and 'the divine' I mean the first form, the first cause, towards which everything is inclined, with which everything seeks to be similar to the extent to which each thing is able to. And each thing has this ability in accordance with its nature. (33.8–11)

This mechanism of participation is explained as an effect of the 'true providence', whereby the desire for the beautiful is inherent in the ugly, and the desire for self-sufficiency in what is deficient.

But how is this desire (*ephesis*) present in the matter? Or is this a true providence: that in what is ugly there should be present a desire (*orexis*) of the beautiful and in what is deficient, a desire of what is self-sufficient, and this form which is the first and incorporeal and separate and the enmattered forms which are led by it have as their contrary the privation, whereas the matter is inclined to [this form] and [thus] has a desire? (33.12–16)

Themistius criticizes the view of privation as identical with matter:

If indeed privation is nothing else, but exactly identical with matter, then how would it be preserved in the [process] of partaking of some form? Because, he says, even then the privation is present within matter: for matter is always lacking the other [term], even if it partakes of 'this particular' [item], because the privation mentioned in the account of matter covers not just 'this particular' [feature], but all [features] in a similar way. For [otherwise] it would perish even if it had some of the forms and not others. If, then, neither the form has a yearning for itself (for it is not deficient with respect to itself), nor its contrary [namely privation] (for the contraries are mutually destructive), it remains that matter is desiring the form, the way female desires the male and the ugly the beautiful; 'the ugly' not in the sense of 'ugliness', but accidentally, to the extent to which it partakes of privation. (33.18–27)

This argument probably draws on Alexander's commentary, where it is argued that privation inheres in matter as an accident (*kata sumbebēkos*) rather than *per se* (see Simplic. *In Phys.* 211, 3–23, discussed in Rashed 2007: 199–214). The argument may or may not have Plotinus' view of matter in *Enn.* 1.8 as its immediate target, but its force is certainly anti-Plotinian. The description of relation between the first cause and the enmattered beings in terms of desire is elaborated and clarified in the paraphrase of *Metaphysics Lambda*.

THE PLACE OF THE COSMOS AS A WHOLE   In the cluster of problems which have to do with the application of the principles of Aristotle's physics to Aristotle's cosmology, the problem of the place of the first body is particularly important.

Aristotle defines place as 'the limit of containing body at which it is in contact with the contained, i.e., that which is locally movable' (*In Phys.* 4.4, 212a2–7, trans. Ross). The problem arises because the first body, or the outer heaven, while being 'locally movable', does not have any containing body (*In Phys.* 4.5, 212b7–9). Aristotle's proposed solution, that the first body is not in a place as a whole except *per accidens*, but its parts are in a place, leaves undefined a number of terms and positions.

First, there is a question of the meaning of *per accidens*. Ancient tradition took 'being in a place accidentally' to mean that while the first body itself is not in a place, its parts are in a place, '*per accidens*' thus being synonymous with '*per partes*'. Themistius also adopts this interpretation.[19] Secondly, there is a question of the meaning of parts (related to a more general question of the meaning of *ouranos*, which can refer either to the outer heaven or to the whole body of the cosmos). Here there are the following historical options: 'parts' could be either (a) continuous sections of the outer sphere, or (b) all the concentric spheres inside the outer heaven, or (c) all the concentric spheres and the sublunary cosmos. Themistius interprets 'parts' as concentric planetary spheres which form a sequence of containers (*In Phys.* 119.17–25). The outermost sphere does not have any external container, but Themistius says that it is 'in a place in respect of what is on its inner side (i.e., it is in contact with the sphere of Saturn, and that is to say, "in a way" contained [by it]), whereas in respect of its outer side, it entirely lacks any share in place' (*In Phys.* 121.2–4). Thus, the outermost heaven has no place in the conventional sense of outer place, but does have the 'inner' place which is the convex surface of the last planetary sphere. This position is criticized by both Simplicius and Philoponus in their respective revisions of the Aristotelian concept of place.[20]

DE CAELO Themistius' paraphrase of *De caelo*, extant in Hebrew and Latin translations, is the earliest complete exegetical work on Aristotle's treatise that has reached us. Themistius' paraphrase, along with Simplicius' commentary, is an important source for the reconstruction of the lost commentary by Alexander of Aphrodisias.[21] But in this paraphrase, Themistius adopts a more critical stance towards Aristotelian doctrines. He criticizes the thesis that the elements have

[19] Although he shows some misgivings about the inconsistency this causes with the discussion of being 'in itself' in *Phys.* 4.3, 210a33–b8 where the characteristic of being 'incidentally' is not supplied as synonymous with 'in parts'. Most medieval commentators treat 'incidentally' and 'in parts' as two different meanings.

[20] Simplicius, *In Phys.* 590.27–32; 592.25–593.6; Philoponus, *In Phys.* 565.21–566.7.

[21] On Themistius' use of Alexander's commentary, see Rescigno 2004: 85–98. Zonta 1994 indicates the need for a new edition of the Hebrew version (warranted by both new manuscript evidence and ecdotic considerations).

weight and lightness when at their natural places, arguing that although the elements do develop natural propensities to move upwards or downwards, once they have reached their natural places, they do not keep these tendencies *qua* natural propensities (*In Cael.* 232.17–235.21). Against Alexander, Themistius rejects the notion of 'heavenly matter'.[22] From Simplicius' commentary we know that Themistius' arguments were used by Philoponus in his arguments against the Aristotelian theory of the aether (cf. Simplic. *In Cael.* 70.2–9; 71.20; 72.10–16).

(c) Psychology

The paraphrase of *De anima* is by far the longest and philosophically the most interesting work by Themistius. It has been preserved both in Greek and Arabic.[23] There are a number of controversial topics on which Themistius arrived at his own (authorial) solution of the problem discussed, including the relation of soul to body, sense-perception (the sense of touch against Alexander) and the interpretation of *phantasia*. Aristotle's discussion of the intellect in *De anima* 3.4–5 is certainly the most important text and a locus of Themistius' most significant digression, wherein he formulates his original interpretation of Aristotle's doctrine of *nous* in a polemic against both Alexander and some of his Platonist predecessors.[24] Themistius as usual shows sensitivity to dialectical and logical issues, aiming to reconstruct not just the overall position but the logic of Aristotle's arguments in the most accurate and convincing way.[25]

There has been a debate over the question of Themistius' school allegiance in this paraphrase. The view that Themistius' noetics is a critical development of a number of Platonic doctrines, including Plotinus' discussion of the soul, was first stated by Ballériaux in his doctoral thesis in 1943 and elaborated further in subsequent discussions. Later on, independently, several scholars, on the basis of the study of Themistian material in philosophical works of late medieval and early Renaissance thinkers, came to the conclusion that Themistius was a Platonist. This view was challenged by Henry Blumenthal and others who drew

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[22] 'The body which rotates has no contrary, as will become clear in a little. Nor does it have any substratum, for elsewhere it was stated that it lacks matter. So the body that revolves exists without having been generated' (*In Cael.* 14.12–15, trans. Sorabji).

[23] The Arabic version attributed to Ishaq ibn Hunayn is based on a Greek text superior to the one which has been transmitted through Byzantine tradition, which, in combination with the high quality of translation, helped to eliminate a number of lacunae and establish correct readings of several philosophically significant passages. See Browne 1986, 1998.

[24] In the discussion of the *aporiai* concerning the soul in Aristotle's *De anima* 1.1, Themistius shows good knowledge of the Platonic tradition.

[25] Note in this respect several occasions on which he sets out to defeat Porphyry's logical objections to Aristotle (6.11–33, cf. Todd ad loc.)

attention to Themistius' dependence on post-Aristotelian Peripatetic sources. The most important issues for defining Themistius' philosophical position are the relation of soul to body (taking into account both the interpretation of Aristotelian definition of the soul and soul's role in the operation of bodily faculties) and the doctrine of the intellect.

EMBODIED SOUL   In his introduction of Aristotle's definition of the soul, Themistius concentrates on a detailed explanation of the text of *De anima* 2.1–3 largely in accordance with the principles of Aristotle's hylomorphism.[26] He defends Aristotle's definition of the soul from the dialectical criticism possibly originating within the Peripatetic tradition, according to which this definition fails to satisfy any of the particular kinds of the soul (vegetative, animal or rational) (*In An.* 48.7–34). To this extent, it is possible to agree with the scholars who take his position on this issue to be largely Aristotelian (see, e.g., Blumenthal 1990).

Still it is clear that Themistius regards the Aristotelian definition of the soul as being in principle, in agreement with Platonic doctrine. This becomes particularly clear from his discussion of 'harmony' theory criticised by Aristotle in *De anima* 1.4, (407b27–408a30), a view according to which the soul is a certain proportion or composition of bodily constituents. This view is discussed by Plato in *Phaedo* 92a6–95a2 and apparently has some following in the earlier Peripatetic tradition (attested for Dicaearchus and Aristoxenus). Alexander of Aphrodisias develops some original arguments against it in his *De anima* (24.18–26.30). Themistius' discussion of this theory differs from Aristotle's in two ways. First, he is more explicit than Aristotle in granting some limited plausibility to this theory, to the extent that when the bodily mixture perishes, soul perishes as well (*In An.* 25.23–33).[27] Second, arguing against an anonymous Platonist treatment of the 'harmony' theory in strictly dualist terms, he defends the consistency of this restricted 'harmony' theory not just with Aristotelian doctrine of the soul, but with Platonic-Aristotelian concordance on the nature of the soul, which he presents in the following way.

The Platonist objection to the 'harmony' theory is that it is not the soul that perishes when harmony is destroyed, but only the ensoulment (*empsukhia*), 'since

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[26] As Blumenthal points out, Themistius does not digress on the question of possible separability of the soul or at least one of its faculties and is not interested in any subversive interpretation to which Aristotle's analogy between the soul and the sailor readily lends itself. (*De an.* 2.1, 413a8–9, cf. Themistius *In An.* 43.27.) This contrasts with Plotinus' interpretation of this simile in *Enn.* 3.2.1 (cf. Blumenthal 1968).

[27] This has been related to his appropriation of Alexander's introduction of Aristotle's definition of the soul which does show some parallels with the 'harmony' theory.

the soul itself is separate, but irradiates life [to the body], as the sun [imparts] light to the air' (*In An.* 25.33–4, trans. Todd, lightly modified). Themistius' reply to this objection is two-fold. On the one hand, he points out the logical mismatch between the concept of soul intended by the opponent and that of Aristotle:

For the sun, which is one, supplies light to all bodies, yet they [namely the critics] would not describe the soul that irradiates life to all animals as one. That is why the sun too is one, but not everything shares in light in the same way, but air, water, silver, stone and wood do so in different ways, and distinct colours do so in distinct ways. But if someone says that the soul is one, then by the same token animals must share in it in a variety of ways, and also [on this theory] will differ not in their souls but in their ensoulments. (*In An.* 26.1–8, trans. Todd)

The objection, according to Themistius, misses the point of Aristotle's project, which presupposes the generic perishability of individual embodied souls; these would correspond to the 'ensoulments' of the critic. On the other hand, Themistius acknowledges the appropriateness of the critic's quest for the single soul (which would correspond to the critic's sun simile) and says that Aristotle shares in this quest, even though he does not pursue it in *De anima*.

Next, what [soul] will that one soul be? Whatever it is, it will make no difference to Aristotle's theory at least. For he says that in the present work he is not inquiring into that soul which is single, nor is he defining it, but he is inquiring into the [soul] of a human being, and that of a horse and a cow, and whether they want to give it the name 'ensoulment' or 'soul', he will not object. Instead, just as in defining light as an entelechy of that which is actually transparent, so here too in defining the soul he says that he is not defining the [soul] that is from without and single, but the entelechy *which comes from that [soul] into bodies that have organs, while perhaps being able to define that [external soul] too in the same way*. For nothing prevents one of the two entelechies of transparency from being more perfect [i.e. the sun], and the other less so [i.e. the light]. So too with the soul, one [entelechy] is more perfect [i.e. the soul from without], the other less so [i.e. the soul of each individual]. So the soul of each individual to which you [my opponent] give the name 'ensoulment' and I [give the name] 'soul', he [Aristotle] says is inseparable and perishable, and perishable not in an unqualified way but as light in water. You, as it seems, hold the same view; for while disputing the name, you all too obviously agree on its reference. (*In An.* 26.8–25, trans. Todd)

This line of interpretation is left without any consequences in the subsequent discussion of the definition of the soul (in accordance with the stated remit of Aristotle's study at this point), but we see it resumed in the discussion of the intellect.

THE DOCTRINE OF INTELLECT   Themistius' treatment of lower cognitive facul-
ties does not claim major doctrinal departures from Aristotelian tradition. The
most original and controversial text is the one devoted to *De anima* 3.5.

ACTIVE AND POTENTIAL INTELLECT   Themistius interprets Aristotelian distinc-
tion between the two kinds of intellect, active and potential, at the beginning of
De anima 3.5 as characterizing the structure of human intellect (102.30–103.19).
The role of active intellect consists not just in actualizing the potential intel-
lect, but in 'constituting its potential objects of thought as actual objects' (*In
An.* 99.2, trans. Todd, slightly modified). Themistius seems to be distinguish-
ing between the two meanings of potential intellect: potential intellect proper,
which is brought about by the active intellect and does not exist apart from the
latter, and the cognitive faculties underlying this potential intellect before it is
acted upon by active intellect.

These [objects of thought] are the enmattered forms, i.e., the universal thoughts assem-
bled from particular objects of perception. Up to this point the potential intellect cannot
distinguish between them, or make transitions between distinct thoughts, or combine
and divide them. Instead, like a store-house of thoughts, or better like matter, it deposits
the imprints from perception and imagination through the agency of memory. But
when the productive intellect encounters it and takes over this 'matter' of thoughts, the
potential intellect becomes one with it, and becomes able to make transitions, and to
combine and divide thoughts, and to observe thoughts from [the perspective] of one
another. (*In An.* 99.3–11, trans. Todd)

When actualized by active intellect, potential intellect proper forms a unity
with it. The unity is described by Themistius in hylomorphic terms, active
intellect being form and potential intellect, matter (*In An.* 99.11–23). Lower
cognitive faculties (memory, imagination and sense-perception) provide the
necessary psychological substructure for the objects of thought and in this
capacity are responsible for discursive processes of reasoning.

ACTIVE INTELLECT AS THE PROPER SUBJECT OF THOUGHT   Themistius points
out that whereas the unity of the potential and active intellect characterizes the
structure of human thought and the substance of a thinking agent ('self'), it
is the active intellect, the formal aspect of this quasi-hylomorphic unity, that
constitutes the agency in a proper sense. Using Aristotle's distinction between
to tode and *to tōide einai* drawn in *De anima* 3.4, 429b10–14, he distinguishes
between 'the myself' and 'what it is to be myself' and explains that the lat-
ter is the active intellect (cf. *In An.* 100.16–20, Todd 1996: 187 n. 11). Thus,

although the subject of activity is the composite intellect (active *cum* potential) it acts not *qua* potential, but *qua* actual, since the activity is channelled down to it from the active intellect.[28] The active intellect so understood is not subject to destruction, affection or any combination. This is the first major difference between Themistius and Alexander of Aphrodisias. Alexander explains the attributes of the active intellect listed by Aristotle in *De anima* 3.5 as the properties of the intelligible object of which the human intellect gets its (temporary) share while engaged in the process of thought (Alexander, *De anima*, 89.4–91.6). For Alexander, the human intellect is perishable; for Themistius it has an imperishable component which in fact constitutes our proper self.

Themistius builds on this analysis to propose his solution to the exegetical problem raised by Aristotle's claim: 'But we do not remember because this is unaffected, whereas the passive intellect is perishable' (*De anima* 3.5, 430a23–5). Themistius criticizes the solution proposed by a recent Platonist, according to which 'we' refers to the perishable passive intellect which thus does not remember the life of the active intellect before descent.[29] According to Themistius' analysis, 'we' refers to the active intellect which does not remember the activities of its perishable temporal part after death. Themistius here elaborates on what is essentially a Platonic formulation and solution of the problem, drawing on some aspects of Platonic tradition concerning the self and the intellect (cf. *Alc.* 196b). But his analysis of the problem shows a critical engagement with this tradition, on the basis of what appears to be his original exegesis of Aristotle's text.

THE ACTIVE INTELLECT AND THE ORDER OF THE UNIVERSE   Themistius argues against Alexander that the active intellect of *De anima* 3.5 is not identical with the first unmoved mover of the *Metaphysics Lambda* (*In An.* 102.30, cf. Alexander of Aphrodisias, *De anima* 88.17–91.6, *Mant.* 2.107.29–110.3). His criticism is exegetically based: the divine characteristics attributed to the active intellect can single it out only in the context of human soul, not in the rest of the cosmos, where each of the unmoved movers of the heavenly spheres can also be characterized as unaffected, immortal and eternal (*In An.* 103.6–19).

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[28] 100.22: '[potential]' in Todd's translation is surely an oversight, the gloss must say 'actual'. *autos* refers to the *ho sunkeimenos nous* and *ekeithen* to the active intellect; cf. the next few lines (100.22–6) where Themistius discusses the potential intellect's inability to receive what the active intellect gives in undivided manner.

[29] Most likely Porphyry in *On the Soul Against Boethus*.

Themistius asks whether this active intellect is one or many. The problem itself seems to be a restatement in terms of the intellect of a similar question concerning soul raised by Plotinus in *Enn.* 4.9 [8].[30] Themistius' answer is that active intellect is one and potential intellects are many (*In An.* 103.30–4). Apart from purely exegetical argument based on Aristotle's use of the light simile in *De anima* 3.5, Themistius invokes the 'common notions' (*koinai ennoiai*) and common understanding, for which the unity of active intellect is the necessary condition. This latter argument shows some affinity with the Middle Platonic version of the theory of recollection wherein the activity of the intellect in the disembodied state of the soul described as contemplation of the first intelligibles becomes the 'natural conceptions' in the embodied state of the rational soul (cf. Alcinous, *Did.* 4.6 (155.17–19)).

POTENTIAL AND COMMON (PASSIVE) INTELLECT   The view that active intellect is one brings about a further question concerning potential intellect. The analogy with light to sight might suggest that potential intellect has no share in the indestructibility that characterizes active intellect (the difficulty indicated at *In An.* 103.24–6, resumed at 104.23–5). If so, the difference between Themistius and Alexander's Peripatetic noetics might become somewhat elusive: whatever other differences in the interpretation of the active intellect, according to both theories, the human intellect (i.e., 'potential', 'which becomes all things') would be perishable. The issue is probably too important for Themistius to leave it at that. Therefore, to strengthen his claim regarding the immortality of human intellect, he introduces a distinction between the potential and the passive intellect (105.13–33, signalled earlier at 101.5–9). Potential intellect is the one that Aristotle discusses in *De anima* 3.4. Themistius points out that being unaffected (*apathēs*) and unmixed (*amigēs*) with body in *De anima* 3.4 (429a15–27) are the characteristics of human intellect as a whole. Potential intellect has no bodily organ and is nothing until the act of thought. This, according to Themistius, means that the light metaphor should be interpreted differently in the case of the intellect: whereas sense-perception uses bodily organs and therefore is not entirely separate and impassive, potential intellect must be completely unmixed, impassive and separate (*In An.* 105.8–12). Potential intellect is brought about by the active intellect and is its natural 'forerunner', as a ray of light (*In An.* 105.30–4). When Aristotle speaks about the intellect as passive (*pathētikos*)

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[30] Although Themistius never in the extant works mentioned Plotinus by name, here he seems to be explicitly contrasting his own approach with that of Plotinus: 'The inquiry pursued by some [thinkers], more recent as well as earlier ones, into whether all souls are one, would be better more correctly conducted into whether all intellects are one' (104.14–16).

and perishable (*phthartos*), he refers not to this potential intellect, but to a lower cognitive faculty common to soul and body. According to Themistius, this faculty – which he calls 'common intellect' – is described by Aristotle as the subject of 'discursive thinking, and loving or hating' (*De anima* 1.4, 408b25–32).

The distinction between the 'potential' and 'passive' intellect constitutes the second major departure of Themistius from the Aristotelian interpretation of Alexander of Aphrodisias. But Themistius also applies it to the interpretation of Platonic psychology, suggesting that all the arguments for the soul's immortality in the Platonic corpus should have as their proper subject only the rational part of the soul, i.e., the intellect, rather than the soul as a whole, which includes the faculties of appetite and spirit.[31] In this way, he secures the agreement between the principles of Aristotelian and Platonic psychology. In fact, he finds some parallels between his reading of *De anima* and Stoicism, because of the clear boundary between rational soul and affections drawn in Stoic moral psychology (*In An.* 107.4–18).

Themistius' interpretation of Aristotle's noetics cannot be regarded as Peripatetic *par excellence*. In his case, it is perhaps more appropriate to speak about a version of Aristotelian exegesis which is characteristic of the Platonist authors committed to the thesis of 'harmony' between Plato and Aristotle. It is clear also that this commitment does not prevent Themistius from evaluating specific Peripatetic and Platonist arguments on their own merits and formulating his own position accordingly.

(d) Metaphysics Lambda

A complete paraphrase of book Lambda is preserved in Hebrew and Latin translations.[32] This paraphrase has several 'digressions' which could shed some light on Themistius' reading of Aristotle's theology.

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[31] Themistius mentions the arguments from self-motion (*Phaedrus* and *Laws* 10), from recollection, and from affinity with God (*Phaedo*). *In An.* 106.29–107.4.

[32] On the Hebrew translations, see Steinschneider 1884 and 1893, Zonta 1996; on the Latin translation, Todd 2003a. The work is cited by Averroes in his *Long Commentary on Metaphysics and Epitomē* and by Shahrastâni in *K. al-Milāl wa al-Niḥāl*. Two surviving Arabic fragments have been published by A. Badawî: an abridgement of Themistius' paraphrase of Aristotle's chapters 6–9 from MS 6 Mîm (philosophy) in the National Library of Egypt, Cairo (Badawî 1947: 12–21) and the translation of the first and beginning of the second chapter from MS 4871 Zâhiriyya (Badawī 1947: 329–33). It is not clear whether Themistius wrote paraphrases of other books of *Metaphysics*. Averroes in his *Long Commentary* says that the only ancient commentaries on (the whole of) the *Metaphysics* that are extant are Alexander's commentary on *Lambda* and Themistius' paraphrase of the same book. Alexander's commentary is extant for books A–D, and attested for books E–N (by references in Michael of Ephesus, Syrianus and Asclepius). It is clear that Averroes' access to Alexander is limited by his source, which also determines his knowledge of Themistius' paraphrases.

SPONTANEOUS GENERATION   Having explained the key role of immanent forms in Aristotle's theory of generation ('man generates man and horse, horse') which leaves no function for Platonic Forms, Themistius raises an objection based on the case of spontaneous generation where there are no relevant immanent forms to account for the coming to be of new organisms (*In Metaph.* 12.3, 9.2–10.4). Averroes, on the basis of this and other passages, suggests that he shares Avicenna's treatment of the First Mover as *Dator Formarum*, taking Themistius' solution to be a version of Platonism. But Themistius' solution as stated in the extant version of his paraphrase contains no explicit reference to transcendent forms. What he suggests is that there is a common explanation to the two types of generation (biogenetic and spontaneous): in both cases the real agency of change belongs to 'forms and proportions' which are at work in nature (9.23–5). In the case of biogenesis, the form of the offspring is obviously similar to the form of the parent. In the case of spontaneous generation, we do not see the form which produces the new organism, but the form, *qua* formula or proportion, is present in the process of generation all the same. Unlike in the first case, it is, as it were, hidden in something different (9.42–10.4). In both cases, the operation of forms in nature has to be referred to the principle that is above nature. Thus, Themistius says, 'the soul that is in the sublunary cosmos, according to Plato, was produced by the secondary gods, and according to Aristotle, by the sun and the (motion) of the ecliptic sphere' (8.19–21). The wording of this conclusion is somewhat vague, but it seems clear that the forms and proportions themselves are still treated as immanent, natural factors. Their origin and function is an effect of transcendent factors, but transcendent in a narrow sense: matching Plato's 'secondary gods' with Aristotle's sun and ecliptic should sound deflationary, even if Themistius' presentation of this account as both Platonic and Aristotelian is in itself significant.

THE FIRST UNMOVED MOVER AS THE 'LAW' OF THE COSMOS   In the paraphrase of *Metaphysics* 12.7, Themistius discusses some of the attributes of the first unmoved mover which do not appear or appear only cursorily in Aristotle's discussion. The first unmoved mover is a true (as opposed to derivative) kind of being, one and simple. While there are many intelligible kinds which can operate as unmoved movers, the first among them is substance, and within the category of substance, in turn, the first is the one that is simple, exists in pure actuality, unmixed with any kind of potentiality, of which nothing is predicated and which has no underlying subject, but is truly one and simple nature (19.5–8). Anything that has matter cannot be either simple or one in a proper sense, despite the fact that we apply both terms to many such entities, e.g., when we speak of 'one human being', 'one nation', 'simple sentence'

or 'simple body' (meaning one of the four elements). In 'one man', 'oneness' and 'being' (i.e., 'humanity') are distinct concepts. But in the case of the first substance they are not distinct. Similarly, simplicity in a proper sense refers to the nature which admits of no multitude or composition, not to something of which another thing may be composed, and not in a sense of comparison. This proper simplicity characterizes only the first substance, which is the first unmoved mover, perfection and the end (19.19–24). Themistius makes no attempt to draw a link between the proper and derivative unity and simplicity. Themistius does not pause to explain how the improper oneness and simplicity relate to those of the first substance, but the most likely answer, on the basis of his Aristotelian background, would be that the relation is that of homonymy *pros hen* or *aph'henos*. The text has no reference to this concept, and the wording at times might indeed suggest a wider ontological gap between the two types of concepts (19.14–16). But knowing Themistius' tendency always to find a middle ground between the extreme readings of Platonism and Aristotelianism, we may hypothesize that his position is not different in this case too.

According to Themistius, the first unmoved mover cannot be either a subject or a predicate (19.7–8). This interpretation of the first principle as 'verging on the ineffable' does have some Platonic connotations. It is impossible to align it with the system of Plotinus, where the distinction between the first and the second god (or the One and Being) is clearly drawn in a way that excludes the possibility of treating the first principle as the intellect, while Themistius in this respect firmly stays on Aristotelian ground. But Themistius' interpretation has a number of affinities with the Middle-Platonist reading of Aristotelian theology, where the first god is described as the cause of the active intellect and has all the attributes Themistius mentions.[33]

Themistius compares the first unmoved mover of the cosmos to the law of a polity which is a good by itself and essentially (19.25–9), but points out a distinction. Whereas the law is not a substance and has limited existence, the first unmoved mover is a substance, permanent, simple and existing in actuality (19.32–6). The analogy would be more precise were one to think of political law as a living being, thinking itself and in this way moving the political government, causing this motion by being the object of desire. In this way the first unmoved mover is the principle of the hierarchy of beings which desire it.

Themistius points out that the nature of this desire is different both from (a) the desire underlying the process of 'becoming like' the divine substance and (b) the lower kind of desire which informs our appetites for food, etc.

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[33] Cf. Alcinous, *Didasc.* 10, one of the first extant examples of Platonist reading of *Metaphysics* 12. Note also that the first god of Numenius is described as the intellect (frs. 16, 17, 20 Des Places).

(20.11–15). Rather, the desire for the first substance should be compared with the desire of the citizens to obey the laws of their city. Of the two alternatives, the first one refers to a radical interpretation of the Platonic concept of 'becoming like god' (*homoiōsis theōi*) (*Tht.* 176b1), which Themistius respects.[34] The second alternative probably is meant to correspond broadly to various naturalist interpretations of desire for the 'first appropriate thing' (*prōton oikeion*) in Hellenistic philosophy, where the object of such desire can be construed as pleasure (Epicureanism) or self preservation (Stoicism), both taken in the narrow sense of the 'cradle arguments'. Themistius' middle ground consists in sticking to the principle according to which the desire for the highest good consists for each kind of being in adhering to the laws and principles of the cosmic order. The political metaphor signals a link to Themistius' practical philosophy, where Themistius exploits exactly the same opposition:

Realise, [sir], that up and down are not simple concepts. Epicurus is certainly trifling, as is anyone who admires him and has become enamoured of bodily pleasure. Plato, on the other hand, is always in the upper sphere, as is anyone who follows Plato and seeks to become like god. But I stand between these two men, being content to be sometimes 'up' and sometimes 'down'. For me, being in the lower sphere does not mean being there completely; for when I am there, I depend on the upper sphere and take my directions from on high. (*Or.* 34.30, trans. Penella)

THE OBJECTS OF DIVINE THOUGHT   Themistius details the argument showing that the object of divine thought is one and not plural, but adds that divine intellect also thinks all things which exist (32.14–15). He explains that this thinking differs from the way human intellect thinks of multiple objects:

It thinks of them not by way of examination, taking one after the other, or by removing one while accepting the other, but it grasps all of them together and simultaneously. (32.15–18)

Presumably, Themistius thinks that simultaneous and intuitive rather than discursive nature of divine thought, secures the unity of its object within the apparent multiplicity. He failed to convince at least some of his readers. Thus, Averroes took his thesis that the objects of divine thought are plural to be a conscious departure from the Aristotelian position. As far as Aristotle's text goes, Averroes is certainly right.

The reason Themistius gives for the inclusion of all things as objects within the scope of divine thought is that the divine intellect as the first unmoved mover

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[34] The more adequate interpretation would include the phrase *kata to dunaton anthrōpōi*, cf. Themistius *Or.* 2.43.1–7 Downey and Norman; 6.116.19–22; Themistius, *In Or.* 15, interprets it in terms of developing political virtue of justice (273.11–274.3 Downey and Norman).

is the principle of their being.[35] By 'all things' Themistius seems to mean the whole of the cosmos. He does not go into further details of their ontological status *qua* objects of the divine thought, but spends most of the argument showing the difference between the feeble human intellect which cannot grasp all things at once and needs to be discursive and the powerful divine intellect which has enough resources to exercise the atemporal intuitive apprehension of all things that are and of which it is the principle. If the argument from comparison is to work, we need to assume that in both cases he talks about the intellection with respect to the same class of objects.

Themistius may be making tacit use of the idea of divine providence as developed in the late Peripatetic tradition, particularly in the works of Alexander of Aphrodisias according to whom divine providence operates at the level of individuals in the heavenly realm and at the level of species in the sublunary world of generation and corruption. Alexander's concept of divine providence exploits the causal role of the first principle rather than its activity of thinking. In Alexander's interpretation the divine thought concentrates on itself and exercises its providence by the very activity of thinking itself and setting the goal for desire and emulation by the heavenly bodies, whose motion in turn maintains the stable order of generation in the realm of four elements (cf. *Quaest.* 2.3, *De providentia*). On Themistius' reading, the causal role of the first unmoved mover seems to presuppose a more direct involvement with the contents of the cosmos as the objects of divine thought.

Themistius' interpretation of *Metaphysics Lambda* does advocate a concordance between Plato and Aristotle. In the interpretation of the problem of generation, Aristotelian position seems to be described as acceptable also to Platonists. In the description of the first unmoved mover, Themistius elaborates in great detail on its transcendent attributes. The thought thinking itself somehow accommodates thinking of all things in the universe. But notably, the hierarchy of beings is organized in accordance with the principles of Aristotelian teleology, i.e., the first unmoved mover is the final cause of the cosmos and as such it is the object of desire for all its components. Themistius makes no explicit suggestion that the divine thought produces its objects in the act of thinking. The aspects of production and thought are brought closer together than we find them in the Aristotelian mainstream, but they are still sufficiently separate. We do not find in Themistius' account either the 'Middle-Platonic' idea that Forms are the thoughts in the mind of god or the Plotinian scheme according to which

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[35] Cf. Alcinous, *Didasc.* 10. Brague quotes Plotinus *Enn.* 4.4 [28], 2.11. As noted above, Themistius never refers to Plotinus by name in his works, and the impression one gets is close to the conclusions stated by Ballériaux 1994, according to which Themistius' Platonism is closer to Middle-Platonic doctrines, possibly with some influence of Porphyry.

thought (or intellect, *nous*) is ontologically derivative from the absolute unity of the first principle.

INSTEAD OF A CONCLUSION: THEMISTIUS' PHILOSOPHICAL IDEAL

The philosophical position we find in Themistius' extant works could be described as an original synthesis within the broad tradition of concordance between Plato and Aristotle.[36] His synthesis reflects some aspects of this tradition, but it has some unique features which set it apart from the philosophical mainstream. Themistius was a champion of a practical rather than contemplative life-style for a philosopher. This did not diminish the importance of theoretical philosophy in his eyes; on the contrary, he emphasized its importance as an instrument for educating a philosopher's mind, making it equal to the task of tackling public affairs. Furthermore, correct understanding of the principles of philosophy was decisive for its practical efficiency. But this practical commitment brought about a different attitude towards the school divisions in philosophy: Aristotelian paraphrases frequently convey a belief that true principles are expressible in all the right philosophical systems. Therefore what may appear as a compromise is for Themistius a necessary procedure of presenting the true answer in its most complete form.[37]

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[36] What is more commonly described as 'Middle Platonism' was perceived by many authors as a genuine symbiosis.

[37] This attitude is well illustrated by the treatise *On Virtue* where three different systems of ethics (Epicurean hedonism, Aristotle's virtue theory and Socratic-Cynic ascetic naturalism) are all regarded as different ways to achieving the *summum bonum*. The choice of ethical system is made on a pragmatic basis in accordance with individual circumstances and disposition, but the assumption is that the correct choices will gradually suggest themselves, at the same time eliminating the incorrect choices.

THE ALEXANDRIAN SCHOOL. THEON OF ALEXANDRIA AND HYPATIA

ALAIN BERNARD

The present chapter focuses on Hypatia of Alexandria and the school of thought she represented in fourth-century CE Alexandria. Nevertheless, defining what *was* Hypatia's doctrine is rendered very difficult by the facts that we have no single source that can be attributed with certainty to her and that the only works she is reputed to have written bear on (apparently) 'strictly mathematical' topics. These are frustrating facts, given that various sources emphasize her considerable reputation both as a philosopher and as a local political figure. It is often taken for granted that Hypatia was a Platonist. But this presupposition relies on such disputable evidence that it is in fact no more than one possibility among many others. We shall see, in particular, that a more plausible one is that she basically was a *Ptolemist*, i.e., a dedicated follower of this original and composite philosophy elaborated by Ptolemy in the second century CE. One major reason for thinking so is that this philosophy had probably been already followed by her father Theon of Alexandria in the mid-fourth century CE, as well as by his predecessor Pappus of Alexandria at the beginning of the same century. Hypatia, Theon and Pappus obviously shared a deep interest in the study of Ptolemy's *Almagest*, the two last having left influential commentaries on it. It is highly plausible (though not entirely provable, as we shall see) that this interest came along with the cultivation of *the same kind* of Ptolemism, derived from the philosophical commitment advocated by Ptolemy himself in his introduction to the *Almagest*, which gives a central role to the study of mathematics. There are, on the other hand, two major aspects of Ptolemy's philosophy that Theon and Pappus do *not* seem to have followed. This first is Ptolemy's broad definition of mathematics, which encompasses theory and instrumented observations. The second is Ptolemy's association of astronomy with astrology and physics.[1]

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[1] Indeed, Ptolemy's approach to physics and physical phenomena can hardly be separated from his famous work in astrology (*apotelesmatika*), the influential *Tetrabiblos*. This side of his philosophy, by contrast, was held in high regard by fourth-century astrologers like Firmicus Maternus and Paulus of Alexandria.

We will thus follow the inverse chronological order and characterize in turn the works and thoughts of Hypatia, Theon and Pappus of Alexandria, before concluding with a short discussion of the fact that they do not seem to have cultivated the 'observational' and 'physical' sides of Ptolemy's doctrine.

1 HYPATIA OF ALEXANDRIA

Life and attributed works

Hypatia's biography and production is hard to reconstitute. Although there are quite a number of biographical accounts in antiquity and early Middle Ages about her,[2] they have essentially in common that they put a disproportionate emphasis on the circumstances and causes of her dramatic death in 415 CE, when Hypatia was killed by a mob of Alexandrian Christians. Each author has his own version of these events, most often related to a moral apologue.[3] Hence, the elements of biography they propose are generally strongly biased, since they are meant to prepare for the conclusion. This situation is made even more complex by the lack of any extant work by Hypatia: we only know through the *Suda* (following Hesychius on this point) that she may have written two mathematical commentaries, one on Diophantus and the other on Apollonius' *Conics*, and a work entitled *The Astronomical Canon*, the nature of which is unclear.[4] The best sources that may help to check biographical information are the letters and works of her famous student Synesius of Cyrene. But these letters, except for one piece to which we shall return, contain much more information on the people belonging to Hypatia's circle than on the positive contents of her teaching. These are by themselves valuable and interesting indications, but they do not contain a single explicit mention of Hypatia's philosophical allegiance nor of any work that she may have written. There is, finally, one interesting sub-scription to Theon of Alexandria's commentary on Ptolemy's *Almagest*, saying

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[2] Two were written by Christian contemporaries of Hypatia, (1) Philostorgius of Cappadocia (368– c. 430?) *Hist. eccl.* 8.9 trans. Walford 1855 and (2) Socrates Scholasticus (379–450) *HE* 7.15 (which has to be read with 7.7, 13–14) trans. Schaff 1886. Three were written about a century after her death, by the two pagan authors (3) Hesychius of Alexandria (c. 500) *Suda* Hypatia 4, 644.1–11 Adler, trans. Reedy 1993 and (4) Damascius *Vit. Isid.* 102 Zinten, trans. Athanassiadi 1999 and (5) the Christian John Malalas (491–578) *Chron.* 14.12, 280 Thurn, trans. Jeffreys *et al.* 1986. The last developed testimony is found by 700 CE in (6) the Christian John of Nikiu's *Chronicle* 84.87–103, trans. Charles 1916.

[3] This is the case in particular for the three most developed testimonies, numbered (2), (4) and (6) in note 2.

[4] Many efforts have been made (Sesiano 1982, Knorr 1989, Cameron and Long 1993) in order to reconstitute lost commentaries or works of Hypatia. But the basis for these reconstitutions is weak, and even if they are right they tell us nothing about Hypatia's philosophical doctrine.

that the commentary was proofread by her daughter Hypatia (*In Alm.* 3.807.1–5 Rome).

In spite of the rather desperate situation of our sources, the following points at least can be asserted with reasonable confidence: (1) she was born and lived in Alexandria, where she died in 415 AD, probably an old woman by that time;[5] (2) her father was Theon of Alexandria, with whom she worked on the commentary on Ptolemy's *Almagest*; (3) she enjoyed a high social position together with a high reputation especially among the rulers in Alexandria or elsewhere – in particular, she seems to have been close to the prefect Orestus; (4) her reputation was based on her teaching in philosophy and mathematics, which attracted many students to her,[6] and generally speaking on her distinguished education and public attitude;[7] (5) many of her students enjoyed or came to enjoy very high social positions (like Synesius himself), and many of them were Christians; (6) she was killed by a Christian mob in a very violent way, probably the indirect victim of a political conflict between the *praefectus* Orestus and the Christian patriarch Cyril.[8]

Beyond this fairly reliable information, many uncertainties remain. Concerning her father (2), it is unclear to what extent she was taught by him and whether he taught her anything beyond mathematical technicalities in ancient astronomy. There are unreliable allusions to the fact that she may have 'surpassed' his teaching.[9] Concerning her teaching and wisdom (4), their precise nature is unclear: in particular, she was not reputed to have taught any *specific* kind of philosophy – an important point to which we shall come back. Concerning her death (6), its precise circumstances as well as the cause for which angry Christians decided to murder her are unclear. Nevertheless, it seems plausible that some Christians in Alexandria believed (or were led to believe) that she used her competence in mathematics and astrology (both related to magic in popular

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[5] The traditional date of birth of 370, mainly based on Hesychius' account, has been convincingly refuted by Penella 1984 *et alii*.

[6] That she was renowned for her teaching and wisdom is recognized by almost all sources and confirmed by Synesius' letters, in which her teaching is remembered with much enthusiasm and respect.

[7] This aspect may be in many cases a literary embellishment of the learned biographers (esp. in Socrates Schol.), but seems confirmed again by Synesius' insistence on Hypatia's impressive culture and influence.

[8] The most detailed account of the conflict between Orestus and Cyril is found in Socrates Schol. (see n. 2), although his analysis of the events is clearly biased by his irenic philosophy of history and must therefore be taken with care.

[9] Philostorgius and Damascius claim that she surpassed her father, the first in mathematics, the second in philosophy; Socrates Schol. only mentions that due to her excellent education she surpassed all other philosophers in her own time. All these allegations probably only represent the *a posteriori* rationalization of the difference perceived between Theon's and Hypatia's fame as well as the relative misunderstanding of their commitment to Ptolemy, as we shall see.

opinion) to influence Orestus away from the Christian faith and entertain his hostile attitude toward Cyril.[10]

Thought

1 Was she a Platonist?

The previous overview shows that we have almost no way to produce a positive idea of Hypatia's teaching and philosophical doctrine, or even to show that she actually had any.[11] It is often taken for granted that she was a philosopher in the Platonic tradition on the basis of three main arguments that are worth reviewing, for they raise important methodological and historiographical difficulties. The first is Socrates Scholasticus' testimony, the only source asserting that she took the succession of the Platonic school (presumably in Alexandria) 'from Plotinus' (*HE* 7.15.1). The second is a generous inference from the contents of Synesius' philosophy to that of his teacher. The last is a kind of 'contamination' argument, according to which she must have been a Platonist because the major and 'most valuable' trend of philosophy in this period is (deemed to be) Platonism and because this philosophy was compatible with Christianity (the religion of many of her disciples).

All three arguments are weak: as remarked above, all testimonies on Hypatia's death are distorted by the writer's own judgement on the personality and virtues (or wickedness) of Hypatia. Thus, Socrates is led to present his story so as to enhance his conclusion on what he considers to be the despicable attitude of Patriarch Cyril and the Alexandrian Church in this affair. It may have been natural, given this *telos*, to enhance Hypatia's philosophical proficiency by attributing to her philosophical views that were valued by Socrates' contemporaries.[12] Moreover, this testimony is not confirmed by any other source, neither by any explicit mention by Synesius of his former teacher's allegiance to Platonism, nor by Damascius, who is usually so eager to extol the Platonic tendencies of other Alexandrians like Hierocles. Finally, Plotinus never

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[10] This plausible explanation is found both in Socrates Scholasticus (presented with critical distance) and John of Nikiu (who supports the explanation).

[11] Damascius even goes so far as to suggest that although philosophy was not practised any more in Alexandria, at least Hypatia's fame and political situation maintain the respect for its name (79.16–17 Zintzen). But this is explained by Damascius' unfavourable judgement on Hypatia's philosophical talent, as compared to Isidorus'.

[12] Socrates may thus have been the first scholar to use the 'contamination argument', both for simple lack of any other information on her and for teleological purposes. One might compare this attitude with Proclus' speculative 'intellectual biography' of Euclid, about whom he obviously had no historical report available: he makes him a follower of Plato (Vitrac 1996).

actually taught in Alexandria, so Hypatia could hardly have succeeded him there.[13]

The second argument is a good example of the abusive use of the notion of 'influence': it amounts indeed to saying that whatever Synesius learned came from Hypatia, as if we were to presuppose that he received no other training than from her.[14] In fact, most of Synesius' letters addressed to her (or in which she is evoked) do not refer to the positive content of her teaching. The only notable and important exception is the letter accompanying the gift of an astronomical instrument to the military governor Paeonius (*De dono*), in which Synesius explicitly says that the conception of the device is his own *and* contains 'all what she, my most revered teacher, helped to contribute' (138.9–10 Terzaghi). This sophisticated letter, which Synesius later sent to his former teacher, is therefore our sole reliable testimony on Hypatia's teaching, even though the extent to which she 'contributed' to Synesius' project is unclear, as we shall see.

Finally, the fact that Platonism was highly valued in late antiquity and, perhaps more importantly, the fact that Platonists like Proclus had built their own historical and intellectual genealogy, does not imply that this was the only philosophical path that could be followed by that time. Beyond those philosophers who were not Platonists at all, people were influenced at various degrees by it and most of the time blended it with other positions.[15]

On the face of the evidence discussed thus far, to speculate that Hypatia had been a Platonist philosopher relies on a weak basis. Our sources only indicate that she seems to have taught a wide range of subjects and especially mathematics at a high level. This does not seem to presuppose a specific allegiance but rather wide literary and philosophical knowledge. This general picture may be refined by looking at Synesius' letter *De dono*.

2 Synesius' testimony on Hypatia's teaching

Synesius' sophisticated letter *On the Gift* was sent, together with the gift in question (an astronomical instrument)[16] to the military governor (*comes*)

[13] That the 'Platonist school', of which Hypatia took the succession, was an *Alexandrian* school is not explicitly said by Socrates but strongly suggested by the context (*HE* 7.15.1). Nevertheless, it is possible to understand the sentence in a very general way, in which case this last argument does not apply.

[14] The comparison with Proclus' case is again instructive: like Synesius, Proclus had his own Hypatia, in the person of Syrianus, to whom he again and again refers as 'his most revered teacher'. But on Proclus we are lucky enough to have Marinus' biographical notes, which clearly alludes to the many other teachers Proclus had in life, most of whom are otherwise unknown.

[15] Synesius, with his elaborate mixture of Platonism, Stoicism (in Dio of Prusa's style) and rhetorical culture, or Themistius are two other examples of this phenomenon in the same period.

[16] It was believed by some Byzantine authors that the instrument was an astrolabe (Neugebauer 1949). But Schramm 1970 has convincingly argued that the instrument is very similar to the anaphoric

Paeonius, in the context of a political embassy (Vogt 1970). The letter was later sent to Hypatia herself, together with two other works of Synesius on which he asked for her judgement (*Letter* 154). The letter begins with a long *encomium* of Paeonius, in which his two abilities as a military commander and as a philosopher are celebrated. More precisely, Synesius stresses that his *natural* ability for philosophy is evident in the way Paeonius complained about the confusion between true and false wisdom and recognized in particular Synesius' worth as a 'true' philosopher. The aim of the letter is therefore to reinforce this mutual recognition by giving Paeonius the means to develop his own, natural impulse toward philosophy. To this end, Synesius explains in general that he chose to teach astronomy as a stepping stone to more general philosophical insights. In particular, he explains that he had an instrument built and conceived to provide to 'the intelligent observer' (Paeonius) the means to understand the reality beyond the artefact.

The choice of astronomy is justified on two grounds. The first has a clear late-Platonic ring, since astronomy is presented as a science, which is 'a convenient passage to mystic theology'. The second is probably taken from Ptolemy's preface to the *Almagest*:[17] indicating that astronomy proceeds, like arithmetic and geometry, 'in no uncertain way'. As for the instrument itself, the central point of Synesius' argument is that its constitution is only understandable if one pays the utmost attention to the mathematical projection (*exaplōsis*), which underlies the determination of the lines drawn on the instrument. Thus, even when they are straight lines or circles with irregular divisions, they actually are the *projection* of circles on the celestial sphere with regular divisions. Reflecting on the projection and making it the concrete mean given to the observer to raise his soul above the mere superficial look of the instrument, is presented by Synesius as the original feature of his project. The latter can therefore be understood both on a 'purely technical' level (for which Synesius acknowledges his debt to Ptolemy and his followers: *De dono* 139.1–10) and on a more philosophical level, in the sense that Synesius gives it at the beginning of the letter.

What was Hypatia's precise contribution to this sophisticated project? Two hypotheses at least may be formulated. The first is that she mostly contributed by imparting to Synesius the technical knowledge necessary to build and conceive such an instrument and that Synesius' 'philosophical amplification' was his. The second is that Hypatia's teaching was itself an elaborate mixture of technical teaching and philosophical interpretation and that her interpretation was basically followed by Synesius. We have no real means to decide between

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clock described in Vitruvius: it must therefore have been a *nukteirion horoskopeion*, that is, an instrument useful to determine the hours at night.

[17] But another possibility could be the third book of Ptolemy's *Harmonics* (*Harm.* 94.9–20 Düring, trans. in Solomon 2000), in which the same idea appears.

these two possibilities. What seems clear and important, by contrast, is the fact that this document represents an early testimony of an attempt to construct a kind of conciliation between Ptolemy's and (other?) Platonist theories.

3 *Hypatia's plausible 'Ptolemism'*

When confronted with the ancient and sometimes dissonant testimonies about Hypatia's doctrine and teaching, a modern mind is bent to read them on the background of the distinction between 'purely technical' mathematics and philosophy. But this distinction only receives its full meaning in the context of modern institutions built in the nineteenth century, during which there indeed appeared specialized domains like 'mathematics' and 'philosophy'. By contrast, these categories have little meaning in the late-antique context. At best, late-antique authors would make and perceive stylistic distinctions between various kinds of commentaries or texts, with no implication that one should make his own 'specialty' to study only *one* kind of literature. As educated and literate persons, they were expected to possess some general knowledge (*egkuklia mathēmata*) including various doctrines and sciences that would be useful for their own literary and philosophical proficiency. There was room, on this generally shared cultural and intellectual background, for various philosophical commitments that could lead one to put more emphasis on the study of certain kinds of classical texts and doctrines than on others. This commitment, therefore, had little to do with any specialization in a modern sense, but was essentially a question of emphasis on a certain kind of literature and knowledge.[18] Thus, the question about the study of mathematics in this period is not whether there were people specializing in a technical field (which is a modern notion), but whether there existed some philosophical commitment that would put a special emphasis on the study of mathematical texts.

At least two such philosophical choices existed in this period: the first one could be named *Ptolemism* and was based on the combined study of advanced mathematics with empirical observations, especially those developed for the sake of studying and calculating celestial motions; the second one, of a very different kind and level, was mathematical Pythagoreanism and is illustrated by the influential works of Nicomachus of Gerasa.[19] It is quite plausible that Hypatia might have been concerned with the first kind of philosophy, given the

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[18] Proclus, in fifth-century CE Athens, is a paradigmatic example: while his commentaries testify on his wide knowledge in many fields, his commitment was obviously to Platonism and led him to put more emphasis on Plato's writings.

[19] The work of the Platonizing Theon of Smyrna in the second century represents a somewhat intermediary case, since he reports both on Pythagorean lore in Nicomachus' style and on the more sophisticated mathematics developed for astronomy.

kind of mathematics she seems to have practised and the fact that she had worked with her father on Ptolemy's *Almagest*.

As seen above, Ptolemy himself had presented the study of mathematical astronomy in his *Almagest* and again in his *Tetrabiblos* as a science desirable for itself. For him, to pursue such studies for their own sake may bring one not only to a better understanding of celestial movements but also to a more harmonious ethical disposition. From the general level of mathematics contained in the *Almagest* itself, it is clear that such a particular philosophy was by nature accessible only to the few people who were willing and able to immerse themselves for years in the study of difficult mathematics and would be ready to form their own understanding and character on this basis.

Thus, this philosophical background plausibly forms the intellectual and ethical background of Hypatia's teaching and doctrines. Moreover, it squares with a respectable part of the testimonies about her. First, she was deeply immersed in the study of Ptolemy's writings, the *Almagest* for sure and probably his *Planisphaeria*. Second, she was respected for her high ethical standard and for her education – two major aspects of Ptolemy's *ethical* philosophy. Third, she was recognized for her philosophical commitment and teaching, although ancient biographers had difficulties in clarifying the nature of this commitment – or were just reluctant to do this, like Synesius in his letters. This may be explained by the highly elitist character of Ptolemism, which required difficult studies that even learned writers would not have undertaken. Fourth, it may also explain the sophisticated nature of Synesius' writing in *De dono*, in which the reflection on the technicalities of planispheric projection is given a deep philosophical content. This fact may reflect an intellectual context in which the philosophical and mathematical inquiries are not distinguished, but in which the latter is *constitutive* of the former. Finally, such an explanation reasonably coheres with the glimpses of the same tradition found in Theon of Alexandria's and Pappus of Alexandria's ideas in the fourth century, as we shall now see.

2 THEON OF ALEXANDRIA

Life and works

Theon, the father of Hypatia, was active in Alexandria in the third quarter of the fourth century CE, according to several astronomical records.[20] His three main works, in order of importance for his late-antique and medieval readers, are the following: (1) The *Little Commentary* on Ptolemy's *Handy Tables* is a

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[20] Dated 360, 364 and possibly 377 CE.

practical guide to the use of the latter, containing more complete and detailed
explanations than Ptolemy's own, but without theoretical justification. (2) Less
famous, but still influential, was his commentary on the *Almagest* (the section on
book 11 is lost). (3) Apparently much less known were the five books of his *Great
Commentary* on the *Handy Tables*, which explains the correspondence between
the tables and the geometrical models found in the *Almagest* (Jones 1999a: 163ff.).
Theon alludes to students of various levels in his prefaces, such as those who
asked him to explain to them Ptolemy's treatise for the sake of understanding
what they perceived as difficulties in it (*In Alm* 317.4–5). Others were expected
to understand the originality of his commentary by comparison with others
(318.5–8) – thus showing that Theon and part of his audience were conscious
of continuing a tradition of commentary already well established. Theon also
mentions less-capable students, for whom he claims to have conceived a 'more
methodical' explanation showing them the way to use the tables, apparently for
the sake of day-to-day work in astrology like the building of horoscopes (Tihon
1978: 199.1–10 and p. 3).

Given these sketchy indications and the attested existence of a community
of practitioners in astrology by that time,[21] it seems highly plausible that the
intended 'astronomers' in Theon's audience were astrologers or astrologers-to-
be who needed to perform and understand correctly their calculations of the
positions of the stars at a given moment. But these prefaces also reveal that
there was a demand, among the same public, for a more demanding study
and justification of these procedures, which required going into the intricacies
of Ptolemy's *Suntaxis*. This demand may have been provoked out of practical
concerns, but also because of the huge reputation the 'divine' Ptolemy enjoyed
in the same period, in particular for his impressive synthesis on *apotelesmatika*,
the socalled *Tetrabiblos*. In this influential work indeed, Ptolemy refers to the
Almagest as the necessary basis for such 'physical' studies (*Apotelesm.* 1.1–2.1
Boll).

It is important to note that 'to do astronomy' does not mean in Theon's
project what it meant for Ptolemy, namely, the careful search for a convinc-
ing correspondence between the observed movements of the stars and the
hypotheses built to account in a demonstrative way for these movements (*Alm.*
9.2, 208–13 Heiberg). Indeed, Theon apparently had no interest in recalculat-
ing the parameters of Ptolemy's models or in modifying the models themselves,
as later commentators in the Arabic or Latin world would do. Thus, although
Theon was well aware of the importance of observations in Ptolemy's reflections

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[21] See Amm. Marcel. 12.16.17 and Jones 1999b: 5.

(315.12–13), he does not seem to have made or used new observations him-
self. Moreover, Theon never alludes to any astrological theory. Hence, it seems
that the practice of astronomy meant for Theon something at the same time
different from standard astrology but also from Ptolemy's study of the heavenly
movements. We shall come back below to this puzzling and important point.

   Other works are attributed to Theon, like his edition of Euclid's *Elements*,
which we know he actually composed thanks to one important allusion of
Theon himself to it, but which is hard to reconstitute. Other attributions to
Theon, like the edition of Euclid's *Optics* or a work on the plane astrolabe,
have been shown to rest on negligible evidence. In general, the generous attri-
bution of many works to Theon seems to have derived from the increasing
celebrity he earned for his commentaries on Ptolemy already in antiquity, then
in the Byzantine and Arabic Middle Ages and in the Renaissance period. But
this makes the reconstitution of his (allegedly) lost works very speculative. In
particular, there are hints, both in the *Suda* (205) and in John Malalas (*Chron.*
13.265.38 Thurn) that he may have written commentaries related to divination
and hermetic writings. This would not be surprising in a time in which such
texts were highly studied and valued. But apart from the fact that we do not
know the content of these putative works, it is surprising that Theon should
make no single allusion to such theories or literature in his extant commentaries,
although he had many opportunities to do so. Moreover, Theon's own style
is almost entirely focused on geometrical demonstrations and computational
procedures and has nothing to do with the exalted and esoteric tone of the
hermetic literature. This is thus no more than a possibility that has received no
serious confirmation.

Thought

There are essentially two places in which Theon betrays his own commitment:
these are his preface to the *Almagest*, in which he explains the nature and purpose
of his commentary on Ptolemy as well as his expectations for his students, and
his commentary on the first lines of the *Almagest*. These two equally interesting
texts are therefore not of the same nature: the first is a preface; the second
already belongs to the commentary proper.

   The preface ambiguously addresses in general 'astronomers' (*astronoumenoi*,
probably referring to distinguished astrologers) and people who might be inter-
ested to improve their knowledge of geometrical elements ('students in the
elements', *stoicheioumenoi*). These two categories do not necessarily refer to two
separate kinds of audiences. Indeed, Theon immediately calls the most per-
spicuous readers to compare the structures of his own commentary with other

texts of the same genre: he insists that the difference lies in his systematic use of geometrical proofs at places that were deemed easy by previous commentators (318.5–9 Rome). Interestingly, he calls on Ptolemy's authority to legitimate this procedure, quoting a short remark of his which, in the *Almagest*, only applies to the establishment of chord tables (*Alm.* 31.4–5 Heib.), but that Theon generalizes to the whole commentary.[22] The commentary itself follows the announced scheme, especially for the first book, since geometrical demonstrations are proposed, sometimes at great length, to explain Ptolemy's rapid allusions to the geometrical proprieties of the universe. In general, Theon's commentary seems built to facilitate and enhance the appropriation, by the reader, of Ptolemy's treatise as well as his mastering of the underlying geometry and calculation techniques. In brief, Theon's orientation as a commentator consists in a kind of radicalization of the mathematical side of Ptolemy's approach to theoretical astronomy.

Theon's commentary on Ptolemy's philosophical introduction adds some interesting information on his allegiances. On the one hand, the 'true philosophers' to whom Ptolemy alludes from the outset are clearly identified by Theon as Peripatetics, as he explains both with reference to Aristotle's division of philosophy into theoretical and practical and, for the practical part, to the *Nicomachean Ethics*. On the other hand, Theon opens his commentary by explaining that those wishing to devote themselves to astronomy should not go into lengthy philosophical discussions. This remark introduces an interesting argument, again sustained by a very selective quote of Ptolemy's preface (319.19–20), according to which Ptolemy himself had no intention of dragging his readers into philosophy, since he characterizes them as 'those who have already made some progress' (*Alm.* 8.8–9). In Ptolemy, this is obviously an allusion to the *geometrical* preliminaries necessary for the study of advanced astronomy, but Theon interprets the remark as meaning that their *philosophical* training dispensed them of any lengthy explanation on the prologue that might have led them into the 'deep investigations' of philosophers. This clever reinterpretation of Ptolemy's allusion might reflect of course the little taste Theon himself felt for such explanations, but may also indicate that he considered the study of Ptolemy's treatise and of astronomy in general as *following* and going *beyond* 'standard' philosophical studies.

Moreover, the whole argument is meant to introduce Theon's interpretation of Ptolemy's general meaning in this preface. Theon indeed argues that it should be taken in the most simple and straightforward way, and if one does this, says Theon, then the whole idea reveals itself to be basically about ethics:

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[22] Theon mentions that he will also clarify the passages *reputed* to be difficult, although he confesses to have little taste for this kind of undertaking (318.12–319.1).

'*anyone who wishes to lead a good life should acquire a good disposition of the soul*' (*kataschēsis*; 320.2–3, repeated in 324.9–325.1). On the one hand, this represents a relevant commentary, since Ptolemy indeed insists that theoretical philosophy (more specifically, the study of mathematical astronomy) should be pursued for itself and that this philosophical choice has consequences on the building of one's character. Theon convincingly shows that Ptolemy's preface begins and ends with this same basic idea. On the other hand, this represents a conscious emphasis on one aspect of Ptolemy's philosophy, namely, its insistence on the ethical disposition gained by the study of theoretical astronomy.

It is rather surprising, in this respect, that Theon does not make any single allusion, in his commentary, to Ptolemy's parallel arguments in his *apotelesmatika*, although obvious points of comparison could be found there, in particular the notion that theoretical astronomy has to be chosen for itself and the more subtle idea that the study of astronomical forecasts might provide the right 'rhythm' to the soul (*Apotelesm.* 1.3). Similarly, Theon alludes to 'astrologers', in his *Little Commentary*, in a way that suggests he does not belong to them (Tihon 1978: 219 and 236).

To summarize, Theon's approach to Ptolemy has several characteristics, which are clearly compatible with each other. The first and most obvious is Theon's commitment to an exhaustive commentary on the *Almagest*, meant to facilitate both its appropriation by the student and the cultivation of geometry in general. The second is Theon's radicalization of the mathematical features of Ptolemy's treatise by the concrete addition of geometrical proofs, thus making the treatise even more geometrical than it primitively is. The third is the way in which Theon insists, again in a quite radical way, on the ethical side of Ptolemy's philosophy – that is, on the consequences of mathematical *studies* on the building of one's character. Finally, Theon represents this kind of studies as coming *after* and *beyond* philosophical studies in their traditional form: this again can be seen as a form of fidelity to Ptolemy's paradoxical claim that *his* philosophy, based on the cultivation of high-standard mathematics, goes beyond the various controversies of 'standard' philosophy, mainly because they enable one to reach a higher degree of certitude about certain divine realities like celestial movements, an attainment which is in turn of primary importance for human's life (*Alm.* 1.1.6.16–17 Heib.).[23]

What is strikingly different from Ptolemy, though, is Theon's apparent avoidance of any allusion to the 'physical' side of Ptolemy's approach, including the *apotelesmatika*, as well as his lack of interest in the correspondence between

[23] This argument in the *Almagest* should be compared to the more developed argument found in Ptolemy's *On the Criterion*, in which the attainment of truth through the definition of a valid criterion is contrasted with empty quarrelling about words (*On the Criterion*, 5 and 6). Note, however, that there is no question of mathematics in this early text of Ptolemy.

mathematical models and actual observations. It all happens as if Theon would have stripped Ptolemy's philosophy both from the 'observational' and 'physical' sides of it.

3 PAPPUS OF ALEXANDRIA

Life and works

Pappus was active during the first half of the fourth century CE, according to his calculation of an eclipse dated to 320 CE. He wrote on a wide and impressive range of subjects, including theoretical and computational astronomy, classical geometry, mechanics, practical arithmetic, geography. His *Geography* is known through an Armenian translation, and only two books (5 and 6) of his commentary on the *Almagest* are extant (it originally covered the first six books at least). Many of his works are known only through later quotations (in Proclus, Marinus, Eutocius or *scholia* to the *Almagest*), interpolated commentaries (like his commentary on book 10 of Euclid's *Elements*), and the collection of originally separate treatises later known as the *Mathematical Collection*, which was probably compiled after the sixth century CE.

Some hints about his biography and intellectual environment can be collected from several prefaces contained in the *Mathematical Collection*. They are indeed addressed to various audiences, which were interested in classical geometry (books 3, 4, 5 and 7), in astronomy (book 6), in philosophy (book 5), in mechanics or architecture (book 8). In the preface to the third book of the *Collection*, Pappus addresses one female Pandrosion (probably a competing teacher of mathematics) as well as her students and some of his own friends, including one 'Hierios the philosopher'. Pappus' discourse, which is conceived as a response to several geometrical challenges sent by the above mentioned students, cleverly shows them how they might improve their own achievements by improving their geometrical knowledge and skill. Pappus' response also reveals his eagerness to demonstrate his own mathematical proficiency. The whole situation might plausibly be interpreted as an attempt to attract new students implying that Pappus worked as a private teacher.

Pappus' contribution to ancient science does not consist in any substantial innovation but in the way he organized and employed an impressive mass of scientific texts.[24] Pappus' cultivation of classical works cannot be dissociated from his interest in geometrical and mechanical *problems*. This was already

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[24] Pappus usually claims originality only for variations on traditional inventions, an attitude which follows his own values, which are reflected by his criticism to Apollonius' alleged attitude toward Euclid (*Math. Coll.* 7, 119.16–120.12 Jones).

recognized in late antiquity; by then, indeed, Pappus was mainly known for his commentary on Ptolemy (as such, he was often associated to Theon) and for his anthologies of geometrical and mechanical problems. This last characterization well reflects the content and structure of many of his works (mainly the third, fourth, seventh and eight books of his *Collection*). Indeed, his exposition is often structured by *problems*, *series of problems*, or *lemmas*, for which he provides various approaches. This taste for the variety of problems and solutions is related to Pappus' more general interest in problem solving and mathematical invention and to his corresponding endeavour to provide his readers 'treasuries' of solutions and techniques (as a resource for their own efforts) as well as guidance through the use of these works. This interest in mathematical methodology and knowledge is important in the present context, since it is several times expressed and introduced by Pappus in philosophical terms, as we shall now see.

Thought

One preliminary question is whether Pappus considered himself a philosopher. The difficulty comes from the fact that, on the one hand, Pappus was apparently eager to distinguish himself from philosophers, as one passage of the fifth book of the *Collection* reveals:[25] introducing his comparison of the volumes of the five regular and isoperimetric polyhedra by comparison with the sphere, Pappus argues that philosophers are usually content to *assert* this propriety but are incapable of *demonstrating* it. On the other hand, Pappus' critical attitude toward 'standard' philosophy, together with his obvious interest in advanced mathematics and in Ptolemy's *Almagest* in particular, might be interpreted as an expression of his fidelity to Ptolemy's philosophical ideals. But in Pappus' case, unlike Theon's, we have no way to invalidate or confirm this, for we lack Pappus' commentary on the preface to the *Almagest*.[26]

We are not in a position, therefore, to determine precisely if Pappus had any definite philosophical commitment and if so, what it was. The plausible hypothesis that he was, like Theon, a 'Ptolemist' must be examined by a review of the philosophical positions punctually reflected in the various extant writings. Beyond the question of the relationship between these theories and Ptolemy's philosophy, this review is also useful because Pappus' ideas may have influenced later philosophical developments, especially among late Platonists like Proclus and Marinus.

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[25] *Math. Coll.* 350 Hultsch, translated in Cuomo 2000: 81.
[26] Theon's own commentary might have been taken, like other passages of his commentary on Ptolemy, from Pappus, but we have no certitude about this.

Two passages from the *Mathematical Collection* seem to indicate some Platonist affiliation: an allusion to the demiurge of the *Timaeus* (5.350.20) and another allusion to proportion as the bond of mathematics in book 3 (84–5). But these hardly represent much more than commonplaces,[27] and the second one is of dubious authenticity.[28] Equally dubious are the allusions to Pythagorean lore in Pappus' discussion of means (*mesotai*).[29] Similarly, the philosophical digressions punctuating some parts of the first book of Pappus' commentary on the tenth book of Euclid's *Elements* (see 2.3.9.12–13) can be attributed to him only with great difficulty; on the contrary, many of them were plausibly added by later commentators, perhaps belonging to Proclus' circle.[30] If one therefore excludes these passages as dubious, the best one can say is that Pappus resorted to the traditional opposition between nature and convention in order to account for the difference between the natural notion of (in)commensurability and the conventional notion of (Euclidean) rationality (5) and that he valued the work of mathematicians like Theaetetus, Euclid and Apollonius on these issues, mostly for their capacity to organize the subject in a demonstrative and clear manner. As for the comparison between Theaetetus' (as reported in Plato) and Euclid's approach to 'rationality' (10 and 17) it does not betray any favourable or hostile attitude toward Plato: Pappus' point is more to clarify, for those who may be interested in this subject, the difficulty created by these two different and incompatible approaches.

Beyond these scattered passages of the same kind, many of them of dubious authenticity or of little interest, Pappus gives more substantial and reliable indications about his theory of knowledge in his prefaces to the treatises composing the *Mathematical Collection*. The preface dedicated to Pandrosion (book 3) has a subtle argument about the performance of the students who submitted to Pappus their geometrical constructions. The argument (*Math. Coll.* 1.30ff.) bears on geometrical researches, about which Pappus recalls that they were regarded by some ancient philosophers as all consisting of *problems*, i.e., things that are to be done or constructed, and by others as all consisting of *theorems*, that is,

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[27] This may indicate, nevertheless, that Pappus relied on a tradition which identified only one and not two gods in Plato's cosmology. See Mansfeld 1998: 104ff.

[28] It is inserted after Pappus' discussion of the *reduction* of all means (in the sense of *mesotai*) to only the geometrical one has been announced, so that one hardly sees why he should announce it a second time: the passage is more plausibly interpreted as an interpolation.

[29] The whole discussion on *mesotai*, in *Math. Coll.* 1.68–104, was obviously completed and interpolated by someone who had strong Pythagorean bents, so that the other allusion to Pythagorean authors contained in this passage may be suspected of inauthenticity.

[30] In general, several incoherences of this text concerning in particular the order of Euclid's propositions in book 10 (4 versus 24–36), the value of Plato's doctrines on incommensurable magnitudes (12–13 versus 10–11), as well as the notion of 'rational' lines underlying certain explanations (6 versus 14–15), clearly indicate that this first part of the commentary (unlike the second book) can hardly have been written by one and the same author (Vitrac 1998: 417–19).

as things to be checked and 'followed' in their logical consequences.[31] On this preliminary basis, what Pappus basically proposes to Pandrosion and her students is a kind of compromise: although one cannot blame them for having produced and submitted geometrical constructions, they should also understand that the construction should be checked with the theoretical means appropriate to each problem. The first student, in particular, could thus have checked *by himself* that his construction was defective. For this purpose, he could have used the tools of Euclidean analysis in the way Pappus proposes to do: his criticism is therefore conceived as a model offered for the student's imitation. The argument relies on the opposition between two intellectual procedures, the one (through problems) more 'productive' and the second (through theorems) more 'contemplative' or 'theoretical'. At the same time, the two points of view are shown by Pappus to be compatible with each other, in the sense that the 'productive' approach is necessary but should be *complemented* by the second.

The preface to book 7 has attracted much attention from modern geometers and philosophers in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, since it contains an important discussion on the method of geometrical analysis. The discussion introduces the presentation of the various works of classical geometry that may be regarded as a useful matter for the development of one's capacity for invention in geometrical problems. In the course of his argument, Pappus takes the opportunity of the presentation of the various works belonging to the analytical corpus to discuss the notion of *porism*,[32] considered as a kind of mean between those of problem and theorem, and goes on to criticize the geometers who, incapable of really providing the *loci* and objects mentioned in Euclid's *Porisms*, content themselves with the use of theses propositions as if they were mere theorems (book 7, 97.3–7 Jones). We retrieve here the balanced view defended in book 3, but in reverse order: one should not only rely on theoretical results but should also be able to produce them.

In the preface to book 5 (5.304–8), Pappus argues that bees have received from god some kind of 'natural forethought', by which they found out the best way to store honey, namely, in hexagonal honeycombs. Bees thus have some share in the mathematical knowledge imparted to human beings, who nevertheless received the best part of it. The whole story is meant to introduce

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[31] We know through Proclus (*In Eucl.* 77–8) that the former were the followers of Menaechmus and the others followed Speusippus (these names do not appear in Pappus).

[32] In its most simple sense, this notion refers to a result which is 'provided' by a given mathematical proposition as a kind of immediate outcome and which is usually presented right after the proposition. In the more sophisticated sense which is discussed by Pappus, it refers to complex mathematical results which were used in higher geometrical analysis and were the subject of separate treatises like Euclid's (lost) one.

the idea that educated men should do better than bees and add to this 'natural intelligence' some geometrical understanding of the properties of the figures, which were only discovered by bees because of their usefulness and out of mere necessity. Bees are thus recognized for their intelligence and sense of organization: but the nature of geometry is defined as adding to this practical knowledge something more (*perittos*), namely, the theoretical investigation into the reasons and causes of certain constructions. We retrieve here the complementary character of 'productive' and 'theoretical' knowledge.

In the preface to book 8,[33] Pappus again develops an interesting argument touching on the interaction between the 'manual' part of mechanics, and its theoretical parts (book 8.1022–8). The argument begins with a surprisingly ambitious definition of the science of mechanics. Pappus, probably following Hero of Alexandria,[34] defines it as a kind of generalized physics, in which not only natural movements but also movements forced against nature are considered. Pappus thereby justifies the interest that learned people and philosophers take in it, beyond its practical utility for life. Then he explicitly borrows from the opinion of 'Hero's followers' that anyone taught from childhood in the two branches of mechanics, theoretical and practical (manual), would become the best architect and inventor of mechanical devices. This is illustrated by the subsequent exposition of a variety of problems, some of them of a practical nature, but quickly leading to theoretical questions, others of a theoretical nature but requiring mechanical devices for their solution.

Throughout these various prefaces, the idea of a deep interaction between productive and 'problematic' and theoretical activity is asserted. In two of these prefaces (books 3 and 5), theory is seen as somewhat superior to the latter, but in books 8 and 7, the emphasis is put more on their balance and complementary character. It is difficult to identify precisely the origins of such ideas. Hero is a good candidate, since Pappus explicitly recognizes his dependence on him in *Math. Coll.* 8. But Ptolemy is a good candidate as well, especially since Pappus is known to have commented on the *mathematika*, as he himself calls Ptolemy's works (8.1030 and 1058).

In general, Pappus seems to have borrowed freely from the philosophical literature what seemed relevant for the purposes of his arguments in each treatise.

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[33] The book was known to Eutocius of Ascalon, in the sixth century CE, as an independent treatise entitled *Mechanical Introductions*.

[34] Parts of the contents of Pappus' *Mechanical Introductions* follow Hero's *Mechanika*, which is lost in Greek (apart from what is found in Pappus) but partly kept in Arabic. Now since the introduction of the first book was probably absent from the MSS used by the Arabic translator (Qustā ibn Lūqā) and the end makes clear that it was conceived as an introduction to mechanical theory, Pappus may well have borrowed his introduction from that of Hero.

These philosophical arguments are not developed for themselves, but still serve to define Pappus' own ethical commitment to the study of mathematics in all its aspects, some of them related to practice. By the same token, they also serve as an introduction to the exposition of various mathematical theories and methods. This attitude reminds us of Theon's argument that philosophical studies are only the first step before the 'hardcore' of mathematical studies. Thus, we retrieve in Pappus' ideas, although expressed in a different way and with no emphasis on observations, the complementary character of practical and theoretical inquiries which is a consequence of Ptolemy's philosophy.

Pappus' way of organizing his mathematical arguments also reminds us of Theon's way to insert geometrical demonstrations within Ptolemy's text. In Pappus' case, not only Ptolemy, but the whole and huge set of classical literature in mathematics is the pretext for such theoretical digressions. This proximity might again be interpreted as a sign of Theon's relative dependence on Pappus, or merely as deriving from their common interest in Ptolemy's works and thought.

Whatever their origins may be, one interesting and important aspect of Pappus' ideas is the influence they may have had on late Platonists like Proclus, Marinus and other members of their circle interested in mathematical literature. Indeed, he is explicitly mentioned by Proclus as one of the traditional commentators on Euclid, and by Marinus, in his commentary on Euclid's *Data*, as an authority on mathematical analysis. We also saw that certain parts of Pappus' *Collection* as well as his commentaries on Euclid's *Elements* 10 bear witness to the intervention of later commentators, who could plausibly belong to the late-Platonist school. Thus Pappus' works could well belong to this category of mathematical commentary, about which Proclus says that they must be stripped of their superfluous discussions of lemmas, in order to keep their most 'valuable', that is, philosophical contents (*In Eucl.* 84.8–23). This heritage may be relevant to understanding one aspect of the constitution of the sophisticated theory of mathematical activity developed by Proclus and his master Syrianus, which exploited and reinterpreted the difference between the notions of mathematical problem and theorem in the framework of late-Platonist metaphysics (*In Eucl.* 48–57 and 77–81).

4 SOME OPEN QUESTIONS ABOUT PTOLEMY'S HERITAGE IN THE FOURTH CENTURY CE

Let us summarize the picture emerging from the previous, schematic presentation of Hypatia's, Theon's and Pappus' works and thought. First, it should be clear that any such picture is necessarily speculative, due to the lack of

completely reliable information. In such a situation, the best one can do is to propose a plausible story, which is ultimately improvable but reasonably in line with the available evidence. From such a perspective, we saw that viewing these figures as inheritors of Ptolemy's philosophy provides a reasonable account of many aspects of either the testimonies concerning Hypatia or the particularities of the extant works of Theon and Pappus. In particular, it squares with the simple and remarkable fact that the three of them spent a considerable amount of time studying Ptolemy's *Almagest* and commenting on it.

The most surprising feature emerging from this account of Theon and Pappus is their apparent disdain for observational aspects of theoretical astronomy and for Ptolemy's physics and astrology. Paulus of Alexandria, seemingly a professional astrologer who left us an important work on astrology partly relying on Ptolemy, was both a contemporary and a compatriot of Theon. While it is difficult to imagine that each of them may have ignored the existence of the other, they do not allude to each other in their respective works – at least in what we have kept from them. In the same way, we saw that it was highly probable that many members of Theon's audience were *de facto* astrologers or astrologers-to-be. The case of Hypatia even suggests that she at least had some astrological training, as Socrates' and John of Nikiu's accounts of her death suggest – a fact which seems confirmed by one letter of Synesius to her (*Letter* 15). The way to explain such a puzzling situation is an open question. We will content ourselves with suggesting here three possible explanations.

First, the split between astrological literature (in Paulus' style) and astronomical commentaries (in Pappus' and Theon's style) may be explained as a mere accidental product of the textual transmission: as the *Suda* and John Malalas suggest, we may after all have lost the astrological and/or hermetic writings of Pappus, Theon and, of course, Hypatia.

The second explanation is that Pappus and Theon (the second more than the first) *intentionally avoided* working on astrology, even in Ptolemy's 'scientific' manner, because they had to manage *Christian* susceptibilities. Indeed, astrology became a controversial subject and constituted one side of the confrontation between pagan and Christian officials within the late Empire. Given the fact that Hypatia was Theon's daughter and student (or assistant), and that many (high ranking) Christians attended her lectures, Theon himself may have adopted a prudent reading of Ptolemy and avoided producing any commentary on the physical theory that might have caused him trouble with his contemporaries.

The third explanation is somewhat midway between these two but of a different nature: both Pappus and Theon may consciously have avoided any treatment of vulgar astrology independently of any political or religious pressure, but because they despised and ignored *this kind* of astrology, as compared to

Ptolemy's much more abstract and 'scientifically based' approach to the subject. Thus, unlike Paulus, they may have been reluctant to put together in the same study Ptolemy's physical doctrine and the traditional Hellenistic and Egyptian lore that could not be reconciled with each other.

Whatever the explanation, the tradition of commentary and study on Ptolemy, in the form it took in the fourth century, seems important for the long-term history of philosophy. Indeed, this philosophical framework was relatively neutral from a religious and doctrinal point of view (being based on the extensive study of mathematics and a 'conciliatory' kind of philosophy). But it kept, at the same time, something of Ptolemy's powerful idea that mathematical studies were a legitimate approach to philosophy and personal culture, independently of any strong or obvious metaphysical commitment.

HIEROCLES OF ALEXANDRIA

HERMANN SCHIBLI

1 LIFE AND WRITINGS

From the Byzantine scholar Photius we learn that Hierocles dedicated his treatise *On Providence* to the historian Olympiodorus whose work covers the period from 407 to 425 CE (*Bibl.* cod. 214. 171b22–32). Photius further tells us that Hierocles described himself as a student of Plutarch of Athens who died in 431/2 (cod. 214. 173a 37–9). These dates allow us to place the *floruit* of Hierocles' life within the first half of the fifth century CE.

It was then during the reign of Theodosius II (408–50) that Hierocles was active, teaching and writing in Alexandria after his discipleship with Plutarch in Athens. Very little is known of Plutarch (whose writings do not survive) but he appears to have been an important link for his pupils, not only Hierocles but also Syrianus who later became the mentor of Proclus, to the thought of Iamblichus with its emphasis on the revelatory nature of philosophy, on the *Chaldaean Oracles*, and theurgy. Thus schooled by Plutarch Hierocles returned to Alexandria, a city that could boast a long tradition of philosophical activity, going back to Eudorus the Platonist (*fl.* 35 BCE). Alexandria was also the home of the Jewish theologian and Platonist Philo, of the Christian philosophers Clement and Origen, and of Ammonius and his students, yet all these thinkers had long since passed away before the arrival of Hierocles. Other than his younger contemporary Hypatia, whose interests anyhow seem to have been more mathematical than philosophical, Hierocles had no serious rival in philosophy. This makes him *the* outstanding Platonic philosopher in the Alexandria of his time. And those times could not have been the easiest for a pagan philosopher. Christians exercised secular authority. Imperial legislation forbade pagan sacrifices and many temples were closed to public worship. Cyril, the ambitious bishop of Alexandria, fought against paganism, Judaism and all forms of heresy. It was during his patriarchy that Hypatia, in 415, was murdered by a Christian mob. Hierocles himself, according to an anecdote told by Damascius, ran foul of the authorities on a trip to Byzantium (Constantinople) and was flogged, but returned to

Alexandria 'and continued to philosophize with his students as he was accustomed' (*Vit. Isid*. fr. 106 Zintzen). In spite of the Christian-versus-pagan theme Hierocles remained a stalwart pagan philosopher, making no concessions, in his writings at any rate, to Christianity, and he enjoyed a fruitful teaching career. In the words of Damascius, Hierocles 'adorned the schools in Alexandria with his lofty spirit and and elevated speech . . . ever rivalling the elegant language and copious thought of Plato' (apud Phot. *Bibl*. cod. 242. 338b28–35).

Hierocles appears to have written only two works, the fully extant *Commentary on the Golden Verses of the Pythagoreans* and the treatise *On Providence*, which survives in the form of summaries and extracts in Photius.[1]

The Pythagorean *Golden Verses* is an anonymous poem composed in the Hellenistic era (it was known to Chrysippus in the third century BCE) and of continued popularity into late antiquity and beyond. Its seventy-one verses set out moral maxims and exhortations to virtue and purification, culminating in the promise of the immortalization of the soul. Hierocles, like Iamblichus before him, considered the poem a propaedeutic to philosophy.[2] The high regard in which Hierocles held the *Pythagorean Golden Verses* is well brought out in the last chapter of the *Commentary*:

These verses are nothing other than the most perfect impress of philosophy, a compendium of its more definitive doctrines, and a basic pedagogical exposition transcribed by those who have already gone up the divine path for those who come after. You could in truth say they are the most beautiful token of human nobility and the memorial of not just one of the Pythagoreans, but of the entire sacred assembly, and, as they themselves would say, an apophthegm common to all of the school. (*Comm*. 27.11)

The *Commentary*, in twenty-seven chapters, is divided into three parts that reflect his understanding of the poem's themes and their order: chapters 1–19 deal with civic philosophy, chapters 20–25 with contemplative philosophy, and chapters 26–27 with telestic, i.e., purificatory and mystic, philosophy. Written in clear and elegant Greek, Hierocles' *Commentary* brings to the fore the moral and didactic issues important to late Platonic-Pythagorean philosophers.

Of Hierocles' other work, *On Providence*, Photius gives a succinct summary of its seven books (cod. 214. 173a5–40). From this précis we get the strong impression that Hierocles' treatise amounted to a systematic history of philosophy. Setting down first his views of providence, corroborating these with 'Platonic opinions' (books 1 and 2), and refuting opposing theories (book 3), Hierocles goes on to marshal historical support going back to the *Chaldaean*

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[1] The standard Greek edition of the *Commentary* is Koehler 1974. The remnants of *On Providence* are in Photius' *Bibliotheca* cod. 214 (Henry 1962, vol. III) and cod. 251 (Henry 1974, vol. VII), referred to in this chapter simply as 'cod.'.

[2] Iamblichus attends to the *Golden Verses* in his *Proptrepticus*, ch. 3 (pp. 10–16 Pistelli).

Oracles, Orpheus, and Homer (books 4 and 5). The catholicity of his programme is seen in that Aristotle is brought into the Platonic fold, from which he excludes only those who oppose a Platonic view of providence – these are elsewhere specified as Stoics and Epicureans, astrologers and sorcerers – or those who deny the unanimity of Plato and Aristotle (book 6). The unity of Plato and Aristotle was in fact canonical among later Platonists. Porphyry wrote a separate treatise on the subject.[3] Hierocles credits the 'divinely inspired' Ammonius, the teacher of Plotinus, for this doctrine. Finally, Hierocles lists the 'sacred race' of philosophers: the school of Ammonius, Plotinus and Origen, Porphyry, Iamblichus, and his own teacher Plutarch of Athens – 'all these thinkers agree with the philosophy of Plato in its purified form' (book 7). This is the mainstream of the later Platonic tradition, to which, coming a little after Hierocles, we could add Syrianus, Proclus and Damascius. On the evidence of his doctrines Hierocles is assured a solid position within this lineage.

2 THOUGHT

A The One

As the philosophy of Plato passed down through the centuries, it was naturally subject to modifications, additions and innovations. Undoubtedly Plotinus ranks as the greatest innovator of Platonic doctrine, so much so that scholars have coined the name 'Neoplatonism' to describe the philosophy Plotinus worked out in his *Enneads* and followed by his students. The legitimacy of this term is debatable since those who came to be called 'Neoplatonists' saw themselves as nothing other than Platonists. Be that as it may, Plotinus' philosophy of a supreme, transcendent One from which all being emanates certainly took Platonism into new and uncharted territories. Now in Hierocles' *Commentary* and the remnants of *On Providence* we never hear of this supreme One; the highest principle appears to be the Demiurge. The seeming absence of the One has led some scholars to posit for Hierocles a particularly 'Alexandrian' philosophy that reverts to 'middle Platonic' doctrine such as taught by Origen (the pagan).[4] It has also been supposed that this toned down metaphysics made Hierocles more amenable to his Christian contemporaries.[5] Against the *opinio communis*, however, Ilsetraut Hadot has argued convincingly that a supreme

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[3] *Suda* s.v. 'Porphyrios'.

[4] This view was first expressed by Praechter 1912 and 1913. As I have shown elsewhere (Schibli 2002: 48–52), Hierocles, rather than following Origen, more plausibly aligned himself with Plotinus and his own teacher, Plutarch of Athens, who taught that the One precedes Intellect and Soul (apud Procl. *In Parm.* 6.1058.21–1059.14 Cousin).

[5] Thus notably Kobusch 1976, Aujoulat 1986.

One must be assumed for Hierocles, too. Her research is based on a minute examination of Hierocles' theology of numbers in chapter 20 of the *Commentary*, in which the Demiurge is identified with the sacred Pythagorean symbol of the Tetractys (the number 4 or Tetrad, occupying the arithmetical mean between the monad and the hebdomad). Hierocles' numerical work harmonizes with late Pythagorean and Platonic texts on the subject, which are unanimous in deriving the progression of number from a monad or a One and nowhere posit the tetrad as an unqualified first principle. The identification of the Demiurge with the Tetractys/Tetrad, seen against the background of Pythagorean-Platonic numerical theology, rules out his position as the absolutely first principle.[6] As for the silence about the One in Hierocles' works, it is not so surprising that this highest echelon of late-Platonic metaphysics does not appear in the *Commentary*, since it is in the main an ethical treatise that, as Hierocles himself says, he did not need 'to extend to the whole of philosophy . . . but rather to make it proportionate . . . to the intent of these verses, unfolding only so much in them as . . . suits the interpretation of the poem' (27.10). And Hierocles interpreted the poem as a 'basic, pedagogical exposition' of Pythagorean doctrines (27.11). Furthermore, apparently here departing from Plotinus, he did not teach that the human soul returns to the One.[7] Hierocles is emphatic that the soul, by reason of its abiding substance, can never reascend beyond its original pre-existent state in the divine hierarchy. Once purified of its earthly attachments, the soul is returned to the form of its 'primal state of happiness', its 'first estate', which is with its creator, the Demiurge (26.9; 27.2). This point of doctrine, too, makes understandable Hierocles' omission of the One in the *Commentary*. In regard to *On Providence*, as pointed out, we do not have the whole work: either the One appears in the lost sections or, more likely, the subject matter did not call for its mention.

B *The Demiurge*

Although the One may be assumed to be the ultimate source and principle, the practical work of creation devolves on the Demiurge, modelled of course after Plato's Demiurge in the *Timaeus*. Hierocles' Demiurge is thus 'the first cause' and 'the very first and best' of the superior beings (*Comm.* 1.12; 3.4), just as Porphyry calls the highest creative cause 'the one demiurge, the very first' (apud Procl. *In Tim.* 1.457.3). Corresponding to the second hypostasis of

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[6] See Hadot's ground-breaking work 1978 (particularly 110–16), her articles 1979, 1990, 1993, and her most recent study 2004: 56–97.

[7] This departure from Plotinus is possibly one reason why Damascius groups Hierocles with those philosophers who did not accomplish 'the whole ascent'.

Intellect in the Plotinian system, he is also the 'intelligible god' and 'creative intellect' (cod. 251. 462a26; *Comm.* 1.6; 20.19; 1.10). Further names Hierocles uses in connection with the Demiurge, such as 'Zeus', 'father', 'divine law', 'creative law', 'creative Tetractys', or 'divine providence', all flow from his role as cosmic maker.

The Demiurge's method of creation can be reconstructed from passages in Photius: 'Following Plato his [Hierocles'] investigation posits the prior existence of god, the creator of both the whole visible and invisible world order, which . . . the craftsman brought forth from no existing substrate, since god's will . . . suffices for the existence of things' (cod. 214. 172a22–6). A parallel passage specifies that the world order comes to be from no *pre-existing* substrate (cod. 251. 461b6–12). In an extended text in which Hierocles argues against certain Platonists – mainly Plutarch of Chaeronea, Atticus and Numenius, he further reveals his own position:

Why . . . do I enumerate these philosophers for you, when even some of the Platonists do not maintain the right concept about god, the creator? For they do not think that he is sufficiently capable, through his own power and wisdom, of bringing the world into existence absolutely, acting from eternity, but that he can only create with the aid of uncreated matter and by using nature which does not derive its existence from him, whereby all things pre-exist potentially in the matter just referred to, while he, as it were, paints things in and merely orders them and chooses from what matter presents. This would be an act of elaboration rather than an act of divine goodness. In that case, what knowledge would he need for his attempt to arrange the things he did not cause to exist, when the orderly arrangement of things is somehow already wholly contained in their uncreated nature? If anything should be added to that which exists of itself without being created, the addition will be contrary to its nature; and to be composed contrary to its nature is an evil for the thing being changed. As a result, for the aforesaid matter its being ordered would not be a good, if it were really uncreated not only outside of time but also without a cause, just as we say god is uncreated.

Even god himself will not be blameless of evils, if he makes the beginning of creation arise from some evil act by trying to compose being, which like himself is uncreated, in a way that violates its nature, and by not allowing his 'sister', who together with him has come forth spontaneously, to remain in an uncreated state. Besides, it is impossible to prevail over something that happens to be equally uncreated as oneself, no matter whether one tries to represent such control as existing from eternity or from a point in time. One would be still further from the truth if, in addition to needing the activity of matter, god had begun the ordering process also from some point in time; this does not allow him to remain in his proper state. If it was better not to make, how has he changed over into a state of making? And if it was better to make, why has he not done so from eternity, if to make from eternity does not appear to make the least difference to him? Unless one should say that he belongs to nature, which is capable in turn of both making and destroying, but lacks the power to create eternally, because the evil of matter,

which it has to make use of, rejects the imposition and introduction of order, continually returning to its uncreated state of, one might say, disorder; thus order would prevail at one time, and disorder at another, or, speaking more truthfully, disorder would always prevail, since an ordered state, insofar as it is a condition contrary to its nature, will appear as disorder to one who considers the matter correctly. (Cod. 251. 460b23–461a23–33)

In opposition to those Platonists who held that god could only create with the aid of uncreated matter, Hierocles subscribes to the teaching, first clearly enunciated by Porphyry and followed by Iamblichus and Proclus, that matter is engendered. But here it must also be understood that for the Platonists, such as represented by Hierocles, the word 'engendered' (*genetos*) has a double meaning. Although all things ultimately stem from a single cause, the One, the whole world order is divided into two realms, the intelligible world of being and the visible world of coming-to-be and passing-away. Therefore there is a creation of the immutable, intelligible things (like numbers, which applies as well to the Demiurge in his role as the Tetrad) that is eternal and a creation of the mutable, sensible things that takes place in time. Even the intelligibles are created in the sense that their existence derives from a superior cause (*geneta kat' aitian*), but they are un-created insofar as they have no beginning in time (*ageneta kata chronon*). Thus matter is created in regard to cause, but uncreated in regard to time. In contrast, for Plutarch of Chaeronea, Numenius and Atticus, as Hadot explains,

indeterminate matter is unengendered in both senses of the word: both outside of a cause and outside of time, it is 'as old as the demiurge'. In other words, it is not engendered . . . but is a substrate . . . for the work of the demiurge. Moreover, it is the cause of evil, either in itself or by virtue of the evil soul that moves it. At most, they admit that *determinate* matter may be said to be engendered, because it has a beginning. For the Neoplatonists beginning with Porphyry, by contrast, even indeterminate matter is engendered, by a cause superior to the demiurge, but outside of time. This allows Proclus to say that this indeterminate matter is just as much engendered . . . as it is the first substrate . . . relative to the work of the demiurge. Thus . . . the demiurge merely receives, as it were, a matter that has already been provided for him; but since this matter derives ultimately from the same cause as the demiurge himself, it cannot be opposed to the demiurge as good is to evil. Matter is not foreign to the demiurge, but is in a certain sense immanent within him.[8]

[8] Hadot 2004: 20–1 (her emphasis), with sources in nn. 67–72. As Hadot 17 n. 53 also notes, the distinction of the two senses of the word *genetos* appears to go back to the Platonist Taurus (second century CE), who is cited for it by Philoponus. Indeed, according to Dillon's analysis, 1977: 242–4, Taurus distinguished four meanings of the word, but the essential point is that Taurus also opposed Plutarch of Chaeronea's interpretation of Plato's *Timaeus* as describing a temporal creation of the world. Philoponus himself, as a Christian, naturally argued in his polemical treatise, *On the Eternity of the World Against Proclus*, that the universe had a temporal beginning.

The background to the debate is found in Plato's *Timaeus* (28b, 32c, 41a–b) where Plato speaks of the cosmos as both generated and indestructible. Whatever Plato may have meant exactly by his 'likely story' (*Tim.* 29c), he earned Aristotle's criticism for violating the law that whatever comes to be must also perish; the cosmos is without beginning or end, it being inconceivable that god, who is immutable, decided at some point to create (*De caelo* 1, chs. 10–12). To meet this objection, members of Plato's Academy (Speusippus and Xenocrates) argued that the creation account of the *Timaeus* was not to be taken as a literal creation in time, but that Plato had described the creation of the cosmos in sequential steps for the 'didactic reason' of explaining its order and organization; in reality the cosmos has existed from eternity. The interpretation of the *Timaeus* as a theoretical account allowed later Platonists to use Aristotle's immutability argument for a beginningless creation.[9]

We can observe Hierocles using the same line of reasoning. If creation were merely understood as the adornment and ordering of a formless but pre-existing substrate, then the act of creation would have to begin at some point in time. But the notion of a temporal beginning implies that god, when he begins to create, passes from a state of inactivity to activity and this notion would contradict the nature of god, which is to be eternally active as well as immutable. When Hierocles, in the above passage from Photius (second paragraph), remarks that to suppose god began the ordering process from some point in time would 'not allow him to remain in his proper state', he is paraphrasing Plato, *Tim.* 42e 5–6, and interpreting the Platonic text in the sense of the immutability of the divine Demiurge. In the *Commentary* Hierocles declares unequivocally that the Demiurge as the first cause 'remains wholly immutable and invariable', both possessing 'a substance equal to his activity and having his goodness . . . as his very substance, the goodness by which he leads all things to their well-being. There is in fact no other reasonable cause for his creation than his substantial goodness. "For he was good", says Plato [*Tim.* 29e, cf. *Phdr.* 247a], "and no grudge about anything ever befalls the good"' (1.12–13). The basic thought guiding Hierocles is that the nature of god is good and immutable. As in Plato and, similarly, in Plotinus, the ungrudging goodness of god is the cause of creation.[10] If, however, matter did not derive its existence from him, i.e., were uncreated, then god's

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[9] Cf. Plot. 4.3 [27] 8.30–5; Procl. *In Tim.* 1.288.14–27. As Hierocles says, reversing the proposition that everything eternal is without a generation in time, 'for it is impossible for something that has come to be generated at a certain time to abide eternally' (*Comm.* 11.39).

[10] God is also called 'the principle of good' (*Comm.* 11.4). In Plotinus, the One as the 'first Good', since it does not grudge to give of itself (cf. 3.2 [47] 11.8), is the 'productive power of all things'. For Aquinas, *bonum est diffusivum sui* was an axiom, though Christians considered the self-diffusion of the Good a free divine choice; for Platonists it is a *necessary* emanation.

work of merely ordering and arranging pre-existing matter, like that of a human artisan, would not be a true act of creation, involving all the divine attributes (including the knowledge of what is good from all eternity); it would be 'an act of elaboration rather than an act of divine goodness'.

Creation is thus an eternal activity and proceeds directly from god himself. Describing the hypostasis above Soul, the level of intelligible beings, which applies paramountly to the creative intellect, the Demiurge, Hierocles writes:

those beings who are said to make according to their substance are they who, remaining unchangeable in their substance and activity, not separating anything from themselves nor setting themselves in motion for the existence of engendered beings, produce the race of secondary beings just by being what they are. It follows that they do not make use of matter, do not begin to make from a point of time nor cease to make at a point in time, and that what comes to be does not lie outside the activity of that which produces it. (Cod. 251. 463b30–7)

The Demiurge produces simply by being what he is. His substance, comprising his eternal goodness, thought and will ('god's will . . . suffices for the existence of things'), is the cause of the universe. Proclus, in a similar fashion, explains how being and will are unified in the creative activity of the intelligible gods:

And when they make by their being alone they do not operate, as in the case of nature, without purpose, and when they operate with their will they are not deprived, as individual souls are, of their essential making, but they bring both [i.e., their will and essence] together in one union: everything they are able to do, they will to do, and since by their being they are both able and do make all things, they combine the cause of their making with their ungrudging will. (*Theol. Plat.* 1.15 p. 75, 8–15 Saffrey and Westerink)

And on the Demiurge specifically, Proclus writes: 'insofar as he is intellect, he produces all things by his thoughts; insofar as he is intelligible, he makes by his very being; insofar as he is god, by his willing alone . . . for since his being good is the same as being god, it is also through his goodness that by his will he makes all things . . . ' (*In Tim.* 1.362.2–7).[11]

Creation from no pre-existing substrate at first sight appears similar to the Christian *ex nihilo* creation, but it is not the same. Hierocles does not say that the world is generated from what is not, but from god himself whose substance is eternal intellection. In contrast to the Christian view that God by a deliberate and reflective act of will created the world out of nothing at a certain point in time and would also bring it to an end in the future, Hierocles teaches that creation is an eternal process that *necessarily* arises from god's nature. As

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[11] Cf. further Procl. *In Tim.* 1.371.4–7: 'If he was good, he wished to make all things good, and if he wished, he also made and brought the universe to order; for providence depends on will, and will on goodness.'

E. R. Dodds (1963: 290) put it, commenting on Proclus, *Prop.* 174: 'Against the Christian doctrine of a deliberate creation in time the Neoplatonists maintained an emanative creation which is timeless and unwilled: the only creative power is contemplation or intuitive thought . . . which at a certain level of being translates itself automatically into spatio-temporal terms . . . God creates because he thinks, but he does not think in order to create.'[12] Being immutable, god eternally wills the good, i.e., the created order. Thus the destruction of the universe, too, is, in Hierocles' words, 'an impossible occurrence', given the immutability and invariableness of the first cause (*Comm.* 1.12). Hierocles' doctrine of creation does not hint at a particular type of Alexandrian Platonism palatable to Christian thinkers but is in all respects conformable to the Platonic creation accounts of Porphyry, Iamblichus and Proclus.

C The created order

The cosmos created by the Demiurge is a unity consisting of two parts: 'the whole visible and invisible world order . . . Corporeal substance is combined with incorporeal creation, and from both is produced a completely perfect cosmos, two-fold and single at the same time, in which the creative wisdom has distinguished the highest, middle, and last beings according to their nature' (cod. 214. 172a23–30, cf. 251. 461b7–13). The 'incorporeal creation' is the transcendent, invisible realm of rational beings, and the 'corporeal substance' the visible bodies of heaven and earth.[13] In traditional Platonic fashion Hierocles speaks of the rational world order as 'an image (*eikōn*) of the demiurgic god in his entirety' (*Comm.* 1.9).[14] The procession from the Demiurge to the created order is the characteristic Platonic procession from the second hypostasis of Intellect to the third hypostasis of Soul.

The created order is divided into three classes:

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[12] Cf. also Sorabji 1983: 318: 'The difference from Christian accounts of creation lies not in the fact, but in the *manner*, of the will's being exercised. Thus Plotinus does not follow Plato's *Timaeus*, which repeatedly represents the demiurge as deliberating, that is, as thinking out how to achieve his aims. Plotinus and his successors deny that there is any deliberation. Further, the thought and will of the creative beings is turned in upon itself; it is not directed towards producing a creature and is not for the sake of the creature. The creator does not move in that direction at all, but stays in itself. It does not *seek* to create, but does so by being what it is' (his emphases).

[13] The lowest level of existence is the world of animals, plants and inanimate things, but the irrational world is no longer the image of the Demiurge (cod. 251. 462a25–7).

[14] Cf. Plato, *Tim.* 92c: 'this universe . . . an image of its maker'. Plot. 2.3 [52] 18.16–17: 'This universe then is properly called an image, an image eternally being made.' Procl. *In Tim.* 1.321.10–12: 'Since the demiurge is intellect, if he makes by his very being, he makes something most like unto himself; and this is to make an image of himself.'

Of rational beings the first are called the heavenly beings and the gods. The rational beings who have obtained as their portion the place after this company he names aetherial beings and daemons; they have become the interpretors and messengers of what brings benefit to mankind. The human race occupies the last rank; they are called earthly creatures and human souls and . . . immortal men. These three classes are joined to one another as in one living creature or chorus and orchestra, but their distinction according to nature is preserved without confusion by reason of their unity and coherence. (Cod. 214. 172a30–40, cf. 251. 461b13–17)[15]

The immortal gods occupy the highest rank; they are 'impassible and incorruptible images of the creative cause' and abide in eternal, invariable contemplation of god (*Comm.* 1.3; 3.4). Next comes the intermediate class of ethereal and daimonic beings whom Hierocles, following Plato (*Symp.* 202e), also calls 'interpreters and messengers of what brings benefit to mankind'.[16] This median rank does not enjoy the same steadfast contemplation of god as the immortal gods: 'By knowing him always, it comes before the human class, but because its knowledge is not invariable nor forever the same, it comes below the divine . . .' (*Comm.* 1.7; cf. 3.5; cod. 251. 462a2–5, 12–13). Finally, the human class which, tainted by matter and prone to forget god, is the most deficient in divine likeness (*Comm.* 1.5, 14; 3.8; cod. 251. 462a7–10, 13–18).

Although these three classes taken together form a unity, 'as in one living creature or chorus and orchestra', to represent the whole rational cosmos, Hierocles stresses repeatedly that there is nonetheless no confusion or mingling among them. It is an axiom of his system that the three classes of beings remain forever fixed in their rank (*taxis*), which is determined by the different nature (*phusis*) or substance (*ousia*) of each. Not even the practice of virtue or vice allows a change of rank:

For the creator-god has established first, second, and third classes that differ from one another by nature; they do not flow into one another nor do they change rank by reason of virtue or vice. Being eternally what they are according to their substance, they are divided by class in the rank that attends them and arranged in conformity with their creative causes.[17] Just as the order there[18] includes first, second and third degrees of perfect wisdom . . . so also in this universe what comes to be as a result of the first

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[15] The model for the three classes is probably Plato's *Timaeus* (41d) where the Demiurge, after creating the primary immortal gods, fashions souls called 'seconds and thirds'. Cf. Procl. *In Tim.* 3.245.22–4.

[16] Hierocles also knows of evil *daimones*, but passes over this 'inferior class of daemons' as not worthy of honour (*Comm.* 4.3).

[17] The plural 'creative causes' is significant as a typical expression of late Platonism and indicates a ternary structure inherent in the Demiurge. Cf. Procl. *In Tim.* 1.161.21: 'The Demiurge contains within himself a hierarchy of different ranks, of the first, the middle, and the last.'

[18] In abbreviated Plotinian parlance, 'there' (*ekei*) refers to the transcendent realm of intellect.

thought of god should surely take first place in the cosmos, what comes to be as a result of his middle thought should likewise take middle place, and what looks as though it came to be at the boundary of his thoughts should take final place among rational beings. (*Comm.* 1.8)

D Mankind and philosophy

The rigidity of Hierocles' hierarchical cosmos would not seem to bode well for human ambition, even of the noblest kind. Still, Hierocles does hold out certain hopes for mankind; to be sure, these rest solidly on a Platonist's understanding of human nature. Man is an 'amphibian' creature, who at one time associates with the immortals and at another 'joins the herd of mortal kinds' (*Comm.* 23.2–3).[19] This dichotomy reflects standard Platonic psychology according to which man's soul is divided into a rational part that has its source in god and intellect and an irrational part that is allied to the body and the material world. The source is most likely Plato's *Timaeus*: the Demiurge fashions the divine, immortal part of the soul, to which the younger gods weave the mortal part that is joined to man's corporeal nature and subject to irrational sense-perception (41c–42d; cf. 28a, 69c–d). Thus Hierocles speaks of man in the proper sense, i.e., the true man, as the higher, immortal self composed of a rational essence and an immaterial, luminous body (the vehicle of the soul). Man's lower, mortal element consists of the irrational soul and and the material body (*Comm.* 26.5). This life-form is no longer directly the 'product of god', the work of the Demiurge, 'for how could an image of the intelligible god be without thought or intelligence? Every image of him is in fact intellectual and rational . . .' (cod. 251. 462a25–8; cf. *Comm.* 11.32). Man's goal therefore should be to regain his true self in likeness to god, for which Hierocles outlines a system of purification. The highest element of man's soul is purified through the truth gained by contemplative philosophy. But on the principle that 'one must become a man first and then a god' (*Comm.* Proem 4), the primary prerequisite is to get one's worldly life in order, freeing the soul from its passions through the exercise of the civic virtues and purifying the luminous body of material accretions through telestic rites. Hence Hierocles lays great emphasis on *practical* philosophy, which accordingly he divides into two branches: the civic and the telestic.

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[19] In *Comm.* 24.9, Hierocles observes of man's substance: 'through the possession and loss of intellect it adapts itself in turns to a divine and beastly likeness because of the double life (*to amphibion*) of its nature'. Cf. Plotinus 4.8 [6] 4.31–5: 'Souls therefore become amphibious, so to speak, since they are compelled to live in turns the life there and the life here.' Cf. also Simpl. *In Ench. Epict.* 35 p. 336, 351–7 Hadot; Dam. *In Phd.* 2.143.4 Westerink (with n. ad loc.).

By the civic virtues Hierocles means above all Plato's four cardinal virtues –
wisdom, courage, self-control, and justice.[20] Like Plotinus and Porphyry before
him, he sees them deriving from the intelligible realm where they exist as
models or paradigms (*paradeigmata*).[21] From intellect then 'the virtues send their
rays directly . . . into the rational soul; they are its proper form, its perfection and
happiness. But to the irrational soul and the mortal body comes a certain sharing
of the virtues . . . ' (*Comm.* 10.4). Hierocles assigns the virtues to different parts
of the soul, in line with Plato's psychology, with justice as the all-pervasive
virtue:

Therefore we need a tetrad of virtues to be able to turn away from . . . vices: for that
which reasons, practical wisdom, for that which is spirited, courage, for that which
desires, self-control, and for all these faculties alike, justice, which is the most perfect
and all pervading, a virtue that contains all the others as though parts of itself. (*Comm.*
10.1)[22]

He also stresses that the virtues ultimately benefit the *whole* of a person's life:
'our mortal man is adorned out of the abundance of virtue that inheres in the
immortal man' (*Comm.* 10.3).[23] While Hierocles' handling of the virtues is in the
main Platonic, he is also indebted to Peripatetic and Stoic ethics. Noteworthy
in particular is his Aristotelian definition of practical wisdom (*phronēsis*) as a
faculty which 'when firmly established in the rational soul, bestows the ability
to deliberate well about all things' (*Comm.* 10.4). The 'habit of practical wisdom'
is 'the best disposition for our rational substance to be in' (*Comm.* 10.3), because
it prepares the soul for contemplation, but it nonetheless remains, like the other
virtues, a 'human virtue' (*Comm.* 20.8). Thus Aristotle had called the most

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[20] On Plato's four cardinal virtues see *Rep.* 427e, 442b–d, 504a. Hierocles, however, as in Plato,
Phd. 69c and *Leg.* 631c, favours practical wisdom or prudence (*phronēsis*) over wisdom (*sophia*)
when speaking of human conduct, since he considers *sophia* as more properly belonging to the
transcendent, intelligible realm (*Comm.* 1.8).

[21] Hierocles' reference to the paradigmatic role of virtue is allusive but clear enough: 'Virtue is . . . an
image of god in the rational soul, and every image needs a model (*paradeigma*) for its genesis' (*Comm.*
21.5). Plotinus, in his treatise *On Virtues* (1.2 [19] 6.17), speaks of virtue 'there' (in Intellect) as a
kind of a model (*hoion paradeigma*). In all, Plotinus mentions four different kinds of virtue, which
Porphyry (*Sent.* 32) formally systematized as the civic, purificatory, contemplative, and paradigmatic
virtues (thereto see Hadot 1978: 153).

[22] On the rational, spirited, and desiderative parts of the soul cf. *Comm.* 8.1. The tripartite division
of the soul goes back to Plato's *Republic* (435b, 439c–441c, 580d–581a) as well as to the image
in the *Phaedrus* (246a–b, 253c–254e) of the charioteer (reason) and his team of horses (spirit and
desire). The division of the soul into three parts does not necessarily conflict with Plato's basic
bipartite division of the immortal and mortal soul. Thus in the *Timaeus* (69c–d, 70a, 70d, 87a, 89e)
the rational element belongs to the immortal kind of soul and the spirited and desiderative are
subsumed under the mortal soul.

[23] Cf. Porphyry's summary of the four cardinal virtues as the civic virtues that 'adorn with order the
mortal man' (*Sent.* 32.24.5–6 Lamberz).

characteristic function of practical wisdom the ability to 'deliberate well' and limited its application to 'human affairs' (*EN* 6.5, 1140a28–30; 6.7, 1141b8–10), placing it below theoretical wisdom (*sophia*), 'since practical wisdom does not use theoretical wisdom but makes the provisions to secure it' (6.13, 1145a6–9). The distinguishing mark of practical wisdom is right reason (*orthos logos*), as seen in Hierocles' application of the latter to the four cardinal virtues: 'For he who uses right reasoning acquires as his ally courage in dangers, self-control in pleasures, and justice in all things alike. And thus practical wisdom is found to be the beginning of the virtues . . .' (*Comm.* 10.2). Again, the influence of Aristotle is felt: 'Virtue is a habit not only in accordance with right reason but united with right reason; and right reason in matters of conduct is practical wisdom' (*EN* 6.13, 1144a26–8).

Hierocles' other prerequisite for 'divine virtue', i.e., contemplative philosophy, is telestic philosophy, a term derived from the Greek word *teletē*, denoting mystic rites (and often used of rites of initiation in mystery cults).[24] Here we arrive at the mystical element of Hierocles' thought. He requires the practice of certain mystic rites because of the existence of the 'luminous body' (*Comm.* 26.3, 5), also called 'pneumatic body/vehicle' (*Comm.* 16.11; 26.22; 27.2), and, in a direct borrowing from the *Chaldaean Oracles* (fr. 120), the 'fine vehicle of the soul' (*Comm.* 26.4). The doctrine of the vehicle is a late Platonic development, inspired mainly by Plato but also containing Aristotelian and Stoic components. In Plato's *Phaedrus* (246a ff.) the soul is compared to a winged chariot (*ochēma*) traversing the heavens (the germ of the later idea that the soul rides on a vehicle) and in the *Timaeus* (41e1–2) the Demiurge mounts the souls, each upon a star 'as upon a vehicle.' Aristotle had likened the *pneuma*, the airy substance that served as the locus of the sensitive and imaginative soul, to the element of which the stars were made. The Stoics taught that the soul was a *pneuma* composed of fire and air. Who first wedded Plato's chariot/vehicle and the Aristotelian/Stoic *pneuma* is not known, but by the second and third centuries CE it was an established doctrine. While Plotinus merely alludes to the vehicle, most late Platonists, from Porphyry to Olympiodorus, make significant use of it. Hierocles' version is comparatively simple. The Demiurge equips man's rational soul with a 'congenital body' (*Comm.* 26.1). This is not the mortal, earthly body but a spiritual or 'soulish' body appropriate to the rational, immaterial essence of the soul. It is likewise immortal (*Comm.* 26.2), which is apparently what Iamblichus had taught.[25] Yet when the soul falls away from god and is

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[24] Thus in the *Phaedrus* Plato speaks generally (249c) of man's fulfilment through 'perfect rites' (*teleous teletas*) or specifically (265b) of the rites of Dionysus as a 'telestic inspiration'.

[25] In *Myst.* 5.26. 239.9–11, Iamblichus implies that the purified vehicle shares in the immortality of the soul.

incarnated, its luminous body becomes tainted by the irrational part of the soul (the recipient of material sensations) and the mortal body. For the soul to reascend to the divine by means of its vehicle, it must not only practise the intellectual and moral virtues to purify its rational element but also cleanse its luminous body of material accretions. Hence it needs a 'more corporeal purification' for which Hierocles recommends the practice of 'sacred ordinances and the arts of sacred rites' (*Comm.* 26.8–9). Here he is clearly referring to theurgy.

Theurgy can be defined broadly as the 'performing of divine actions, chiefly with the aid of magical "symbols" or *sumbola*'. The increasingly important place theurgy occupied in the late Platonic tradition can be attributed largely to the *Chaldaean Oracles*, a veritable guide to theurgic practice. Iamblichus, whose *De Mysteriis* is our main source for the *Oracles*, takes from them the ideal of theurgic union:

. . . for it is not thought (*ennoia*) that links theurgists to the gods. For in that case what would hinder theoretical philosophers from having theurgic union with the gods? Now this is not truly so. But it is the divinely proper performance of ineffable acts, whose effects transcend all thought, and the power of unutterable symbols, understood only by the gods, that accomplish theurgic union. Therefore it is not by thinking that we do these things. (*Myst.* 2.11, 96.13–97.2)

That conceptual thought alone is insufficient for divine union is part of Iamblichus' polemic against the Plotinian thesis of the impassibility of the soul, Plotinus' belief that part of the soul remains unfallen and that the soul as a whole could be reabsorbed in Intellect through its own powers – without the aid of external rites. Hierocles shared Iamblichus' view that the soul descends in its entirety, and for that reason too would have espoused the aid of theurgic rites, but he couples their usefulness expressly to the purification of the luminous body: 'These practices [theurgical rites] . . . purify and perfect the pneumatic vehicle of the rational soul; they separate it from the lifelessness of matter, and they also render it capable of being in a state worthy of the fellowship of pure spirits' (*Comm* 26.22). He never spells out what these rites entailed, except for mentioning that ritual purification 'lays hold of all sorts of material things' (*Comm.* 26.9), yet we know from other sources – especially from the *Chaldaean Oracles*, but also from Iamblichus, Proclus and Psellus – that theurgy involved fasting, sacrifices, invocations, animation of statues, and even ritualistic burial.

The efficacy of theurgy and its material rites rested on the notion of a 'cosmic sympathy' pervading the material universe. The same thought governs the operation of ancient magic, as is well brought out by Plotinus: 'How do magical rites work? By sympathy, and by the fact that there is a natural harmony of things that are alike and and a natural opposition of things that are different,

and by the variety of the many powers that go together to make up the one living creature' (4.4 [28] 40.1–4). Platonic philosophers were keen to distance theurgy from magic: the magician practised his art for profane ends, to procure material and earthly benefits, whereas the theurgist sought through holy rites to transcend this world and with the assistance of the gods achieve union with the divine. Yet although the goals may have differed, the actual practices of each may not have been that distinguishable. Augustine would remark later of incantations, charms, and the occult arts: 'these the pagans call magic or witchcraft, or, using a more honourable name, theurgy' (*Civ. dei* 10.9). The laws of the Christian empire forbade magic, and there is no reason to believe that theurgy was exempt. It is not surprising therefore that Hierocles warns that the sacred actions concerning the luminous body should be carried out in a 'divinely proper manner and not in a beggarly priestly manner', where the latter reference is to wandering priests who would offer charms and incantations for a price, in other words, magicians. Yet when theurgical practices are performed, as we also saw Iamblichus say above, in a 'divinely proper' way, they accord with the standards of truth and virtue and serve the soul's 'hieratic elevation' (a key term in the *Chaldaean Oracles*) (*Comm.* 26.9, 22). The adherence to theurgy by Hierocles and other Platonists reveals, next to their understanding of the philosophical way of life as a sacred vocation, that Platonic philosophy had truly become a religion.

E Divine likeness

'The contemplative intellect is the summit of the whole of philosophy, the civic is intermediate, and the telestic is third' (*Comm.* 26.27). Civic and telestic philosophy prepare the soul for contemplative philosophy. Contemplation is the perfection of the rational soul on the level of intellect. For its 'intellectual perfection' the rational soul, too, must be purified (*Comm.* 26.11). Hierocles does not dwell on the intellectual purifications, since the mostly ethical subject matter of the Pythagorean *Golden Verses* does not invite him to, but he does state that mathematics and dialectics are the disciplines that transmit 'scientific truth' to the soul and purify it (*Comm.* 26.6, 21). In Hierocles' Plotinian hierarchy of being intellect comes before the rational soul, so the soul's task is to divest itself of its lower, irrational and mortal elements and turn wholly to the superior realm of the intelligible. Since this is the level of the creative intelligence, the demiurgic god, the soul here, on the principle of 'like unto like', becomes most god-like (*Comm.* 1.18; 20.8; 26.23; 27.7). The *Golden Verses* boldly offer the ancient promise: 'And when, with the body deserted, you have reached the free ether, / You will be a deathless god, immortal, no longer a mortal'

(vv. 70–71; cf. Empedocles DK 3 B 112). Hierocles a few times echoes the Poem in speaking of man becoming a god, but generally he is at pains to stress that man's apotheosis is not to be taken literally: becoming *like* god is man's realistic goal.

The theme of divine likeness may have had a Pythagorean origin,[26] but it first becomes expressly stated by Plato:

Evils . . . cannot have a place among the gods but must hover about mortal nature and this world. Therefore we must try to flee from here to there as quickly as we can. To flee is to become like god (*homoiosis theo*) as far as possible; and to become like god is to become just and holy with the addition of wisdom (*phronēsis*). (*Tht.* 176a–b)

This passage became a *locus classicus* in the Platonic tradition. Aristotle, too, has a version of the theme when in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (10.8, 1177b26–34) he describes the contemplative life as a life according to the divine element in man, namely intellect, and advises us not merely to think mortal thoughts but 'to become immortal as far as possible'. In Plotinus the divine likeness the soul gains at the hypostasis of Intellect is left behind when in contemplation of the One it becomes unified with the One – a transcendent union of substance (6.9 [9] 7.20–3). For Hierocles, however, the qualifier, 'as far as possible', found in nearly all the texts that promise divine likeness, is of crucial importance. It is possible for man to become god-like at the intelligible level but further he cannot go. Divine likeness is a restoration (*apokatastasis*) of man's original estate in the ethereal order of the stars below the immortal gods and glorious heroes, to which rank he is always bound by reason of his human substance (*Comm.* 27.1–2). Although the virtuous soul can be said to become a god through a 'relation of likeness', it always remains essentially human (*Comm.* 23.10). A realistic self-knowledge must always accompany man's striving: 'when someone, being a man, hopes to become one of the immortal gods or glorious heroes, this person does not understand the limits set by nature' (*Comm.* 23.8). Even the great Pythagoras was not exempt from a proper subordination within the universal hierarchy: 'he did not belong to the immortal gods, nor to the heroes by nature, but was a man (*anthrōpos*) adorned by the likeness to god and one who preserved the divine image before his followers' (*Comm.* 20.20). In the last chapter of the *Commentary* (27.9) Hierocles makes clear the limits set by nature:

But if we fall short and obtain only such degrees [of likeness] as we are able, then we have this just as it accords with our nature and we reap the perfection of virtue in this, that we do not fail to recognize *the measure set for our substance* and are not angry thereat.

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[26] Cf. Eudorus (apud Stob. 2.49.8–12): 'Socrates and Plato agree with Pythagoras that the goal (*telos*) is likeness to god . . . and it is only possible by wisdom, that is to say, as a result of virtue.'

The pinnacle of virtue is to remain within the bounds of creation, by which all things are separated according to kind, and to follow the laws of providence, through which all things in accordance with their own capacity are adapted to their proper good.

F Providence and fate

The three-fold arrangement of rational beings – immortal gods, *daimones* and glorious heroes, and humans – is part of the providential order ('the laws of providence'). In *On Providence* Hierocles identifies providence with god, the father and creator: 'This paternal kingship of god is considered to be and actually is providence; it distributes to each class what belongs to it. The justice that accompanies providence is called fate' (cod. 214. 172b1–4).[27] Since the creator-god is identical with the second hypostasis of Intellect, providence is the order bestowed upon the universe by Intellect, as in Plotinus (3.2 [47] 1.21–3; 6.8 [39] 17.9–11). The higher a being is in the universal hierarchy, the more it partakes of providence. Thus the immortal gods enjoy a 'pure' providence, whereas for lower beings, who are not always rational and variously involved in matter, providential care is mixed with fate and chance (cod. 251. 464a10–15). The nadir of all existence is the world of matter and irrational nature, which Hierocles excludes from participation in providence, except to the extent that the genera and species existing in nature are providentially preserved (cod. 251. 463a1–4; 466a30–4).

Fate is a subordinate form of providence, a 'material providence' operative in the sublunary world. It is, as it were, the judicial arm of divine providence ('the justice accompanying providence') and meted out by our guardian *daimones*; in judging us for our actions they fulfil our fate: 'All their activity concerning us is called fate, which arranges our affairs by the laws of justice' (cod. 251. 462a31–3). Even seemingly chance events are part of the providential order: 'But in the affairs that pertain to us even what seems to happen by chance serves to accomplish the fate meted out by providence, so that while it seems we suffer spontaneously just as irrational animals do, we suffer, in respect to the body and externals, what an overseeing judgement has determined' (cod. 251. 463a19–23). Human beings thus experience providence as their fate, but not in the sense that their lives are completely determined. To preserve a measure of free will Hierocles adopts a theory of conditional (or hypothetical) fate: 'it [fate] is the righteous activity of the divine that comes upon transgressors according to the ordinance of providence; following an orderly sequence [of causes] it directs

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[27] In Plato's creation account in the *Timaeus*, the living cosmos comes to exist through the providence of god, 'the maker and father'; see 30b–c with 28c; cf. 41a.

our affairs according to the conditions (*hupotheseis*) chosen by our free actions' (cod. 214. 172b14–18). The theory is that while we are free to make choices, those choices provide the condition for earning us necessary and ineluctable consequences: 'the activity of human souls consists of independent choice and of what is said to be "in our power", which provides the divine judges a reasonable condition (*hupothesis eulogos*) for making an unequal distribution' (cod. 251. 462b32–5). Because not everything that happens to a person can be traced to his or her decisions in this life, Hierocles extends the idea of conditional fate to include past lives: 'for it is not according to a pre-established principle that divine judgement brings terrible things upon some of us and upon others bestows benefits, but on the condition (*ex hupotheseos*) of what we have merited from previous lives . . .' (cod. 251. 464a20–3; cf. *Comm.* 10.24). The condition set up in a past incarnation is all-inclusive:

Each one of us obtains by the decision of our judicial daemons the life deserved on the basis of our previous lives. In this life everything has been included: race, city, father, mother, the moment of conception, the particular body, the modes of behaviour and various fortunes that belong to life, the manner and appointed hour of our death. And there is a daemon whose lot it is to guard and fulfil all these things. (Cod. 251. 466a21–8)[28]

If what we merit is the result of our choices, Hierocles leaves unanswered the question of why our initial choices should not themselves have been determined by fate. It does not help to locate the causes in a previous life, since these could have been triggered by yet a life before and so on *ad infinitum*.

What Hierocles does offer is a chance to escape the workings of fate. The negative consequences we suffer as a result of our choices may no longer be 'in our power', but how we respond to them is. Our sufferings are not true evils anyway because as the work of 'material providence' they only affect us 'in respect to the body and externals' (cod. 251. 463a23). If in the face of external evils we willingly turn to vice, we reap further pains because of our wrong choices, but we are equally free to turn to virtue and accept the corrective measures of fate as we would a medical cure (cod. 251. 464a24–39). This would be an intelligent decision that enables us to rise to the level of intellect and transcend the physical world of necessity ruled by fate. It was a common teaching in late Platonism that a life according to Intellect is beyond the influence of fate.[29]

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[28] Cf. Plotinus' belief that a previous existence determines a just recompense in this life: 2.9 [33] 9.23–5; 3.2 [47] 13.1–4; 4.3 [27] 8.9–10.

[29] Cf. Plotinus 3.2 [47] 10, 15–19; 6.8 [39] 3, 19–22. As put succinctly by Proclus, 'For not only are the gods superior to the laws of fate, but also individual souls when they live according to

A major concern that shines through the Hieroclean passages on providence and fate is to offer a plausible theodicy. Hierocles' premiss is the Platonic one that 'god is good' and 'in every respect blameless of evils' (*Comm.* 11.4, 19; cf. Plato, *Rep.* 2.379c, 380c6–9). The Demiurge cannot be exempted, of course, from creative activity, for the created order is the result of his will, but what he wills is good. In his function as lawgiver and judge he ordains goods and removes evils (*Comm.* 11.13–14, 17, 19), though in truth he delegates those tasks. While divine providence concerns itself directly with the immortal gods, it extends to the human class only through the intermediary class of the *daimones*. The work of chastizing our faults is assigned to our guardian *daimones*, who mete out our fate and thereby keep divine providence pure from any association with material providence; the responsibility for our fate is ours alone. In the end, Hierocles' divine providence, unlike the providence of the Christians, does not wear a personal face.

G Hierocles' influence

In the subsequent history of late Platonism Hierocles was largely overshadowed by the most famous pupil of both Plutarch of Athens and Syrianus, Proclus. This is no wonder, given Proclus' immense output, his reputation as the great systematizer of Platonic doctrine, and his skill in elaborating Platonic metaphysics. Yet during his lifetime, Hierocles exercised considerable influence over his students. Damascius draws this vignette from his teaching career:

Once he was expounding Plato's *Gorgias* to his retinue. One of his auditors, Theosebius, wrote down the exposition. When, as is customary, Hierocles arrived a second time at the *Gorgias* after a certain interval, Theosebius wrote down the exposition again. Comparing the first exposition with the second, he found no repetitions, as it were, but nevertheless each – which is surprising to hear – adhered as closely as possible to Plato's purpose. Now this shows how great was this man's ocean of thoughts. (Cod. 242. 338b35–339a7)

Theosebius went on to become a well-known moral philosopher, 'the Epictetus of our times'.[30] Another witness to Hierocles' professorial influence is given by Aeneas of Gaza in his *Theophrastus* (p. 2, 19–20 Colonna). At the beginning of this dialogue (the dramatic date is 485/486) one of the characters, Aegyptus, a native of Alexandria, reminds his newly arrived friend Euxitheus that they both studied the philosophy of Hierocles in their youth. Euxitheus asks in turn

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intellect and surrender themselves to the light of providence' (*Theol. Plato.* 4.17.52, 11–14 Saffrey and Westerink).

[30] So Damascius apud *Suda* s.v. 'Hierokles'.

whether there are still among the Alexandrians 'those who reveal the rites of philosophy, such as Hierocles the professor (*didaskalos*) used to do'. Aegyptus has to answer that unfortunately those beautiful times are past. We do not know for certain if Aeneas of Gaza, a Christian, was actually himself a student of Hierocles, but clearly his tone is one of utmost respect for Hierocles, whom he sees as the primary representative of philosophy in the Alexandria of the past.[31]

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[31] Aeneas indeed knew Hierocles' work *On Providence*, and seems to refute it from a Christian perspective. A reflowering of philosophical activity in Alexandria took place with Hermeias and his son Ammonius in the late fifth and early sixth century CE.

THE SECOND ENCOUNTER
OF CHRISTIANITY WITH ANCIENT
GREEK PHILOSOPHY

INTRODUCTION TO PART V

From the second half of the fourth century CE until the death of Augustine in 430 Christian theology fully matured. The fact that Marius Victorinus and Augustine wrote in Latin hardly suffices to justify our setting them outside of the dialogue of Christians and pagans within the ancient Greek philosophical world. Even when Latin speakers learned their philosophy from the books of Latin authors like Cicero, what they learned was ancient Greek philosophy. The refined vocabulary of ancient Greek philosophy was the starting point for the expression of theological doctrine. The well-known example of the controversy over how to express the relation between the persons of the Trinity turns upon the understanding of one of the central terms of Greek philosophy – *ousia*. As theologically motivated students of philosophy learned almost immediately, the Greek philosophers differed in their understanding of *ousia*. Plato in his *Republic* has Socrates state that the Good is 'above' *ousia*, primarily owing to the absolute simplicity of the first principle of all. Aristotle in his *Metaphysics* states that the question 'what is being?' is just the question 'what is *ousia*?' He goes on to argue that the primary referent of *ousia* is the thinking of a divine mind 'beyond' which there is nothing. This fundamental disagreement is reflected in the philosophical schools throughout period. So, the question of whether the first person of the Trinity was in any way 'beyond' the second and the third is inseparable from the question of whether the first principle must be absolutely simple. If it must be so, how can the other persons of the Trinity be identical with the first without compromising its simplicity? If it is not simple, how can it be first? Making a decision or, from a position of authority, a determination on this matter, is necessarily to embrace a philosophical position. And just as the philosophers differed, so, too, did the theologians. As these disputes grew in sophistication, so grew the tendency to separate the ancient Greek philosophers according to whether or not they were thought to be in harmony with the correct theological position. Augustine himself moved from a tentative

embrace of Plotinus' language for the elucidation of the relation between the first principle and everything else to a rejection of that language when arriving at his final expression of Trinitarian theology. In countless other matters, more or less controversial, the starting-points for theological speculation, apart from Scripture, were the well-honed arguments of ancient Greek philosophers.

It is well to keep in mind the last spasm of political opposition to Christian rule in the Emperor Julian (331/2–363). His efforts to restore pagan religion and to diminish the influence of Christianity during his very brief rule at the end of his life were remarkably short lived in their effects. There would be no more pagan Roman emperors after Julian. Henceforth, the inheritors of the ancient Greek religions realized that they had to accommodate their Christian rulers in one way or another. Particularly in the transmission of philosophy through teaching, a certain amount of discretion was to be practised. In some, like the Bishop Synesius of Cyrene, various strategic attempts were made to harmonize Christian and pagan doctrine.

BASIL OF CAESAREA

LEWIS AYRES AND ANDREW RADDE–GALLWITZ

INTRODUCTION

Basil was born c. 330 into a rich Cappadocian family. The family of his mother Emmelia appears to have been Christian for some generations. Basil was schooled first by his father, and then in Caesarea. He studied under Libanius in Constantinople for a year in 348/9 and was then in Athens from 349/50. Here he heard, and perhaps studied with, the Christian rhetor Prohaeresius and the non-Christian Himerius. Unfortunately, we know little about the character of the philosophy he also studied. We may surmise that during the 350s Iamblichean Platonism was increasing in importance in Athens, and perhaps Priscus, the intellectual grandchild of Iamblichus and associate of the Emperor Julian, arrived in Athens during Basil's time there. During the 360s and 370s Basil appears to know some Porphyry, some arguments from the Aristotelian commentary tradition and possibly some Plotinus, but we do not know if he encountered this material in Athens.

In 355–6 he was back in Caesarea as a teacher of rhetoric. At the end of this year Basil toured monasteries in Syria, Palestine and Egypt. This tour seems to have effected or reflected a growing commitment to an overtly Christian life, and in 357 he associated himself with a small ascetic community established in 352 by his elder sister Macrina and their mother, Macrina the elder in Annesi. He was also joined in this enterprise by Gregory Nazianzen, whom he had probably known as a teenager and certainly had been a student with in Athens. Basil and Gregory there edited the *Philocalia*, a selection of passages from Origen – a task that reveals much about which Christian traditions they saw themselves continuing.

In 360 Basil returned for a time to Caesarea where he was ordained as a priest. In 364 Bishop Eusebius of Caesarea called Basil back to Caesarea from Annesi, possibly in the context of struggle against non-Nicene Christians. Basil became Bishop of Caesarea in 370 on Eusebius' death. Basil was an ardent advocate of

Nicene Christianity, endeavouring with some success to build alliances among potential eastern allies and, with less success, to solve disputes in Antioch and with western bishops. Nevertheless, he was able to retain mostly good relations with the Emperor Valens. He died either on 1 Jan 379 or, more probably, at some point in September 378.

An extensive range of Basil's writings survive, including over 300 letters and around fifty homilies. Among the latter we find his nine homilies on the seven days of creation, and two homilies on the creation of humanity which, if genuine, may constitute the sequel he promises in the ninth.[1] His ascetic corpus is foundational within Byzantine monastic literature. Basil's main dogmatic works are his *Against Eunomius* and his *On the Holy Spirit* (375). A number of exegetical works also survive. Basil's short *To Young Men, on the Value of Greek Literature*, a treatise which may show considerable Origenian influence, presents the study of non-Christian literature as a propaedeutic for the study of the Scriptures. For those unable to penetrate to the mysteries contained therein, non-Christian literature provides a training ground and reflects the truths that the Scriptures teach. The whole enterprise of learning – with philosophy at its head – is organized by its ability to teach the virtue by which Christians will attain their eternal reward. Much of the treatise focuses on the emulation of those who, in the poets and historians are presented as offering virtuous examples: throughout Basil insists on the importance of the Christian discriminating useful from bad example. Ultimately, however, the key to the treatise lies in Basil's insistence that an ascetic practice of bodily regulation and performance – which cites among other sources St Paul, Plato and Pythagoras – provides the key to learning right discrimination. His concern is always with shaping a Christian vision of *paideia* within which attention to God as made known in the Scriptures remains paramount and attention to the virtues described within Christian asceticism remain always central to the shaping of that attention.

This text sets the agenda for this chapter insofar as it reminds us of the difficulties of describing Basil's philosophical opinions in relationship to earlier traditions. Basil rarely names his sources and is frequently eclectic in his opinions. Moreover, extracting his philosophical opinions from their theological contexts is also problematic insofar as those contexts often govern the choices he makes or the opinions deployed in a given work. Our task then is both to see the range of sources that he uses, and to establish the techniques of adaptation that Basil practises.

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[1] In what follows we have not considered these last two homilies.

BASIL ON CREATION AND PROVIDENCE

Basil's homilies on the *Hexameron* present a perfect example of the difficulty of reading Basil's philosophy. Not only is he highly eclectic – showing knowledge of Aristotelian, Stoic and Platonic doctrines – his positions are often driven by the demands either of the Scriptural text or of developing Christian belief. We are, however, unclear how far his knowledge of philosophical doctrines was mediated via doxographies and more proximate texts. His account of the creation as a whole is also shaped by the need to describe a world within which and with which Christian teaching is coherent and consonant. In attempting this task Basil draws on a long tradition of Christian commentary on Genesis, with Origen casting perhaps the longest shadow over his work. In general terms, Basil not only rejects (as do virtually all of his contemporaries) Origen's more speculative readings of Genesis but he reads the text highly literally, with close attention to the text's *historia* (9.1).

Thus, Basil insists strongly that matter did not pre-exist the creation in a formless state, and here he is not only disagreeing with particular classical philosophical traditions, but also rehearsing a well-established Christian opposition to Gnostic and Manichaean systems of thought (e.g., *Hex.* 2.2). One of his main tools of opposition is, however, not so much philosophical *per se*, as literary: he insists that the 'darkness which is on the face of the deep' at Gen. 1.2 is not a separate God but merely an absence of light, and 'the deep' is similarly not a multitude of powers but a large body of water.

Basil also participates directly in ancient philosophical debate. He argues, for example, that before the creation of this world God created the intelligible or angelic world and that those who read the instability of the material cosmos as indicating the condition of all that is (he seems to have in mind Epicureans) misunderstand that even the circle begins (here perhaps alluding to Aristotle's *De caelo*). Nevertheless, the rhetoric of Basil's argument throughout is one of exhorting his readers to attend to the revealed text of Genesis and to beware of the endless speculations of those 'outside' – even as he is constantly making use of those very resources. While we might be tempted to read this dynamic as revealing a certain hypocrisy, we are better seeing this as another dimension of Basil's attempt to perform a style of thought which does not disparage learning but incorporates it into a Christian vision of moral existence, as we saw in the case of his *Ad adulescentes*.

Throughout Basil insists on the unknowability of the *ousia* of created realities. In *Homily* 1, for example, Basil asserts the impossibility of understanding the *ousia* of created things by abstraction of their qualities and then launches into a

series of possible ways of conceiving of things being the product of a number of basic elements, four or five. His conclusion is that such theories are, first, untenable because they could not account for the harmonious motion of things (especially the heavenly bodies) and, second, that such knowledge is beyond us (*Hex*. 1.8–9). At the end of the series he also dismisses any discussion of the shape of the cosmos on the grounds that Moses says nothing about it (*Hex*. 9.1–2). While this reflects a fairly consistent approach (and tension) in his understanding of the nature of *ousia*, it does not stop him also speaking later of the mutual interpenetration of the four elements and the mixed state of all in the world (*Hex*. 3.4). Elsewhere in the series he speaks of distinct realities (he does not refer only to the elements) as possessing an *idiōma* (or possibly by implication some *idiōmata*: 'distinguishing marks') that characterizes their *hupokeimenon* ('underlying subject') and is made known by the more general terms that we use – such as using 'human being' to designate a being whose distinctive feature is its rational faculty (*to logikon*) or using 'horse' to designate the creature that neighs.[2] It is not clear whether Basil here is saying that only the four primary elements each have one defining quality, or whether this goes for all things: if the latter then Basil may well contradict himself in many other places. The two examples Basil offers are at times offered within the commentary tradition on Aristotle to designate *propria*, and it may be that Basil is suggesting a parallel between his understanding of *idiōmata* and *propria*. In any case, the passage reveals that Basil knows something of that tradition. The epistemological tensions revealed here are dealt with at much greater length in Basil's Trinitarian works where questions of what we know when we speak of God press strongly (see below).

   One of the most interesting aspects of the series, and most revealing about his engagement with philosophical sources, is his treatment of providence and the harmony of all things. Basil sees the created order as a network of harmonious parts united through *sumpatheia*, and forming a chorus praising their creator.[3] The term *sumpatheia* might seem to reveal a Stoic background; for Karl Gronau in 1914 it revealed the particular influence of Posidonius.[4] As scholars have become more cautious in their estimation of Posidonian novelty and ubiquity, commentators on Basil have suggested that the latter knew of the theme via some of the very writers who are our own sources for Posidonius, such as Diogenes Laertius or Galen, or even via some of the other Jewish and Christian

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[2] *Hex*. 4.5. Cf. *Hex*. 6.3 where Basil argues that, in the case of all composite things, we separate in thought the *ousia* that is capable of receiving qualities and the qualities (*poioteta*) that are found in it.

[3] *Hex*. 1.2 and esp. 2.2. Basil also makes use of the Stoic image of the cosmos as *polis* in *Hex*. 5 and 8: but this theme also had long been used by Christian writers.

[4] Gronau 1914.

writers (including Philo) who mention the concept without necessary reference to Posidonius himself.[5] More recently it has been suggested that we might also see here the influence of Plotinus' own adaptation of Stoic teaching.[6]

The strongly Christian – and perhaps Christian Platonist – emphasis of the text is seen in Basil's insistence that God is not responsible for evil. In this context he is concerned to argue against any Stoic-sounding determinism that might seem to follow from his account of the cosmos. Basil's tactic is to present God as providentially ordering a cosmos that is both perfectly fit for human habitation and which provides examples of appropriate living for human beings at all levels (e.g., *Hex.* 1.7, 7.5, 9.2). Within this context each human being is the author of his or her own evil. Chance and nature govern some of what happens to us (and Basil carefully identifies natural disasters and human afflictions as not truly evil) but in cases of moral action we are responsible for our own actions. Evil is then only a falling away from goodness on the part of the soul (*Hex.* 2.5). Once again the sources for Basil's view are unclear. That God orders the cosmos in general but leaves humanity free to make its own decisions is a tactic he will have found in many earlier Christian authors. There are, however, a number of doctrinal parallels to Plotinus, both in his early and late discussions of providence (*Enneads* 3.1 and 3.2–3). Although Basil rejects any hint of Plotinus' vision of the necessary imperfections in the intermediate world that human beings inhabit, he at least parallels Plotinus' attribution of the cause of human evil in a failure to control the passions which stem from the body, and a failure to live in accord with the *Logos* that pervades all. We cannot, however speak with any certainty: Basil's position broadly parallels that of Nemesius, perhaps a younger contemporary, but Basil offers none of the detail that enables us to demonstrate Nemesius' knowledge of arguments in favour of human self-determination stemming from the Aristotelian commentary tradition (Nemesius, *Nat. hom.* 35–40).

In his *Hexameron* Basil says little about the nature of God *per se*. At the beginning of the series he identifies God as 'goodness without measure . . . the most desirable beauty, the origin of all that exists, the source of life, intellectual light, impenetrable wisdom' (*Hex.* 1.2). Nevertheless, at a number of points he insinuates his Nicene account of Son and Spirit. In the ninth homily it is the all pervasive and powerful Word who is the agent of creation; in the second it is the Holy Spirit who completes the Trinity who is above the waters at Gen. 1.2, creating alongside Father and Son (*Hex.* 9.2; 2.6). In these sparse

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[5] Diogenes Laertius, *Vit.* 7.139–40; Philo *Migr.* 32.179.
[6] Cf. Plotinus *Enn.* 4.11, 4.33, 4.5; Torchia 1996. Torchia offers a number of interesting parallels between Basil's and Plotinus' accounts of *sumpatheia* within the human person.

references we see only a little of the account of the Trinity as the immediately present undiminished giver that occupies such an importance place (especially with reference to his accounts of the Spirit) in the *De spiritu Sancto* and *Against Eunomius*. It is, however, in those texts that we find much of Basil's most extensive and subtle engagement with non-Christian philosophy.

PHILOSOPHY IN TRINITARIAN THEOLOGY

A great deal of Basil's thinking on the Trinity was worked out in response to Eunomius, sometime bishop of Cyzicus and proponent of the view that the Only-begotten Son is unlike God in substance. In 364/5, Basil was asked to write a response to Eunomius' *Apology* and produced three books *Against Eunomius*. From an earlier letter, we know that Basil was suspicious of all theological formulae of the day: even the sound ones could be interpreted maliciously. Basil preferred to say that the Son is 'indistinguishably like [the Father] in substance' (*aparallaktōs homoios kat'ousian*). But despite concerns he had raised in correspondence with Apollinarius, he also approved of the Nicene definition of the Son as 'the same in substance' (*homoousios*) as the Father, provided it be suitably qualified. For Basil, the two formulae amount to the same, though the Nicene phrase is more susceptible to misinterpretation (*Ep.* 9). While Basil defends Nicaea's creed in later works, the scholarly picture of Basil moving throughout his career from exclusively holding one position to exclusively holding the other can be misleading. But whether the Son is 'indistinguishably like' or 'the same' in substance, the more basic question is this: what does 'substance' mean in this context?

Basil maintains that the account of an entity's essence or substance is what one gives in response to the question 'what is it?' (*Eun.* 1.15). If the answer is the same as the answer for another entity, the two are 'similar' or 'the same in substance'. Scripture names the Son 'the light of the world' and speaks of the Father dwelling in 'light'. Whereas Eunomius claimed that 'light' is equivocal in the two cases, Basil argued that it means the same when predicated of the Son and the Father. For Basil, the fact that Father and Son share 'light' – as well as other titles – as their 'formula of being' or 'substance' (*ho tou einai logos, ho tēs ousias logos*) shows the 'commonality of substance' (*to tēs ousias koinon*) between them, despite the 'distinguishing mark, distinctive feature' (*idiōmata, idiotētes*) that distinguish the two.[7]

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[7] *Eun.* 1.19; *Epp.* 125.1; 214.4. For 'particular characteristics', see esp. *Eun.* 2.4; 2.28; *Ep.* 214.4.

Basil's notion of shared substance clearly contains elements inherited from non-Christian philosophy. Like Aristotle and the late ancient commentary tradition, Basil believes that only the 'formula of substance' of X appropriately answers the question 'what is X?' Neither differentiating nor accidental characteristics adequately answer this question. Basil also conceives of the characteristics that distinguish the divine 'persons' along broadly Aristotelian lines. In explaining how Father and Son can be distinct without negating their shared substance, Basil suggests that the properties that distinguish them are like the differentiae of the genus animal: being winged or footed, aquatic or terrestrial, rational or irrational.[8] A rational animal is no less animal for being rational than an irrational one; similarly, the Son as 'begotten light' is no less light (and therefore divine) for being begotten than is the unbegotten, begetting light that is the Father.

But Basil also uses language for substance that appears to be inspired by Stoicism. Twice in *Against Eunomius*, Basil speaks of 'substance' (*ousia*) as equivalent to 'material substrate' (*to hulikon hupokeimenon*) (*Eun.* 1.15; 2.4). This is reminiscent of the first genus or aspect of Stoic ontology, though the language can also be used for the second genus. For the Stoics, we speak of material substrate when we think of an object merely as a lump of matter or as a lump of this kind of matter, without going further to specify the qualities and dispositions peculiar to it. Perhaps Basil was proposing this as an analogy for the shared substance of the Father and the Son – the shared properties are a way of viewing the persons as this kind of reality, without specifying their differences and without importing the notion of a generic essence. In an influential article, Reinhard Hübner claimed that Basil rejected the generic account.[9] On this view, Basil rejected the materialism of Stoic metaphysics while endorsing its basic approach, with its focus on particular entities characterized by common and particular properties. It is true that Basil uses 'the same in substance' in *Against Eunomius* in a strikingly materialistic way to refer to a consubstantiality among humans and between a human and artificial products he makes (*Eun.* 2.4; 2.19; though see 1.20). Yet, the passages in which 'material substrate' appears are ambiguous and in both cases the phrase is used in reference to human beings. It seems to name either the person himself, the individual, material entity, or the shared human nature. Either way, it is unclear how much of this Basil intends us to transfer to divine shared substance. Moreover, even if we grant that Basil's view of shared

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[8] *Eun.* 2.28. Basil's examples originate with Plato (*Soph.* 220a–222b, *Tim.* 39e–40), are discussed by Aristotle (*Cat.* 1b18–19, 14b38, 15a2–3, *Part. an.* 697b2–3) and taken up in the late ancient commentaries on Aristotle.

[9] Hübner 1972.

substance in *Against Eunomius* is in keeping with the Stoic account of the mate-
rial substrate, it contradicts his earlier explicit rejection of a 'material substrate'
for God, and he never returns to the idea in later works (*Ep.* 361). We certainly
cannot find Stoicism in Basil's understanding of substance outside of *Against
Eunomius*. So, the idea that Basil has a fundamentally Stoic metaphysics, inher-
ently opposed to Gregory of Nyssa's Platonism is without foundation. As with
the 'Aristotelian' elements in his account of substance, Basil has transformed
Stoic language for his own theological purposes.

With the notion of the Son as distinguished from the Father by particu-
lar characteristics while sharing the Father's substantial properties, Basil has a
response to Eunomius. But it is only partial. When we speak of a human son
in terms like Basil's, we don't merely assume he is of the same nature; we also
assume there is a mother involved, that the son is younger, smaller (for a while at
least), and so forth. Eunomius wishes to stress the 'junior' status of the Son. Also,
he argues that 'Son' and 'Father' are merely metaphors when applied to the
divine realm – the equivalents of 'Creature' and 'Creator'. But Basil maintains
that calling God 'Father' is not metaphorical. How can he hold this without
also likening divine begetting to human procreation or attributing the 'inferior'
status of human sons to the Only-begotten Son?

For Basil, the meaning of 'father' is essentially the same whether used of
a human or of God. In both cases, there is an act of 'begetting' (*gennēsis*).
But our notions of fatherhood and begetting nonetheless need to be purified
of all connotations of physical procreation in order to be suitably applied to
God. When we strip these off, we find that 'begetting' essentially means one
thing only: 'affinity of nature' (*tēn tēs phuseōs oikeiotēta*).[10] So, begetting does not
necessarily imply materiality or temporality. The Son is causally dependent upon
the Father, but in a timeless manner; there is 'begetting' without 'becoming'.

For Basil, the name 'Father' carries unique significance such that it can-
not be replaced by other terms without loss of meaning. Eunomius prefers
the term 'Unbegotten' (*agennētos*); indeed, he argues that this title conveys the
very essence of God. While 'Father' and 'Unbegotten' share some conceptual
content, according to Basil, Eunomius' preferred term misses the relation that
'Father' conveys (*Eun.* 1.5). Eunomius' theology replaces the Scriptural pair
'Father–Son' with the pair 'Unbegotten–Begotten'. The difference between
the two is important: whereas the former are relative terms, such that each
points to the other, the latter are contradictory terms (though Basil treats
them as contraries rather than mere contradictories). Basil is fully aware of

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[10] *Eun.* 2.24.23 (*SC* 305, 100); cf. 1.5.106; 1.12.46; 1.27.18, 30; 2.25.12; 2.30.18.

the difference between contrary terms and relatives and accuses Eunomius of crypto-Manichaeism in opposing the Son to the Father (*Eun.* 2.27).

Basil distinguishes 'absolute' from 'relative' names in a way he has most likely inherited from discussions in technical grammatical authors (cf. *Eun.* 2.9). 'Human being', 'horse', and 'ox' are examples of absolute names. Names are absolute when:

(A1) they are intended 'absolutely and in respect of themselves', and
(A2) they signify objects.

In contrast, names are relative when:

(R1) they are intended 'with reference to other [names]', and
(R2) they signify *only* the relationship of the name to the associated name.

Basil's examples of relative terms are 'son', 'friend', and 'slave' – as well as Eunomius' term for the divine Son, 'something begotten' (*gennēma*). He proposes a simple mental experiment: when someone hears a term like this, he does not think of a substance, but only that the subject in question is connected with another – the son *of* so-and-so, the friend *of* so-and-so. But it is quite a leap from this point, which restates R1, to R2. It is obviously true that someone is called son only in that he stands in a certain relationship to another (we can ignore for the moment the fact that all men are sons). But it does not follow that the term 'son' does not signify the person at all but only a relationship. At any rate, the relationship should be named with the abstract 'sonship' – a term Basil mentions elsewhere (*Eun.* 2.28) – rather than the concrete 'son'.

The reason Basil needs to affirm R2 is that it provides crucial support for his claim that 'father' and 'son' are applied in their ordinary, literal senses to God (see *Eun.* 2.10; 2.23). R2 allows him to say that the sole meaning of 'father' is the relation of affinity with offspring and the sole meaning of 'son' is the same relation to the begetter.[11] Consequently, the physical and temporal connotations of the terms are inessential to them. Thus purified, the terms can be used in Trinitarian theology with neither embarrassment nor semantic alteration. Still, R2 sits at odds with the ordinary use of language Basil struggles to maintain and one suspects it is part of a grammatical theory Basil has only partially assimilated.

R2 gains its rhetorical force in *Against Eunomius* 2.9 from its contrast with A2. But Basil himself qualifies A2 in a way that is important for his theological epistemology, his account of what humans do and do not know about God. At

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[11] Though cf. the definition of 'son' at *Eun.* 2.22.

the end of 2.9, Basil notes that even if absolute terms 'seem most of all to reveal some subject (*hupokeimenon ti*), they too do not communicate the substance itself (*autēn . . . tēn ousian*), but delineate certain particular characteristics (*idiōmata*) connected with it'. Here Basil draws two distinctions:

(1) Between a subject and its substance or essence, and
(2) Between the substance itself and its particular characteristics.

Basil's point is that we know a subject through its name, and even the most revelatory name does not tell us the subject's essence, but only the particular characteristics associated with it. The point holds true for humans – 'Peter' does not call to mind the essence of Peter, but rather the characteristics unique to him – and for God (*Eun.* 2.4).

This is one way of avoiding Eunomius' claim that truly to know God is to know God's essence, such that one either knows this or knows nothing at all. For Basil, the terms 'life', 'light', 'power', 'goodness' and so forth tell us what we can know about God's substance, but still only reveal its 'particular characteristics', not its essential definition. A particular characteristic is essentially what Aristotle and late ancient commentators call a 'proprium' (*to idion*, a noun constructed from the adjective *idios*): a characteristic that necessarily inheres in a natural kind, is unique to the kind, but does not strictly define it (see especially Porphyry, *Isagōgē* 4).

This construal of divine attributes as particular characteristics is central to Basil's way of understanding the doctrine of divine simplicity. Divine simplicity, the idea that God is not composed of parts, was inherited by Basil and Eunomius from a long-standing tradition of Christians who had in turn drawn the idea from Platonist theology. Although Basil and Eunomius agreed *that* God is simple, they diverged significantly over what this notion implies. For Eunomius, it means that 'unbegotten' must name God's substance. Indeed, for Eunomius, simplicity implies that all divine names are synonyms with 'unbegotten'.

For Basil, this reduces the intricacy and richness of Christian worship to a single idea, endlessly repeated (see *Eun.* 2.29; *Letter* 234). He suggests that we think of the relationship of God's nature to God's characteristic attributes along the lines of the relationship of the elements – 'simple bodies' – to their inherent powers. In his *Hexameron*, as we saw above, Basil explains that each of the elements has a 'distinguishing mark' (*idiōma*) which 'characterizes the nature of the subject' and distinguishes it from the other elements: for water, this is coldness; for air, wetness; for fire, heat; and for earth, dryness (*Hex.* 4.5). As he says in a homily on the Holy Spirit, 'just as heating is inseparable from fire and illuminating from light, in the same way too are sanctifying,

giving life, goodness, and righteousness inseparable from the Spirit' (*Hom.* 326 (*PG* 31.469)). Like heat in fire, 'goodness' is 'concurrent' (*sundromon*) with the substance of God (*Spir.* 8.21). In *Against Eunomius*, Basil says that 'life', 'light' and 'goodness' are 'ways of indicating [God's] distinctive feature' (*idiotēs*). Because God is simple, each of these characterizes the substance of God 'as a whole'; they are not parts of it (*Eun.* 2.28). But neither does any of these terms serve, like Eunomius' 'unbegotten', as a complete account of the divine essence. Moreover, although each property is co-extensive with the divine substance, this does not imply that the terms are semantically equivalent.

For Basil, simplicity does not mean that the divine essence is identical with the divine attributes; since we do not and cannot know God's essence, we are not entitled to proclaim it identical with anything. The best we can do is to speak of God's particular characteristic. This construal of simplicity is unique, differing both from Plotinus' use of simplicity for the One and later Latin Christian theology.

Basil's theological epistemology does not end here. He also defends the role of human 'conceptualization' (*epinoia*) in devising new theological terminology. Basil defines this process as 'the more subtle and precise reflection about an intellectual object after an initial concept of it has arisen for us from sense perception' (*Eun.* 1.6). For instance, one can think of 'grain' as a simple concept. On closer inspection, however, 'grain' can be thought of as 'fruit', as 'seed', or as 'nourishment', depending on one's perspective. The multiplicity of ideas one can entertain about grain says nothing about whether grain is inherently simple or complex. Hence, conceptualization can be used for immaterial divine reality just as well as for sense-perceptible objects. Conceptualization is devising new concepts from old ones, not necessarily naming inherent properties of items. Eunomius disparages conceptualization, saying that any term humans discover cannot appropriately be applied to God. God is simple and therefore there is nothing prior or posterior in God. From this, Eunomius reasons that there can be no discursive reasoning about God. For Basil, this confuses God's ontological status with our processes of thinking about God. Basil even argues that 'unbegotten' has been devised through conceptualization (*Eun.* 1.7). The fact that we have multiple notions of God devised through conceptualization does not imply that God is any less simple. There are as many ways of conceptualizing God as there are ways of standing in relation to God. But Basil does not claim that all divine names are the products of conceptualization. It seems we need a handful of basic notions to get the process going.

In scholarship over the past century or so it is Gregory of Nyssa who has gained the reputation of being the most 'philosophical' among the

'Cappadocian' theologians. More recent scholarship has tempered this claim, especially by recognizing the contributions of his older brother Basil. In order to appreciate Basil's work, however, it is no good expecting him to see ancient positions reported with accuracy and handled in ways their authors would respect. We have always to deal with a Christian thinker, who bends all to his own use.

GREGORY OF NYSSA

ANTHONY MEREDITH

LIFE AND WORKS

Gregory came from a large, prosperous and Christian family in the Roman province of Cappadocia in modern Turkey. About the exact year of his birth it is hard to be precise, but it was probably between 335 and 340. His father, Basil the Elder, taught rhetoric in Pontic Neocaesarea and his mother Emmelia herself came from a Christian family and was herself the daughter of the elder Macrina, who had received her faith from Gregory the Wonder Worker (c. 213–c. 270 CE), the so-called Apostle of Cappadocia, who had been a pupil of Origen in Palestine. Gregory himself had eight siblings, two of whom, Macrina and Basil, had a great influence upon him. Of the former he wrote *The Life of Macrina* (*GNO* VII/2: 370–414) and of the latter a panegyric, *On his Brother Basil* (*GNO* X/1: 109–134). The influence of both is discernible in Gregory's more theological writings. In the case of his sister in *On the Soul and Resurrection* which takes the form of a deathbed dialogue with his sister with distinct echoes of Plato's *Phaedo* with its account of the death of Socrates. In the case of Basil in his treatise *On the Six Days of Creation*, at the beginning of which (*PG* 44.61B) he explicitly acknowledges his debt to 'the great Basil'. Basil had composed for the Easter of 375 nine sermons bearing the same title. Gregory's treatment is more positive to philosophy than is that of his elder brother. Of Gregory's own education little can be said. He had some acquaintance with the celebrated pagan teacher of rhetoric Libanius (c. 314–c. 394), as his *Letters* 13 and 14 indicate, but there is no evidence that he studied under him. *Letter* 13.4 to Libanius states that he, Gregory, studied under his brother 'the marvellous Basil'. Chapter 3 of his treatise *On Virginity* strongly suggests Gregory's own marriage. The identification of his wife with the Theosebeia mentioned in *Letter* 197 of Gregory of Nazianzus is very conjectural (see Silvas 2007: 15–25, 98–101). As to his philosophical education we are told nothing and the ecclesiastical historians, Socrates and Sozomen, say little about him.

In 371 the Arian Emperor Valens divided the province of Cappadocia and Basil needed to create bishoprics to support his own position as metropolitan of Second Caesarea. With this in mind he made his friend, Gregory of Nazianzus, the Theologian, bishop of the small wayside town of Sasima and his own brother, Gregory, bishop of Nyssa. Neither Gregory turned out to be ideally suited for his new position of responsibility, as several letters of Basil (58, 60 and 100) indicate. In 376 Gregory of Nyssa was deposed by an Arian synod. Sometime in 378, Gregory was allowed to return to his diocese, possibly owing to a belated change of religious policy on Valens' part (so Rufinus, *Church History* 11.13), though some sources claim that it was only after the death of Valens in August at the battle of Adrianople that Gregory was allowed to return by the pro-Nicene Emperor Gratian (Socrates, *Church History* 5.2; Sozomen, *Church History* 7.1.3; Theodoret, *Church History* 5.2.1). The death of Basil, in late 378 or January 379, and of his sister in the following January of 380, allowed Gregory to establish himself as a theologian in his own right and as a defender of orthodoxy above all against the Neo-Arians. He was present at the Council of Constantinople from May to July 381 and in the course of it wrote a large part of his treatise *Against Eunomius*, which he read to a group, which numbered among them Saint Jerome (*PL* 23.713B). Subsequently he played an important role together with Basil's successor in Caesarea, Helladius and Otreius of Melitene in ensuring the enforcement of the decrees of the council in the area of Pontus. At the council itself he delivered the funeral oration on Meletius of Antioch and he displayed his rhetorical ability in 385 and 386 by delivering panegyrics in honour of the Emperor Theodosius' daughter Pulcheria and wife Flacilla (for the funeral orations, see *GNO* IX: 461–90). These sermons betray the influence of Menander Rhetor, a pagan writer on rhetoric. Gregory died in 394 or 395.

The other major writings of Gregory aside from those already noted are his *Catechetical Oration* of 385/6 and, important for later generations, his spiritual treatises: fifteen *Homilies on the Song of Songs* and two books *On the Life of Moses*. He also defended the full humanity of Christ in his *Against Apollinarius* and monotheism as distinct from tritheism in his *To Ablabius On not Three Gods*. His other major writings were *On the Six Days of Creation* of about 379/380 and *On the Making of Man* of shortly afterwards.

THOUGHT OF GREGORY

Unfortunately, the writings of the philosophical contemporaries of Gregory on the pagan side, like Aedesius, are largely unknown to us. It is not easy, therefore, to reconstruct the sort of philosophy with which Gregory was familiar.

Although, as we shall see, Gregory was happy to employ certain common ideas which occur in Stoicism, such as passion (*pathos*) and mixture (*krasis*), we need to remember that Stoicism had ceased to be the dominant Hellenistic philosophy by the end of the second century CE and its place had been taken by various forms of Platonism (for Gregory's complex views on passion, see Smith 2004). We find in Gregory therefore an amalgam of the two philosophies, the one, Stoicism, immanent, the other, Platonism, transcendent.

Very different interpretations of the thought of Gregory of Nyssa and the extent to which his writing reveals the influence of Greek philosophy have appeared. They have varied from the celebrated judgement of Harold Cherniss that any apparent Christianity in Gregory is only a surface cover which imperfectly conceals a dominant Hellenism: 'But for a few orthodox doctrines he could not circumvent, Gregory has merely applied Christian names to Plato's doctrines and called it Christian theology.'[1] Hardly surprisingly, this view has met with either hostility or with severe modification, at the hands for example of Heinrich Dörrie in his article on Gregory in the *Reallexicon für Antike und Christentum*. Clearly it is hard to assess the actual extent of Gregory's dependence on Hellenism.

The extent of Gregory's philosophical commitment has been addressed from another angle, that of the nature of his coherence. This issue was raised in numerous works by Christopher Stead, though never fully answered. Stead's basic point is that Gregory's thought is not sufficiently coherent to treat him as a philosopher.

The task is made none the easier by our almost total ignorance of the source and depth of Gregory's philosophical training. There are plenty of explicit references to philosophers in his corpus, but for various purposes. He offers Plato the backhanded compliment of being 'wise in matters outside [the faith]' (*On Infants' Premature Deaths*; *GNO* III/2: 70). Still, he is plainly willing to disagree with Plato on such important issues as the pre-existence of souls. In the person of Macrina, he names certain materialist psychological doctrines as Epicurean and Stoic, engaging them and offering what he takes to be a philosophical refutation (*On the Soul and the Resurrection*; *PG* 46 21B). He could also employ philosophical labels polemically, in an attempt to associate his contemporary opponents with 'external' (i.e., non-biblical) wisdom. He accuses Eunomius of being a disciple of Aristotle, at *Against Eunomius* 1.45 and 2.411. Again, at *Against Eunomius* 2.404, he argues that Eunomius picked up his theory of natural language from Plato's dialogue *Cratylus*.

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[1] See Cherniss 1930 [1971]: 62.

Despite our relative ignorance on the nature and extent of Gregory's formal rhetorical education, his letters betray a quite surprising knowledge of classical poetry. Further, and more importantly, he was acquainted with the most distinguished pagan orator of the day, Libanius. Two of his letters to him, 13 and 14 survive, though Libanius himself makes no reference to his Christian correspondent.

All of this underlines Gregory's competence as a rhetorician, but at the same time raises questions about the relationship in his writings between rhetoric, philosophy and theology. The difficulty is further increased by the fact that the majority of Gregory's writings were intended to deal with particular issues and the approach to philosophical ideas Gregory adopted was determined by the work in hand. So, for example, the early *De virginitate* of about 371/2 CE addresses the nature of human beings' desire for the beautiful and is influenced in this both by the *Symposium* of Plato and by two *Enneads* of Plotinus: 1.6 and 6.9. By contrast, the *Against Eunomius* of nine years later insists, perhaps for largely controversial motives, upon the infinity of the divine nature. In his classic study, *Die Unendlichkeit Gottes bei Gregor von Nyssa*, Mühlenberg argued that neither Plato nor Plotinus apply the language of infinity to the absolute and further that because for Plato the good and the beautiful are thought of as forms they cannot be without limit. This probably does not do justice to the thought of Plotinus, as we shall see.

A further illustration of the difficulty of constructing a coherent system out of the varied writings of Gregory is illustrated by his *Catechetical Oration*, written probably in 385, the central thrust of which is to provide catechists with solutions to problems raised by the Hellenists against the possibility of the Incarnation of the divine Word. But what is significant is this. The doctrine of the incomprehensibility and infinity of the divine nature, which had played so large a part in the *Against Eunomius* receives no mention at all in the later work. These ideas are 'replaced' by a stress on the divine fittingness (*theoprepeia*), in a way articulated by Werner Jaeger in his *Early Christianity and Greek Paideia*. In fact, the emphasis on certain ideas perceived as especially 'fitting' to God – God's goodness, justice, power, wisdom and so forth – appears throughout Gregory's works. How this fits together with the incomprehensibility of God is a matter of some dispute.[2]

All this means that although it is true that philosophical influences are evident and in some places dominant in Gregory's writings, it is not always the same background which underlies his writings. Some of these clearly evidence his dependence on certain Platonic dialogues. *On Virginity* shows the influence of

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[2] See Radde-Gallwitz 2009.

the *Symposium, On the Soul and Resurrection* of the *Phaedo*, and *On the Making of Man* of Plato's account of the making of the world in his *Timaeus*.[3] But even in these works Gregory is no slavish and uncritical follower of his master. So, for example, although in his *De virginitate* he follows Plato in his stress on the upward movement of the created spirit in the direction of ultimate beauty, this journey is closely linked, especially in chapter 23 of the treatise with the idea of being 'crucified with Christ' (Galatians 2.19) – scarcely a Platonic idea.

Again, in his treatise *On the Soul and Resurrection*, which is clearly influenced by the account of Socrates' death in the *Phaedo*, we find Gregory's sister, Macrina, taking the place of Socrates. The second part of the treatise (starting from *PG* 46 129A) is devoted to a not entirely successful attempt to relate the Platonic idea of the immortality of the soul to the Christian doctrine of the resurrection of the body. The reconciliation of these two ideas clearly challenged Gregory as his other treatise *On the Dead* indicates.

Cherniss' celebrated judgement referred to earlier is too unnuanced. In his adaptation of classical philosophy Gregory adopts a policy of use or *chrēsis*: he employs philosophy whilst striving not to be taken over by it, above all by Plato.[4] The notion of use appears in Gregory's interpretation of the spoils of the Egyptians, related at Exodus 12.35–6. In his *Life of Moses* 2.112–16 he explains that the non-Jewish culture in the case of Moses and the non-Christian culture in the case of Basil was exploited in the service of the Church.[5] It may be the case that Gregory felt the need to defend the use of the non-Christian classics in response to the celebrated *School Law* of Julian the Apostate of June 362, which had forbidden Christians to be professors in universities. The question of Christian attitudes to pagan learning had previously been addressed by Origen in his *Letter to Gregory the Wonderworker*.

Together with this notion of use of pagan literature and philosophy, we also find Gregory appealing to *koinai ennoiai*, or common ideas, a concept derived originally from Stoic philosophy, though also present in late-ancient

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[3] *Timaeus* 29e insists on the goodness of God as the ultimate reason for creation, and 41d ff. and 90e place the creation of man as the climax of the generative process as being in the likeness of God. A similar scheme appears at On *the Making of Man* 1 and 2 (*PG* 44 128c ff.). However, in his account of the creation of the universe Gregory annexes the idea of creation out of nothing to the rather different notion of the ordering of pre-existent material that characterizes the *Timaeus*. A similar fusion of ideas occurs also in Gregory's *Catechetical Oration*. In chapter 5 Gregory insists like Plato, *Timaeus* 29e on love as the motive for the creation of man. Again, in the same passage in Gregory he insists on the eye as sharing in the light, not unlike *Timaeus* 45b–d.

[4] See the series *Chrēsis: die Methode der Kirchenvaeter im Umgang mit der antiken Kultur*, under the editorship of Christian Gnilka.

[5] Basil's attitude toward philosophy, though praised here by his brother, was not quite consistent. Although in his treatise *To Young Men on the Study of Greek Literature* he takes a positive attitude, Basil often speaks of his knowledge of Greek literature as 'wasted time' so *Letter* 223.2.

Platonism, in order to defend and explore the meaning of the Christian gospel (see *Against Eunomius* 2.11, *Catechetical Oration* pref. and 5). These ideas or notions were thought of as implanted in every one by nature. Gregory could have learned of them through prior Christian authors: Saint Paul seems to appeal to them at Romans 2.14 and 15; we also find 'common notions' discussed by Origen (*Against Celsus* 1.4) and Basil (e.g., *Against Eunomius* 1.5). In the prologue of his *Catechetical Oration* Gregory tries to situate Christianity between Judaism and Hellenism, the latter being represented by common ideas, but they always subserve a higher purpose to defend and illustrate the mysteries of the Gospel.

A further illustration of the way in which Gregory at times found it helpful to employ Stoic ideas to explain Christian doctrine can be found in his wrestling with the mystery of the union of two natures, divine and human in Christ. In the *Catechetical Oration* we find him in chapters 6, 11 and 14 using the Stoic language of mixture (*krasis*). Gregory may have been following in the footsteps of Origen, who in his treatise *On First Principles* (2.6.6) had employed similar language.

But the central difficulty in dealing with Gregory as a coherent philosopher in his own right is the simple fact that in his theological approach he seems to be highly eclectic and to select what suits his particular purpose in the writing with which he is engaged. The most celebrated case of this philosophical insouciance occurs in connection with the notion of the divine infinity. Whether or not he was original in his use of this idea is unclear, but there can be little doubt that in three at least of his writings it plays a key role (*Against Eunomius*, *Life of Moses* and his fifteen *Homilies On the Song of Songs*).

In his *Against Eunomius*, composed in 380, the idea of the divine infinity as distinct from the more common Philonic idea that God is formless (*aeides*) occurs in the context of Gregory's response to Eunomius' argument that the Son is excluded from the deity, since God is defined by being unbegotten and the Son is by definition generate or begotten. Gregory uses the idea of infinity in order to insist that there is nothing to limit the power and goodness of God. Gregory lays out two arguments at *Against Eunomius* 1.168 and 180 (1) God cannot be defined and therefore cannot be circumscribed by the title of unbegotten, which would exclude the second person from the deity; (2) as God is infinite there can only be one God, who shares his deity with the Son and Holy Spirit. Interestingly he does not appeal either to personal experience or to any passages from Scripture. As Jaeger notes in his critical edition, there is appeal in this argument to a principle from Aristotle's *Categories*.

Gregory's originality in respect of infinity has been the subject of much debate, starting with Ekkehard Mühlenberg's strong claim that Gregory was

rather revolutionary in his employment of the idea (see now Weedman).[6] Against the idea that he himself was the first to use the notion are three considerations:

1 There are instances of the idea of infinity in previous defenders of Nicaea, such as Hilary of Poitiers and Basil, who like Gregory used the idea to describe how the Son can be from God without any interval (see Weedman 2010).

2 We find a word with a very similar meaning, *apeiros*, in Gregory of Nazianzus on at least two occasions (in *Sermon* 34.9 and 38.7), both delivered in 380 or 381 and therefore contemporary with Gregory of Nyssa's own work. It is hardly likely that either was dependent on the other, which shows that the idea was not unfamiliar.

3 Behind both Gregories' usages *may* lie the fact that Plotinus at *Ennead* 5.5.6 argues that the supreme principle of his system, the One, is not an *ousia*, but is like the idea of the good in Plato's *Republic* 6.509b beyond being and is therefore unlimited. At *Ennead* 5.5.6.15 Plotinus writes 'It would be a laughing matter to endeavour to embrace that boundless nature.' A striking passage in his *Homilies on the Song* illustrates the influence of Plotinus. In a passage from homily 8 (*GNO* VI: 258.8) Gregory identifies God with the One (*to hen*) of Plotinus, which is a clear example of Platonic influence.

This stress on infinity as the characteristic feature of Gregory's account of the divine nature is strongly reinforced by the use to which he puts the idea in some of his later spiritual writings. To be sure, recent accounts have stressed aspects of continuity between the dogmatic and spiritual writings: both emphasize the role of faith as faculty of union with God and the undefinability of God. Still, differences remain. The main distinction between the employment of infinity in *Against Eunomius* on the one hand and the *Life of Moses* and in the fifteen *Homilies on the Song* on the other is that in the latter more overtly spiritual writings the driving force behind the treatment of the texts of Genesis and the Song of Songs is a mixture of Scripture and spiritual experience, neither of which figures at all in the various treatises *Against Eunomius*. So, in homily 11 *On the Song* (*GNO* VI: 324.10) Gregory speaks unusually for him of an 'awareness of presence'. It may be that Gregory was influenced by a remarkably similar expression of Plotinus at *Ennead* 6.9.4.1 ff. where Plotinus refers to a 'presence which is superior to knowledge'. So, on the exegetical side the two passages from Exodus upon which Gregory relies in both the two latter works, 20.21 'Moses drew near to the thick darkness, where God was', and 33.23 'My face you shall not see' for asserting both the divine incomprehensibility and the divine infinity, nowhere surface in his *Against Eunomius*. What is not at all clear

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[6] See Mühlenberg 1966; Weedman forthcoming.

is whether the assertion of the divine mysteriousness, which recurs in all three works, means the same or if the common idea of all three writings is in any way connected. A further point which links together the later spiritual treatises and is wholly lacking from the dogmatic one is the use to which the doctrine of divine infinity is put. In them it subserves an ascetic and mystical purpose, and is used together with a verse from Philippians 3.13 'stretching forward to what lies ahead'. Because there is no limit of any kind to the divine nature, there is no room as *Life of Moses* (2.239) points out for *koros* or satiety of the sort that arguably had been the cause of the fall of souls in Origen. For Gregory because God is infinite all created spirits, human and angelic alike in their desire to find him – a movement often referred to as *epektasis* – 'stretching out' (cf. Philippians 3.13) will never come to an end in their search either here or hereafter. With it weariness, boredom and a static condition are put to flight. We are always on the move.

However the uses to which Gregory of Nyssa put the notion of infinity were novel and the mysticism of darkness owes much to him. In homily 11 *On the Song*, (*GNO* vi: 322.13–323.9) he describes three stages in the upward path of the mystical life, light, cloud and darkness. Gregory outlines the three stages of Moses' mystical growth of light, cloud and darkness. So, too, does Gregory's use of the idea of sober drunkenness (*nēphalios methē*) in connection with the ecstasy of the created spirit in its outreach for God (*GNO* vi: 308.5 ff.). In fact it is difficult to imagine how Gregory could have arrived at the conclusions he did about the whole process of spiritual growth without having been through it himself.

It would be a mistake, however, as we have seen, to suppose that Gregory's treatment of the divine nature on the one hand or of Platonism on the other was homogeneous throughout his writings. This is above all true of his earliest surviving work of 371/2, the *De virginitate* and of his later important writing of probably 385, the *Logos Catechetikos* (*Catechetical Oration*), a work intended for catechists in their efforts to supply satisfactory solutions to the problems posed by the subtlety of the Greeks above all about the raison d'être of the Incarnation. In neither of these writings is any use made of the idea of the divine infinity.

In the former, modelled as it is upon the *Symposium* of Plato, the dominant divine characteristic is his [its] beauty. It is true that in chapter 10.1, Gregory speaks, but once only, of the unspeakable and incomprehensible beauty of God, but nowhere does he refer to the divine infinity. While it is possible, however, to explain Gregory's silence on the divine infinity in his earliest surviving writing because his aim in writing did not demand any such affirmation, it is less easy

to account for it in his *Catechetical Oration*, which post-dates his encounter with Eunomius.

The primary thrust of this work is to show that a belief in the incarnation of the second person of the Trinity is in no way incompatible with certain basic divine attributes, above all those of power, justice, wisdom and goodness which can be summed up under the general idea of *theoprepeia* or fittingness to God. This notion is stressed above all in chapter 9 of the treatise. Later on in chapter 20 Gregory lists the same four basic attributes of God, all of which must be realized if God is to be correctly conceived. 'It is everywhere agreed that we should believe the divine to be not only powerful, but also just, good and wise.'

Much of the treatise is devoted to proving that on becoming man to save us the divine Word in no way violates any of these four epithets. The source of this view of the divine nature may well be Origen, who at *Against Celsus* (3.70) qualifies the thought of the divine omnipotence as follows: 'In our opinion God is able to do everything which he can do, without abandoning his position as God, and good and as wise.' In other words God's omnipotence for Origen must be considered with his goodness, not independently of it. This type of approach immediately raises the question about the divine incomprehensibility. The divine mysteriousness and divine intelligibility do not easily fit together.

Gregory's 'dependence' on Origen goes even further, in that he makes no mention of the further attribute of infinity. Nor does the idea play any part in the remainder of the treatise. It is of some interest to note that in the *Lexicon Gregorianum* under the entry for *Aoriston* (infinite) the word is found almost entirely in the three works already mentioned and never in the minor dogmatic treatises. So in his *To Ablabius On Not Three Gods* despite its reliance on a universal idea of divinity and humanity, above all in section 16, Gregory nowhere uses the notion of the divine infinity. This is equally true of his eight *Homilies on Ecclesiastes* and of his *On the Titles of the Psalms*. The former work (in homily 8.2) refers to God as 'the really real' (*to alēthōs on*). The latter says that the distinguishing divine feature is his oversight of all things, referring no doubt to the etymology of Thebes from Theognis, to contemplate (1.6.13; cf. *To Ablabius GNO* III/1: 44). But in neither work, both of which are roughly contemporary with the *Against Eunomius*, do we hear anything about infinity.

The conclusion to which this evidence seems to point is that even though Gregory was among the first Christian writers to apply the idea of infinity to the deity and despite the fact that he most certainly explored its ramifications for the spiritual life in an innovative way, he was by no means committed to the idea in an unqualified manner. In fact the same could said of all of his use of

the Platonic tradition he inherited. He used it when it suited him and insofar as it suited him. As with his use of Origen, so too in his use of Platonism he was eclectic and the expression 'use' (*chrēsis*) well suits him. Further the philosophy he used was by no means undiluted Platonism. As has been suggested Gregory could employ Stoic terminology when it helped him.

It is in his wrestling above all with the problem of the origin and nature of evil and our reasons for choosing it rather than the good that Gregory's use of Platonism is most evident. It had occupied philosophers from Plato onwards. For Gregory, one of the most recent non-Christian treatments could be found in Plotinus, above all in the late *Ennead* (51 = 1.8) *The Nature and Source of Evil*. There Plotinus concludes that evil is to be identified with matter, since both are defined as utter lack or privation of form. Later Platonists, presumably starting with Iamblichus, criticized the identification of matter with evil, viewing evil instead as parasitic upon the good, existing in 'by-existence' (*parhupostasis*). This term is used by both Basil and Gregory to describe evil. Gregory certainly agrees with Plotinus that evil is privation. As he writes in his *Catechetical Oration*, above 'All evil is marked by privation (*sterēsis*) of the good. It does not exist in its own right, nor does it have subsistence of its own' (*GNO* III/4: 28, 5 ff.). The only difference of vocabulary between the two authors is that whereas Plotinus at *Ennead* 1.8.5.12 and 3.2.5.26 uses on both occasions the word *ellipsis* (lack) of form, Gregory in chapter 5 prefers that of loss or being deprived of perfection. Yet, for Gregory, as opposed to Plotinus, evil is not utter privation, since utter privation does not exist in Gregory's providential scheme; nor is it identified with matter, as Plotinus held. In fact, Basil and Gregory deny the existence of evil, though neither is entirely consistent on this subject.

A further and bigger distinction between Gregory and Plotinus is that in chapter 26 of the former's *Catechetical Oration* the unreality of evil and its ultimate disappearance in the face of the absolute goodness of God is used to establish the salvation of all, including the devil as the source and origin of evil. Plotinus has no such challenge to face and no 1 Corinthians 15.28 to explain, with its statement that in the end 'God will be all in all'. Gregory's optimistic account of human destiny is clearly helped by his use of Plotinus' account of the nature of evil. Yet, Gregory, unlike Plotinus, also needs to account within this optimistic scheme for the person and function of Christ the Saviour. Except perhaps for the philosopher king, who hardly lays down his life for his sheep, the idea of a redeemer and of redemption, plays no part in ancient religion or philosophy. Yet the whole thrust of the *Catechetical Oration* is to account for and justify the Incarnation. The disappearance of evil and the whole theory of the rights of and ransom of the devil, which lies at the heart of Gregory's soteriology are entirely absent from the *Enneads* and from Platonism. However

we may assess Gregory's implied attitude to and treatment of Platonism in its various forms it is certainly not uncritical.

CONCLUSION

One of the difficulties in assessing Gregory's own philosophical approach and his relationship to the current Hellenism of his day is this. His main launching point was not the discovery of a basic philosophical idea or system, but the desire to understand the faith he had received with the help of philosophy. Most of his writings are in this sense occasional. He uses what suits him and can modify what he has used in ways perhaps unacceptable to the Platonic past he inherited.

Plotinus also had a launching point, but his was Plato, of whose writings he regarded himself as an interpreter. In Porphyry's *Life of Plotinus* 2 we read that Plotinus kept Plato's and Socrates' feast day.

This moderate and moderating attitude is discernible, as has been noted, in both Gregory's *On the Soul and Resurrection* and his *Catechetical Oration*. In the former he uses Plato's *Phaedo* which he tries to wed to the ideas of resurrection of the body. In the latter he uses the idea of *theoprepeia* primarily in order to defend and expound the doctrine of the Incarnation.

More importantly, however, than this adjustment of current philosophy in the service of Christian apologetics, there is at the heart of Gregory's more mature writings his insistence on the radical difference between creature and creator. The division between the infinite Trinitarian God of Gregory and the finite created world, whether intellectual or sensory, is absolute. This informs all of Gregory's writings, above all those subsequent to his *Against Eunomius* and because the idea is quite novel both to Platonism and indeed also to Origen, it can be seen as Gregory's most significant contribution both to theology and to its relationship to Hellenism. His insistence upon the radical divide between creature and creator may have resulted in the rarity with which he speaks of the Christian goal as one of deification.

Hand in hand with this created/uncreated distinction lies another distinction, exploited by Gregory for the first time in his treatise *Against Eunomius*, and later in his more spiritual writings, that between finite and infinite. How original Gregory was is disputed. But the importance of the idea of infinity in his more mature writings, whether dogmatic or spiritual cannot be overestimated. Yet even here his innovative approach to the understanding of the nature of God is not everywhere evident. Gregory was not determined in his approach by the search for total philosophical consistency.

GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS

JOHN A. MᶜGUCKIN

GREGORY'S PLACE IN HISTORY

Gregory of Nazianzus (329–390), described by some of the Renaissance com-
mentators as the 'Christian Demosthenes', is the most well documented of
all the early Christian rhetoricians with the exception of Augustine. Like the
great African rhetor he leaves his reader copious autobiographical informa-
tion from which a critical biography can be successfully constructed. It was
Gregory, indeed, who introduced the genre of autobiography into Christian
letters as a way of making theological inquiry, as well as rhetorically attacking
enemies, anticipating Augustine's efforts along the same lines by a generation.
Accordingly, we have from his pen a host of autobiographical letters, poems
and orations. He also was the first to model, for Christian use, the genre of
the Funeral Encomium; taking Greek precedents and reworking them to new
moral and eschatological ends. In his *Funeral Orations* for several of his family
members (*Orations* 7, 8, 18) he gives us a fascinating picture of an extremely
well-placed and wealthy provincial family that straddled the era from Constan-
tine to Theodosius the Great, and was actively involved with the court at several
instances, particularly under Julian (whom he knew personally) as well as under
Valens, whose state visit to Caesarea Gregory helped orchestrate (alongside Basil
the Great), and lastly under Theodosius I, whom he thought rather dim, but
who elevated Gregory to high office, as Archbishop of his imperial capital.

Gregory's tenure was confirmed by the Ecumenical Council of Constantino-
ple in 381, over which he presided following the sudden death of its first
chairman Meletius. His inability to control the factions at the Council led to
his resignation in the same year, an event which he laboured to justify in his
late works (especially his autobiographical poems) in the face of widespread
criticism. As a mature writer he sees his life through the lens of that short time
when he was at the very centre of Christian thought and politics, that is when
he came to Constantinople in 379, immediately after the death of Valens, to
reclaim the city (and the eastern Empire) for Nicene Orthodoxy. It was there he

gave his finest Orations and effectively set the tone and definition of what would emerge after him as classical Church orthodoxy on subjects such as Christology, Trinitarianism, the understanding of theology as inspired poetry, the nature of God as dimly apprehended mystery, the concept of a Christian religious culture, and the philosophical underpinnings of the newly burgeoning ascetical movement in Byzantium. Of all the writers of the earlier period, Gregory of Nazianzus was the one the later Byzantines turned to with most respect for his combination of high style, theological acumen, and philosophical 'sobriety' (especially his poems on the nature of human suffering and the call of the wise man to transcend it). Gregory's extant manuscripts from the Byzantine world are rivalled in extent only by copies of the Bible, suggesting that he was the most widely read of all individual writers in the formative ages of Greek Christianity. The quality of his Greek, its philological purity, and its style of marrying rhetoric with a determined goal of elucidating moral inquiry, remained a source of wonderment for later ages. Although he suffered an overshadowing of reputation in the West, he remained perhaps the most influential of all the Christian patristic theologians for the Greek-speaking world; and there he is still known, evocatively, as 'Gregory the Theologian', putting him into the select company of the 'other divine', St John the Evangelist. The fifth-century translation of Gregory's dogmatic works into Latin by Rufinus of Aquileia and his canonical endorsement by the Council of Chalcedon, also made him a high authority for the early medieval Latin Church. His surviving body of work comprises 44 Orations (one of them repeating an earlier one as a simple epitome), a fascinating dossier of 249 Letters to the local Cappadocian aristocracy and to Christian friends, and a very extensive collection of poetry ranging from small epigrams to voluminous autobiographical and philosophical pieces, which does not yet have a complete critical edition. It was arranged in the hopelessly vague and anachronistic system of 'Poems Relating to Himself' and 'Poems Relating to Others'. The corpus is collected in volumes 35–8 of J. P. Migne's *Patrologia Graeca*. His Orations have a recently completed critical edition in the *Sources Chrétiennes* series, with Greek text facing the modern French.

A BRIEF LIFE

Gregory was born in 329 in the Cappadocian hill estate of Karbala, a large Latifundium of his father's at Arianzum (Guzelyurt in modern Turkey), itself a small village near the provincial town of Nazianzus, to the west of the local capital Caesarea. The family of his mother, Nonna, had been Christian for many generations. His father, Gregory the elder, was converted to Christianity by his wife in 325, prior to their marriage. Gregory describes the conversion as a

non-negotiable factor for Nonna's family. Even though his father became the (second) bishop of Nazianzus in 328, building a suitably prestigious marble colonnaded octagonal church to mark the occasion, Gregory often refers to his 'lineage' as being less renowned than that of his mother. He had an elder sister, Gorgonia, who married an army officer, and a younger brother Caesarius whom he loved deeply and upon whose premature death he wrote some heartbreakingly beautiful lines. His *Funeral Oration* for Gorgonia (*Oration* 8; *Letters* 29, and 37–9) is the first literary attempt among Christians to 'canonize' a non-martyred woman, for general emulation.

In 345, aged sixteen, he followed one year's rhetorical training in Cappadocian Caesarea, after earlier studies with his uncle Amphilokius who was also a rhetorician, and in the following year he left with his brother on a study tour that for him included Palestinian Caesarea and Alexandria. He left his brother in the Egyptian capital studying medicine, while he himself went on to Athens where he stayed, studying rhetoric for the next ten years, until his father cut the allowance and summoned both brothers home. For his early time in the city, Basil the Great and Caesar Julian were his fellow scholars. Cavafy's masterful 'Julian' poems are drawn directly from sardonic accounts Gregory writes of him. At Athens, Gregory studied under the two leading rhetoricians of the day: the pagan Himerios, and the Christian Prohaeresius; but he studiously ignored the Iamblichean Platonist Priscus to whom Julian had attached himself. The theurgically charged paganism of Priscus that so excited Julian, probably being much too flamboyant for his Christian taste. Several of Gregory's Athenian set-pieces are re-used in his later poetry – notably a very fine 'storm at sea' scene[1] which he recasts so as to have himself in the role of a new Jonah on an angry ocean, though without losing any of the expected Homeric resonances. Also notable is a piece alluding to the Eleusinian Mysteries, and clearly evoking the deification of Triptolemus by Kore and Demeter – except that now it is seamlessly reworked to be the story of how two heavenly maidens (Chastity and Sobriety) come down into a waking dream in his scholar's lodgings (long before Proclus was visited by his 'Athenian lady') to initiate him as a celibate Christian *Sophos*.[2] In relation to dreams, it is interesting to note how, while rejecting Julian's theurgy as hysterical and daimonic (demonic), he is nevertheless one of the leading Christian fathers to underscore the importance of transcendental dreams as a way for the soul to have an intimation of higher realities. Many

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[1] *Poem on His Own Affairs* (*De rebus suis*) verses 307–21. Migne *PG* 37.993–4; *Poem On His Life* (*De vita sua*) verses 129–209. *PG* 37.1038–9.

[2] *A Song of Sadness* (*Carmen lugubre*), *Carmina* 2.1.45 verses 191–269, *PG* 37.1367. Celibacy was regarded as a *sine qua non* of the serious pagan sophist. Gregory weaves the older sophistical theme into his understanding of the significance of Christian ascetic practice. For him the monk was the new sophist; just as he regularly called Christian religion 'our philosophy'.

years later, as archbishop of Constantinople he would make no bones about describing Baptism as the Christian version, and new fulfilment, of the mystery rites' celebration of divine initiation (*Oration* 39). It is typical of how all his work, thoroughly motivated by a Christian spirit, was permeated by an elevated sense of classicism. He is almost unique in the ranks of the Christian fathers for this level of cultural openness. One of his favoured axioms was: 'Words in the service of the Word' and it was a true measure of his readiness to use all that could be appropriated from Greek letters in the service of the Christian faith.

His studies at Athens were not only protracted, they were exceptionally fruitful. If one surveys the classical authors mentioned or cited in his writing we find an impressive array.[3] Homer, especially the *Odyssey* is a perennial backdrop to which he often returns in his autobiographical poetry (habitually characterizing himself as a wandering Odysseus, crafty in words). He also refers to Anaxilas, Apollonius of Rhodes, Aratus and other poets of the *Palatine Anthology*, as well as Aristophanes, Aristotle, Callimachus, Demosthenes, Diogenes Laertius, Evagoras, Heraclitus, Herodotus, Hesiod, Isocrates, Lucian, Lysias, Philo, Phocylides, Pindar, Plato, Plutarch, Sappho, Simonides, Socrates, Theocritus, Theognis, and Thucydides. His works are a significant source for citations of Sappho, whom he especially adored: not least for her verses on roses (he had a rose garden at home which he loved to tend). His greatest Christian influence is Origen of Alexandria[4] whose reputation[5] he was anxious to rescue; and to which end he collaborated with Basil of Caesarea in issuing an edition (the 'best of') of his hero, now known as the *Philocalia of Origen*. He also collaborated closely with Gregory of Nyssa, and Evagrius of Pontus.[6] Both these younger Christian disciples of his (he probably taught both of them at an early stage in their rhetorical careers) shared his passion for Origen, and recognized, along with him, the need to rehabilitate Origen's damaged reputation in the Church of the fourth century. For Gregory, this repair of Origen's great cosmological and philosophical interpretation of the Christian story of the nature of the soul (fallen from pre-existent bliss into temporal punishment) and its salvation (a new *paideia* from the incarnate *Logos* that existentially reorders its being away from material corruptibility (*ptharsia*) towards noetic life (*zōē*)) was a pressing agenda.

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[3] Fleury 1930.
[4] Though he refers to Athanasius of Alexandria with high praise he does not cite him much.
[5] It had been severely battered in the fourth century as the Arian party had appealed to several of his *Aporiai* in support of their theological arguments for the Son's subordination to the Father.
[6] He possibly taught the young Gregory (Basil's brother) rhetoric; and when he was writing his *Theological Orations* (*Orats.* 27–31) the Nyssan sent him his deacon Evagrius (a masterly philosopher) to assist him as amanuensis.

As a rhetorician he had been trained in varieties of philosophical positions. In his *Orations*, for example, especially the great Five Theologicals (27–31) he takes Christian opponents such as Aëtius and Eunomius to task for being too heavily dependent on Aristotelian syllogisms in their method, and too fixated on simple forms of logical propositional argument, not understanding that theology is a science more akin to poetry, and literary interpretation is its subtle means. His preferred mode of argumentation is the enthymemetic argument; wherein he states the limitations of two possibilities and leaves a door hanging open for the listener to move towards an unstated synthesis. Origen is his real major philosophical inspiration. But by his generation Origen's cosmological scheme of lapsed souls had been generally shunned by Christian intellectuals who, after Athanasius, had increasingly posited a view of creation *ex nihilo* and who wanted to increase the distance between Christian and Platonic cosmology and psychology. Gregory argues for a subtle moderation of the rejected Origenian thesis that the soul naturally had an aptitude to return to transcendent levels of being. We will discuss this shortly, when we consider his ascetical poetry, where he largely makes the case. The poetry has, historically, been heavily neglected as a source of his doctrine and, accordingly, the range of his thought has been too narrowly construed.

When Gregory returned to Cappadocia after the Arcadian dream of Athens, his father wished him to embark on a rhetorical career. He himself had other ideas, and announced to the old man that he wanted to become a Christian ascetic and retire from public life. Then there began a monumental struggle between father and son, which Gregory, even as an old man himself would still call a bitter 'tyranny'. For Christians at this period the 'call to the desert' was regarded as a legitimate over-rider of parental obedience, but Gregory had two significant problems. The first of these was that he never wanted to abandon civic life and live in the desert. Basil's letters attempting to draw Gregory to Annesus and to share a hard-working monastic life with him, met with thinly disguised ridicule from his old friend (*Letters* 1–2, and 4–6). He wanted to be a scholarly, gentlemanly, kind of monk-sophist (rhetor-cum-philosopher). The concept did not yet exist among the Christians. It was Gregory's task to invent it. But it was stretching a point, at this period, to regard the Christian ascetic monks (by and large) as 'philosophers' in the commonly accepted sense; although Athanasius in his *Life of Antony* had made that claim with regard to Antony the Great, and there would be an increasing number of genuine philosophers, like Gregory, who would adopt the ascetic life and continue as writers and theologians. The second problem was that he needed his father's blessing, because not only did his father control all the finances, he was also the local bishop, thus able to trump him when it came to what the local church

would or would not allow. It was a reluctant Gregory who was (as he tells it) forcibly ordained priest in 361. He took flight straight after to join Basil in his monastery, but hated it there and returned to Nazianzus where he had to give three self-justificatory orations *On My Flight* to the annoyed community. These turned out to be a masterful apologia concerning the awesome nature of the spiritual governance of others: 'that art of arts and science of sciences'. They were used both by John Chrysostom and Gregory the Great as the basis for standard Christian treatises on ecclesiastical governance.[7]

In 363 Gregory issued an extensive set of *Invectives Against Julian*, provoked especially by Julian's *Edict On The Professors*, by which the emperor tried to prevent Christians from being involved in teaching classical literature.[8] His work caricaturing Julian[9] ('O most dim-witted of men!') was the quarry from which most other Christian assessments were taken ever after. After 365 Gregory advised and assisted Basil's ecclesiastical career and his successful election as Archbishop of Caesarea in 370. He was furious at Basil's ingratitude, when he allocated him a tiny bishopric in Sasima, an obscure frontier town ('a place where one could not think for the sound of moaning and the clink of shackles, or even see, for the clouds of dust'). He always suspected Basil had done this as an insult (*Letters* 48–50), and relations were clouded ever after. In 372 Gregory settled in to assist his father as auxiliary bishop in Nazianzus but three years later, after his father's death, he told the church that he too was retiring, and left a priest-administrator there while he went off for three years of study in the great monastic centre of St Thekla's in Seleucia.

While there, he was asked by the leaders of the Nicene movement, Meletius of Antioch and Eusebius of Samosata, to go to Constantinople after the death of Valens in 379, and use the opportunity to establish a Nicene community. Gregory moved to Constantinople, took charge of a family owned villa near the cathedral and consecrated it as the *Anastasis* (Resurrection) church. Here he gave a series of distinguished *Orations* (27–31: 'The Five Theologicals') that were to make his historical reputation; establishing the classical Nicene doctrine of God, and refuting the Arian logicians Aëtius and Eunomius. The arrival of the new Emperor Theodosius in 380, saw his own elevation to imperial favour, but as ruling bishop he refused to settle scores with sufficient ferocity (in the

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[7] Chrysostom's *On the Priesthood* was based upon it; and Gregory the Great's *Pastoral Rule* uses its ideas. Both these treatises became the classic manuals for ecclesiastical governance theory in the eastern and western Churches.

[8] Since they despised the gods and the philosophy on which it was based, Julian argued, they ought not to be allowed to profit from paid rhetorical positions.

[9] *Orations* 4–5, especially *Oration* 5.23, which portrays Julian as an hysteric. His portrait of Julian is caustic, but his knowledge was substantive, as his brother, Caesarius, was court physician at this time.

opinion of his Nicene allies) and formerly supportive factions now wished to get rid of him. On the other hand, when it came to matters of philosophy he refused to compromise on points (such as the *Homoousion* of the Spirit)[10] which the emperor and his court regarded as sufficiently obscure to be glossed over in the cause of reconciliation. So, from all sides he was regarded as 'difficult', and his resignation amid the growing chaos of the Council of 381, was accepted with relief by Theodosius (*Oration* 42).

Gregory returned to Cappadocia where he more or less stayed for the last ten years of his life. This time he spent arranging the permanent transfer of 'his' see at Nazianzus (he was furious that the local bishops had tried to regularize his absence by appointing another bishop there without his permission, even though Canon law did not allow the occupation of multiple sees), and in gathering round him a circle of philosopher monks. He produced in this period an extensive body of poetry, especially the great autobiographical poems which are high achievements in both art and history. He also collected his *Orations* for publication, and afterwards they became, for a millennium, the standard dossier of preaching guidance for rhetor-bishops in the eastern Church. He died in 390, aged sixty-one, on his hill farm at Arianzum.

GREGORY AS RELIGIOUS PHILOSOPHER

Gregory was, as priest and philosopher, deeply concerned with a Christian account of the nature of the First Principle. His concept of God is to an extent shaped politically by the task of articulating for the Nicenes a public defence of their intellectual credibility in the face of the Neo-Arian assault on the illogicality of the affirmation of the deity of the Son while affirming a theology of the divine Monad. Intellectually he took his task further than a simple defence of Nicene *Logos* theology, for based upon his close reading of Origen, and his own reflections on the wider religious problems of his culture, he took the step of asserting that *Logos* theology was a subset of Christian Trinitarianism: and that Nicenism could not be understood except as a Trinitarian soteriology (doctrine of salvation); just as the unity of God could not be understood without understanding that it was as a triadic unity, in which the deity, and role, of the Spirit of God had to be unambiguously affirmed. Gregory is, then, not only the supreme articulator of the hypostatic relations of the Father and Son, but he is also one of the most influential theoreticians of the Trinity in all Greek

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[10] Gregory is the one who demands that if the Spirit is God he must be credally confessed as consubstantial with the Father and the Son. Even the Council of 381 baulked at this, confessing the deity of the Spirit, but carefully fudging the notion of the Spirit's *homoousion*.

patristic writing. In other words his vision of the Supreme Monad is complex and rich. He is seeking to address both common Christians, who embraced Trinitarian acclamations in their liturgical doxologies, as well as sophisticated religious philosophers of his day (those who were aware of the Plotinian programme) and this with a view to facilitating the attraction of the literate pagan upper classes into Christianity at the imperial capital, where a large body of thinkers still required convincing of the intellectual respectability of the new religion.

Just before Gregory's time, the Arian crisis had precipitated a crisis in Christian metaphysics regarding the issue of how the Divinity, if sublime and transcendent, could relate directly to his earthly cosmos (the very logic of incarnationalism). The Arian school solved the problem by the hypothesis that the unoriginate God related to the world through angelic mediation; chief among whose ranks was the supreme angelic being of the *Logos*. He was, thus, the medium of creation; not its source. Being originate, a creature of the Father who was alone the Divine Monad, he was a partial revelation of God, but not God *per se*. To ascribe to him the name of God was an honorific and nominal thing, that had occurred in Christian scripture and worship at times: but strictly speaking the Son was not God. To emphasize his difference (hetereity) earlier Arian thinkers had used the slogan: 'There was [a time] when he was not.' This principle Aëtius and Eunomius now radicalized, so as to insist against their opponents that the Son was different in being to the divine Father (*heteros kata ousian*); which their opponents soon translated as 'completely unlike' (*anhomoios*), one being unoriginate and ingenerate, (*agennētos*) the other Originate and Generated (*gennētos*). Because of their central arguments they have often been classed in later histories of Christian doctrine as 'Anhomoian' Arians. They preferred the designation 'heterousians'. Aëtius, who had been patronized by Caesar Gallus and later by his brother Julian, wrote a work on the Divine Monad (*Suntagmation*) in highly syllogistic form, pressing the point that words (especially scriptural ones) revealed essences. On this basis the terms 'Father' and 'Son', semantically revealed the relationship to be one of substantive difference. If the Father was quintessentially the Ingenerate, then the Son, being Generate, was radically separated from the Godhead. Aëtius' work was carried on by Eunomius who was resident in Constantinople at the same time as Gregory, and who arranged for personal attacks (both intellectual and physical) on his rival.[11]

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[11] Eunomian sympathizers attended Gregory's orations in Constantinople as hecklers, and on occasions tried to break up the meetings, until Gregory hired some Christian Egyptian sailors from the Constantinopolitan docks to back up his arguments with muscle.

In response to Arian writings, Gregory crafted a refutation to the effect that words revealed things only according to semantic context. Words such as Father and Son were highly important revelatory signs, but did not reveal essences as much as relations. The different terms thus did not demonstrate different natures (*ousiai*) but different relationships. Far from being proof positive of hetereity of nature between one who was Ingenerate by nature (God as *agennētos*) and one who was Generate by nature (the Son as *gennētos* and *gennēma*) the divinely inspired scriptural words gave a revelation witnessing to the closest affinity of Father and Son; a relation understood as limited and natural emanation.[12] If, following the import of the biblical revelation, one asserted a 'natural' relationship between Father and Son, then the semantic context had to be taken seriously. This could mean a grossly material relationship (gods procreating in the manner of the old myths) but, Gregory argues, all men of good sense would rule this out as being inapplicable to the Supreme Deity. He is not simply distancing Christianity from old style polytheism here, but also offsetting the Aetian argument that he could not take the Scripture seriously when it spoke about fathering and sonship, unless he either accepted a mythological understanding of divine begetting, or the simplest symbolic meaning of the words which taught a superiority and inferiority between the progenitor and the product. If, however, dependent inferiority is invoked in relation to the being of the Son then it would follow that the Son could not be God (*Autotheos, Autogenes*).

Gregory exegeted the highly symbolic analogy of Scripture that God fathered Son as connoting neither of the polarized positions the Arians wanted to force him to. And if neither case applied, then, he said, 'natural relationship' here must mean a relation 'from out of' the divine nature (*ek tēs ousias*). Like an earthly son to a father, the relationship is one in which the nature is the same (shared), the patterns of relations alone introducing differentiation. Gregory thus posed what would be the basis for all Greek Christian Trinitarian thought after him: one single self-same nature in the deity (not a shared divine substrate, but precisely the same being) personally hypostasized in three discrete ways. This single nature, which is that of the Father, is given to the Son and to the Holy Spirit; who as distinct *hupostasis* manifest that single nature by virtue of their relationship with the Father who is its source. This energy of relation (*schesis*) is a divinely mysterious thing, for Gregory, but it conveys the manner in which the divine Monad exists in and of itself, and also the manner in which the deity is perceived and operates within the material world. The important distinction (for all later Christian thought) was thus established that the Immanent Trinity

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[12] He criticized Platonic emanation theory, from the One to the Many, as indiscriminately posed: 'Messy, like an overflowing bowl'. *Oration* 29.2.

(God as He is *in se*) and the Economic Trinity (God as he works *ad extra*) had to be conceived as indissoluble. Statements about God, for Gregory, could only be derived from the revealed effects of the Trinity. In other words we can know of the Economic Trinity according to its effects in the world (revelation, salvation, sanctification, illumination). This is authentic knowledge of God, even though perfect apprehension of God *in se* is an impossibility for mortal beings.[13] Incidentally, the location of the category of relation (*schesis*) as now in the heart of the divine reality (the Supreme God as Triad of *hupostases*) did much to weaken Aristotle's relegation of that category as an incidental accident. Gregory's insistence that the concept of individual subsistent persons (*hupostaseis*) in dynamic inter-relation (*perichōrēsis*) was now the core of the religious–philosophical agenda (what emerged as the classical doctrine of the Holy Trinity after him) did much to propel the concept of personhood to the centre of the philosophical stage in the history of later western thought.

The formal terms of this theological settlement on the ultimate nature of God (one *ousia* and three *hupostaseis*) had been in Christian vocabulary since the time of Origen; but Gregory's exegesis was radically new. He insisted that the single nature of the deity was not a common substrate: as if Godhead was a set of properties that collectively could be attributed to something or someone; such that, for example, there were three beings who all shared this commonality, and so were all entitled to being called divine (or gods). This was a common confusion of earlier Christian ages when the divine unity was insisted on, so as to sustain Christianity's claim to monotheism; but the basis of the claim for the divinity of the Son (and Spirit) had not been properly elaborated. The Monarchianism of the second- and third-century Christian theologians had been unable to clarify the problem of how number could be involved in the singleness of the Monad. Gregory was to provide the definitive post-Nicene answer. The divinity was not a common substrate: it was precisely the deity of the Father. What this meant was that deity is not a nature in the common sense of that term (qualifying attributes), but a personal way of the supreme being's existence: how he is; how he acts.

For Gregory the primary revelation of that (which the Church possessed in its sacred books), was the verb (never the noun) 'Father'. The term 'Father' is the supreme revelatory symbol of God, Gregory says, and not the attribute of being 'ingenerate' (*agennētos*) as Aëtius and Eunomius had supposed, following the non-biblical philosophical tradition. Accordingly, He is known as God because

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[13] This theology would be developed by the Byzantine Church in a significant distinction: that God's *ousia* remains unknown while his *energeia* are communicated to creatures. The *energeia* are divine, however, thus mortal perception of the transcendent God within this cosmos is possible.

he fathers his Son. The Son is thus God from God, a natural derivation from the Fatherhood. Because the Father confers his own being on the Son, all that the Son has is of the Father. All that the Son is, *is* the Father, with the single exception of the difference in relation. Gregory defines the *propria*, which distinguish the otherwise undifferentiated Monad into a Triad, as the particular relations of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The 'fathering' is the manner in which God the Father acts as *aitia* and *archē* of the Godhead (cause and principle). The Sonship is the manner in which the Son-*Logos* acts as the *Gennētos* of the Supreme Cause: his Only-Begotten, through whom he made the world and worked its redemption by virtue of using him as the medium of enlightenment and divine grace. The Spirit is the process of the Father's being; a process which relates the Spirit (beyond speech) to the eternal life of God, and yet also to the Creation, which it 'animates' 'sanctifies' and 'inspires' through the *Logos*, who made and redeemed the world. For this technical description of the Spirit Gregory searched the scripture and elevated John's Gospel (John 15.26) as providing the central term of 'procession' (*ekporeusis*). This *ekporeusis* is the particular way the Spirit relates the *ousia* of the Father which is given to him, as it is to the Son, to accomplish and perfect sanctification (understood as harmonization of the principles of existence).

The possession of the self-same being means that all three are one (in essence). In relation they are three-fold and distinct; yet even in their relations, Gregory argues, they are constantly brought back to supreme oneness: for 'Fathering' and 'being Son' is a relationship of unity and of moving together, not a relation of separation. And the Father's procession of the Spirit is likewise a movement of return, not of distance; because the role of the Spirit is to draw back all creation to the Son, that through the Son all life might be brought to the life-giving presence of the Supreme Good. If the Son and Spirit pull all the cosmos towards God, as the fundamental purpose of their economic actions in the world, all the more do they relate to the Father, mutually, as a mystery of return and union. So, as the root of his Trinitarian theology, Gregory argues that the personal being of the Father which all three have as their own (the Father having it as the *archē* of the others, the Son and Spirit having it in relation to the Father) is what makes them one; and equally, the three-fold relations that they constitute also make them one (though simultaneously being the root of differentiation by number).

For Gregory numerical differentiation is, therefore, quite different from the concept of separateness. Number, for Gregory's Trinitarian thought, which is never conditioned by time or space, can 'run to consilience', as he puts it, in ways that cannot be imagined in time and space-bound contexts. The hypostatical distinctness of the Triune God is not an introduction of separation, as much

as the most acute revelation of intellective forms of refining the apprehension of the self-same transcendent being. It had been the notion of the singleness of the Supreme Being as a dominant Monarchy that had dominated Christian thought before Gregory. The concept of the triad as having the self-same *ousia* of the Father (not some common 'stuff' of deity but three ways of expressing the Father's single being), is what he powerfully brings to bear on the subject. But also his other great contribution is the expression of the mysterious manner in which, in the inner life of God, all things run together into union and harmony: how the *hupostases* themselves (the very distinctions we make in the Trinity) are exactly the causes of the energy of divine unity (*Oration* 29.2) not simply its differentiation. With Gregory, at this moment, relation was put into the category of ontological substantives, no longer accidentals. This process was after him to be known as *perichōrēsis* theology (the word derives from the term for 'dancing the round' and for Christians evoked the harmony of intra-Trinitarian love and harmony). It would forever enliven Christian thought after him, and locate the future development of the concept of personhood in the social and moral contexts.

Gregory came to this view from a deep reflection on the scriptural analogies about God understood as revelatory symbols, but specifically (since the fourth century was above all else the era when interpretation of the Scriptures came into widespread crisis among Christians) as that central premiss had been mediated to him through Origen of Alexandria's overarching axiom that the life of God, as the creation discerned it, meant primarily the process whereby God manifested aspects of his being simply in order to draw the world into union with himself (the world's salvation). The Economic Trinity was revealed. The Immanent Trinity remained hidden, because transcendent. If the Economic Trinity thus manifests the process of union; even more so will the Immanent Trinity demonstrate it. He is able, against the Arians who argued the 'Father is greater than the Son' (John 14.28) by nature, to reply that the Father is greater than the Son or Spirit, only in terms of being the Cause and Principle. In all other respects, especially in terms of nature and rank, the *Logos* and the Father (the Divine Immanent, and the Sublime Transcendent) are but one reality (John 10.30). It was this insight, more than any other single argument, that finally quietened the Arian crisis in Christian philosophy, and stabilized the classical doctrine of the co-equal Tri-unity of the Supreme Monad for the later Church.

However, Gregory was shaped in yet other precise ways by the logicians Aëtius and Eunomius, for they had argued, in the *Suntagmation*, and *First Apology*, respectively, that logic was the primary medium and method of all theology. For them, the scriptural revelatory terms said all that there was to say, and

revealed all with perfect clarity to any mind that had been trained in basic logic. A systematic theologian therefore, could say all that there was to say about the deity. Thus if the Son derived his being as a *gennēma*, he was a creature. And the Father was Uncreated as *agennētos*. Nothing more needed to be said. Gregory argued, against this (both the doctrine and the style of it), that even revelatory words were merely partial, obscure and mysterious. Mystery was not an obfuscation of thought, he believed, but the highest level of human noetic[14] attainment: the level where it strained for the perception of a God whose reality transcended all human materially rooted conceptions. At this highest level of divine apprehension the mind was straining, 'receiving light from light in light' as he often describes it, in a way that was anticipating the soul's necessary transformation in the 'Next Age' when, given more angelic capacities in a higher state of being, it could attain to the vision of God more clearly. Even in the next age, Gregory warns his readers, the angels cannot apprehend the unfathomable God. In this age, therefore, mortal philosophers need to have some modesty in estimating the scope of their endeavours. Even to speak about material realities is hard enough: to discourse on noetic truth is hazardous indeed. This passage in *Oration* 28.4 is a deliberate tongue-in-cheek rebuke of Plato's *Timaeus* 28c. He ends *Oration* 28, which is much concerned with advocating the need for an apophatic style of discourse, with the reminder: 'We have been much engaged here in a great struggle to show that even to contemplate secondary natures is simply too much for human minds to sustain. Much more acute is the problem in regard to the First and Single Nature, not even to mention the All-Transcendent.'[15]

For Gregory, theology at the highest level was akin to poetry: an artistic intuition of supreme reality attained only by those who had purified themselves extensively through *askēsis* and learning (*Orations* 20.12; 39.9; and 40.5–6). But it was also more redolent of 'fishermen's nets', he says, than philosophical acuity (*Oration* 28.13). He means by this that it is dependent in humility on the simple 'Apostolic' scriptural utterances (these are the fishermen); and should retain a sober simplicity. The intuition of God was not commonplace in humanity he believed. It was lost irretrievably by those who approached the 'mystery' too sure of themselves; lacking the necessary reverence and awe. He is clearly influenced in this approach by commonalities of the mystery cults of his age; but the grounds of the theology are deeply embedded in the Pauline theology of the

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[14] Using the *Nous* as a term connoting the 'spiritual intellect'; that is the use of intellect at its highest level wherein it could deduce heavenly realities by reference to elevated spiritual deductions from (ascetically refined) material experiences.

[15] The First and Single Nature being the *Logos*; the All-Transcendent being the Father, *Oration* 28.30.

New Testament too.[16] The large difference between Gregory's position and the usual philosophical reliance on mystery language, however, is that the temporal mission of the Son and the Spirit is to bind the material world in closest bonds to the Godhead. The Incarnation of the *Logos*, in Christian thought, was a 'step too far' for most religious philosophy in the fourth century. Eunomius, albeit a Christian philosopher himself, was scandalized by it,[17] and for that reason, while he accepted the idea of the *Logos*' mediation of divine grace to the world, he was compelled to deny the divine status of the *Logos*. For Gregory, the intimate assumption of the material into the divine process, such as the Incarnation signified (a symbol also of the destiny of transfigured progress from matter to spirit that the Church as the mystical body of the *Logos* was called) was the heart and purpose of the Trinity, considered as God's outreach to his world. For Gregory, the doctrine of the Supreme Reality as Trinity, and the notions of the illumination and rescue of the cosmos, are harmonized in one elegant philosophical vision.

Many commentators have presumed that Gregory fell subject to geriatric depressions in his later years. This is largely based on a mis-contextualized reading of his poems on virtue and the human condition, where he reprised a number of classical themes about the futility and corruptibility of human nature. He robustly describes human life in all its miseries, as dark and caustic as any Cynic glance at the follies of mortal life ('how long have I to endure this relentless life as a turd-making machine?');[18] but he turns his final lines around to the call on suffering mortals to hope in a redemptive power. Using the transitional (and biblical) idea of the soul lying under the heavy hand of God's judgement ('I lie helpless, divine terror has bowed me to the dust') he ends his lament on the catalogue of human sufferings, with an affirmation of the need to live a life of Christian sobriety, poised between the frightening realities of seeing horror with a clear eye, and the grounds of hope that trust in the mercy of the *Logos* can bestow. It is typical of Gregory, however, that his awareness of the problem of suffering does not blow away like mist as he introduces the theme of faith.

A major theme of this philosophical poetry is that humanity is the 'Third Creation'. It has a primary place in his *opus* where he attempts to shore up the

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[16] Romans 11.25; 16.25; Ephesians 1.9; 3.3; 3.9; Colossians 1.26–7; 2.2; 1 Tim. 3.9 and the witty reversal of the mystery discipline of the *arcana*, in 1 Tim. 3.16: 'Great indeed is the mystery of our religion which we proclaim.'

[17] 'God could never possibly come into contact with generation, so as to communicate his own nature to a thing that was generated. God must escape all comparison, or association, with anything that is generated,' Eunomius *First Apology* 9.

[18] *Poem on the Vileness of the Outer Man. Carmina* 1.2.15, lines 120–2.

coherence of Christian anthropology after Origen's speculations on the fall of
the soul to earth had largely been rejected by Christian thinkers of the fourth
century. The First Creation, as Gregory posits it, is that of the noetic beings
(the angels) which is entirely coherent and ontologically consistent. They are
possessed of innate instincts for the higher life; and are thus stable and filled
with beatitude; illuminated and radiant. The Second Creation is that of the
material orders. It too is coherent and ontologically stable in its own way.
Being material, of course, it is transient in a way that noetic life is not. But its
transience is not problematic, for its life is renewed in cycles of rebirth, and no
aspect of the Second Creation is endowed with the penetrating insight of the
Noetic orders so that its enslavement to decay ever becomes obvious or grievous
to it. It is the Third Creation which Gregory finds to be incomprehensible:
humanity. In the manner of the Psalmists he questions God in his poems as to
why he saddled human kind with such suffering arising from a nature which
is a mixture of incompatibles. The Third Creation stands midway between
noetic and material being. Humanity alone in the cosmos bears the blessing
of transcendent imagination, and the spiritual acuity that goes with that, but it
also shares the doom of the cycle of material coming-into-being, and material
decay, that is characteristic of Second Creation. In Humanity's case the marriage
of spiritual intelligence and material corruptibility is a profound ontological
suffering, a sorrow that is almost unbearable. In Gregory's anthropological poems
of lamentation[19] he regularly rehearses common Hellenistic tropes about the
pain of life: rehearsing the customary three philosophical questions: 'What are
you from? What are you now? What are you going to be?' (to which he
answers: slime, meat, dust). He argues that the Aristotelian view of a human
being coming to a climactic *telos* that reveals its fundamental *ēthos*, is drastically
mistaken; for the *ēthos* of a person as provided by material empirical scrutiny
has to be ultimately one of decay and loss; and to seek, as was commonly the
case, to posit the definition of our nature as revealed in the teleotic moment of
our maturity and beauty, is a grave and unsatisfying illusion.

   On the other hand, he also takes Platonic theory to task for teaching that
the soul is immortal, and will find its beatitude in release from the flesh and
its constraints. Everything in human life, Gregory argues, makes it clear that
the human *ēthos* is not disembodied soul but embodied psychic consciousness.
Plato's consideration of human psychic identity, he implies, mistakes noetic and
psychic being. To resolve this dilemma (the two terms of the enthymemetic
argument he has sketched by his critique of the two great schools) he posits

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[19] See especially *De Animae Suae Calamitatibus Carmen Lugubre*, *Carmina* 2.1.45, *PG* 37.1353–78.
   English version in Gilbert 2001: 157–69. *Poem on Human Nature*, *Carmina* 1.2.14, lines 129–31.

the alternative of Christian faith. This suggests, for Gregory, that the soul of the righteous human will be transfigured from out of the material order, lifted up from being a psychic entity, into becoming a noetic reality, on a level with the angels. The transfigurative process is directed by the moral, sophic, life of Christian asceticism: the turning away in the core of the being from the death-doomed vagaries of the material order, and the setting of the mind and heart onto higher realities that both promise and fulfil the soul's vocation to a transcendent ontology. His doctrine of angelic metamorphosis was not, in fact, a commonly taught Christian doctrine of his age at all. It is a very moderated form of Origen's conception of the return of the fallen *psuchai* to their ontological origin in the divine *Logos* (though as now stated stripped of its pre-existence implications); and was supported in the fourth century mainly by his own disciples Gregory of Nyssa and Evagrius of Pontus; the latter who especially develops the ascetical ramifications of the idea, namely that the life of the sage is divine and deifying.

In his long poem on the subject, the *Carmen Lugubre*, Gregory uses the image of himself as a young man standing between two antique maidens who have come to him as heavenly visitors to show him the path to metamorphosis. In his Christian telling of the tale they are the ideal forms of Chastity and Sobriety initiating him into the heavenly life. It is a clear evocation of the Eleusinian Mystery which involved the deification of Triptolemus, poised between Demeter and Kore who burn away his mortal half. The scene formed one of the central panels around the Eleusinian sacred precinct, and is still preserved today in the Athens Archaeological museum, with a life-size copy in the Metropolitan Museum, New York. It is surely a scene Gregory saw for himself in his time at Athens, and which he boldly uses to sketch out this dramatic theory of the deification of the race. It would be a macro-theory of the 'Ascent of Man' (*Theopoiēsis*) which would take stronger hold in the Byzantine Christian intellectuals of later centuries, but Gregory certainly paves the way for a transition between the theories of late Second Sophistic on transcendence, and the fifth-century patristic rearticulation of the Gospel imperatives. In this he positioned himself as one of the leading Christian sophists of the earlier period. Considering his significant contributions to Christological doctrine (the function of the active soul in the Incarnate *Logos*), his structuring of the classical Trinitarian theory, his interesting rehabilitation of Origenian anthropology, and not least his pure Hellenistic idiom, Gregory Nazianzen seems to have been unjustly neglected as a major Christian sophist.

CALCIDIUS

GRETCHEN REYDAMS–SCHILS

I LIFE AND WRITINGS

We know next to nothing about Calcidius, and besides a partial translation of and commentary on Plato's *Timaeus* no other works are attributed to him. The translation preserved under his name renders Plato's *Timaeus* up to 53c, the commentary starts only at 31c. His understanding of Greek is not flawless, and his Latin phraseology can be distinctly odd, but the latter feature can also be explained by the dominance of the Greek original. There is a possibility that the commentary as we have it is not complete. In the less well-known second edition of this work (1975; the first dates from 1962),[1] Waszink concedes (CLXXXVI) that in the case of terminological similarities between Calcidius and other Latin writers, such as Ambrose, Calcidius could well have been the source, in contrast to his earlier claim.[2] With this concession, and given the notorious fluidity of metrical *clausulae* for dating purposes, the investigation into Calcidius' Latinity is reopened, together with the possibility that he may belong, after all, with the first half of the fourth century CE. This would bring the account closer in date to Iamblichus, with whom Platonism took a decisive turn apparently ignored by Calcidius, or the Christian Origen (who died c. 254), rather than place it late in the fourth century or even in the early fifth, as Waszink has done.

It has generally been assumed that Calcidius is a Christian. What we can say for certain is that his addressee appears to be a Christian (chs. 126, 133), and so Calcidius could be making some concessions to his patron. That this Osius would have been the bishop of Cordoba is a matter of conjecture. Calcidius' localized concessions to Christian views have little influence on the commentary as a whole. His material from 'the Hebrews', which he does not always accept uncritically (chs. 219, 276, 278), appears to be merely integrated into his doxographical overviews, as one stance among others. Calcidius adheres to the

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[1] *Timaeus a Calcidio translatus commentarioque instructus*, ed. J. Waszink. All references to Calcidius are according to this edition.
[2] Waszink 1962: XIV. See also Courcelle 1973: 172–84.

doctrine of the eternity of the world, and posits matter as a co-principle with and independent from god (see below). He does not Christianize the *Timaeus* but rather makes the case for Platonic doctrine as he understands it. It is also possible that he did not realize that the Platonist Origen and the Christian one could have been two different people. Moreover, the very act of writing a commentary on a non-Christian text (in which Boethius would engage as well, but at a later stage), even at the request of an influential patron, may set him apart from the Christian circles of his time. Thus this work forces us to rethink the boundaries between Christian and pagan affiliations in the fourth century CE.

2 THOUGHT

(i) Hermeneutical principles and structure of the commentary

Calcidius himself provides us with the key to the structure of his exposition. He uses transitions in the *Timaeus* account together with a markedly sequential approach, moving from more basic to complex and advanced topics. In ch. 264, at the close of the second part of the commentary, he indicates that all of philosophy consists of theory (*consideratio*) and practice (*actus*). The former is subdivided into mathematical 'science', the investigation of nature or physics in the ancients' sense, and theology. The closest parallel for this division is in Alcinous' *Didaskalikos* (chs. 3 and 7).[3] Calcidius, as was common in antiquity, considers the *Timaeus* overall as a work of natural philosophy, yet in his treatment he appears to follow his distinction between science, physics and theology.

The sequence of 'science' (arithmetic, astronomy, geometry and music, or what Calcidius also calls *artificialis/es ratio(nes)*, or *artificiosas*), physics and theology explains why Calcidius in his commentary skips the famous opening of the character Timaeus' speech, with its crucial distinction between being and becoming (27d5–29d3), and picks up the text at the composition of the world body, with a mathematical exposition about middle terms, proportions and numerical analogy (31b3–32c4). The overall structure of the commentary thus looks as follows:

   A. Mathematics and the Order of the Universe (chs. 8–118);
   Ba. Physics (chs. 119–267);
   Bb. Theology, the Foundational Principles of Reality (chs. 268–355).

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[3] Which in turn have been derived, in the tradition, from passages such as Aristotle, *Met.* 1026a6ff.

At the opening of Ba, in ch. 119, Calcidius indicates that he has completed his exposition of the mathematical structures of reality, and at the end of the commentary, he returns to the need for mathematical knowledge, thus providing the work with cyclical closure. The transition between Ba and Bb is also governed by a distinction internal to the *Timaeus* (47e) between the works of reason and the works of necessity. Given that his treatment of the foundational principles falls under the commentary's heading of necessity, which he has borrowed from the *Timaeus* and its introduction to the receptacle, he focuses on matter, and its relation to the forms or ideas.

The mathematical section of the commentary provides Calcidius with his authorial voice. The *Timaeus* is a difficult text, he contends, because it requires a thorough knowledge of technical aspects of mathematics. He compares Plato's account to an ideal model, like an intelligible form, that is hard to grasp; the translation as a mere copy of that model risks being even more obscure, and so the commentary needs to come to its rescue (*Ep.* 6.8–9; ch. 4, 58.20–2). Calcidius borrows the ontological model and copy language from the *Timaeus* to reflect on the practice of writing a commentary, and as the one writing such an exposition, he becomes a philosopher in his own right who bridges the gap between copy and model. If he used other commentaries on the *Timaeus* as models for his undertaking (see below), he does not mention them.

Calcidius' self-consciousness as commentator reveals itself in other features of his work as well. Unlike others, Platonists presumably, who in a detestable lack of generosity keep the riches of their knowledge to themselves (ch. 3), Calcidius is willing to share all he knows, including the knowledge to which he has access in sources, with his reader. His general hostility towards Plato's successors is quite striking (chs. 243, 255.4–8; chs. 246, 256.14–16),[4] and apart from Philo of Alexandria or Numenius, and possibly Origen – if he had the Platonist Origen in mind – he does not mention any of these thinkers by name, but again and again returns to Plato himself as the grand master. In addition, he does not hesitate, throughout the commentary, to use a first-person voice, an *ego* or *nos*.

Unlike other Platonist commentators after Plotinus, who adopt the principle that 'everything is in everything, but in a mode that is proper to the being of each',[5] Calcidius adheres to a strictly sequential interpretation, or a ladder of knowledge, which runs from the more elementary to the more advanced topics. This principle applies both to his reading of the *Timaeus* and to how

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[4] His approach can be compared to Atticus fr. 1 des Places and Numenius frs. 24–8 des Places.

[5] Cf. Porphyry, *Sententiae* 10; Iamblichus may have attributed this principle to Numenius as well, apud Stob. 1, 365.15 Wachsmuth.

he sees the relation between the *Timaeus* and other Platonic dialogues. He interprets the *Timaeus* as the sequel to the *Republic*: whereas the *Republic* treats 'positive' justice in human settings, the *Timaeus* focuses on 'natural justice' at a cosmic and divine level (ch. 6). This vantage point anticipates in particular the emphasis on divine Providence and human responsibility in the second part of the commentary, the so-called treatise on fate (see below). The *Timaeus*, in turn, is followed by the *Parmenides*: the *Timaeus* is a predominantly *naturalis* exposition, the *Parmenides* is 'more *epoptica*', a relative term that for Calcidius indicates a more advanced stage of knowledge. The *Parmenides* deals with the forms, and the connection between sensible and intelligible reality (chs. 272, 335). This would put Calcidius on the side of those who, according to Proclus (*Theologia Platonica* 1.32–55 Saffrey and Westerink, *In Parm.* 630.15–645), read the *Parmenides* as an ontological rather than as a logical treatise, but also among those who do not interpret it as dealing primarily with a radically transcendent One. A position such as Calcidius' is elsewhere attested for the Platonist Origen (Proclus, *Theologia Platonica* 2.31.4–22).

The sequential approach within the commentary is evident in a passage about the composition of the World Soul in its first part, which proves essential to the entire exposition (chs. 29–31). There are two main lines of interpretation, according to Calcidius, about the World Soul's intermediary status between indivisible and divisible being: according to one group, divisible being refers to matter, and indivisible to form, according to the other, among whom Calcidius ranks himself, the two kinds of being refer, on the one hand, to a purely noetic type of soul and, on the other, a soul as life-force that is the inseparable companion of bodies. He endorses the second interpretation because to bring in matter, the foundation of corporeality, at this point would imply a return to the previous treatment of the universe's body, and hence imply a clumsy and meandering Plato. Once Plato has moved on to the World Soul, his account needs to be explained in terms pertaining to the soul, not in terms of matter and bodies. Calcidius' rendering of the lower type of soul is sufficiently broad to encompass Numenius' position as well (chs. 295–9), which he will discuss and reject towards the end of the commentary (chs. 352–end), but it is also neutral enough to bracket, at this early stage in the commentary, the question of evil in the form of ontological deficiency.

Thus issues are raised in a simpler form earlier in the commentary, only to be unfolded later in the exposition. A good example of this technique in the first part of the commentary is Calcidius' short-hand reference to the claim that the world is eternal because it is made by a god in the image of an eternal model (chs. 23–5, *Timaeus* 28b7–8; c2–5). It will take his reader until the end of the commentary as we have it to understand fully how Calcidius

interprets this claim, and what he means by 'god'. The most well-known and important sub-treatises in Calcidius' exposition are the ones on *daimones* (chs. 127–36), on fate (chs. 142–90), on the human soul (chs. 213–35), and on matter (chs. 275–354, roughly one third of the commentary).

(ii) Key themes in the commentary

The first part of the commentary (chs. 8–118) is different from the other two. Calcidius appears to depend on one main source, the Peripatetic Adrastus, as a number of parallel passages with Theon of Smyrna prove (this has led scholars to search for a single main source for the other parts of the work as well, if not for the commentary as a whole, but Calcidius' method could have varied with his range of topics). The structure is more clumsy. He repeats the same passages from the *Timaeus*, in particular the passage about the X form of the World Soul (36b6–d7; chs. 52, 58, 92) and about its cognitive functions (37a2–b3; chs. 52, 56, 103). As of ch. 92, he returns to the sequence of Plato's text, and just as Plato mentions the irregular motions of the heavenly bodies several times, so does Calcidius. Yet even in this section of the commentary, in which Calcidius seems highly dependent on his source(s), the technique of using summary statements shows how he orders his material. On the complicated topic of the composition of the World Soul, and at crucial junctions in his exposition, he takes stock of what he has established so far (chs. 51–4, 102).

Underlying the entire first section of the commentary is the principle that numbers are foundational in the ontological sense, and that they ground geometry and music as well (ch. 53). Numbers themselves derive from the monad and dyad (ch. 53), and the monad, which does not appear to play a major role in the remainder of the commentary, here appears as the fountainhead of physical reality (ch. 39). This monad is to be interpreted as mind, intellect or the maker god, which, as we will see, is actually not the highest divine entity for Calcidius.

The composition of the World Soul (chs. 29–31) out of a lower soul-type and a higher, purely noetic one accounts for its role in the world (ch. 31, chs. 51–4). Both the World Soul and the human soul – for which Calcidius tends to emphasize the similarities with the World Soul and to downplay the differences – constitute the meeting ground in the universe for the two poles of reality, the divine and intelligible realm, on the one hand, and matter and the pre-ordered features of the world, including the lower soul, on the other. Calcidius embraces a clearly dualist view of the world. The explanation he provides for this structure of the World Soul is two-fold. One goes as far back, at least, as the early Academic Crantor (fourth–third century BCE; cf. Plutarch, *De animae procreatione* 1012f–1013a) and has a clear affinity with Plato's account

itself (37b6–c3): the World Soul has cognition of *both* intelligible and sensible reality. Throughout his account, Calcidius highly values doxastic reason – i.e., the type of higher-order cognition the World Soul and human souls can have of physical reality. In the case of humans he, like Aristotle and the Stoics, recognizes the epistemic value of sense-perception as well (the World Soul has no need of sense-perception and the world body has no sense organs). The second explanation, however, goes considerably beyond Plato's account in assigning to the World Soul also the role of providential care for the world. Providence is a distinct *leitmotiv* of the commentary, and Calcidius posits a chain of providential presences in the world, from god over the World Soul, and *daimones* all the way down to human beings.

After the composition of the world body, Calcidius inserts a mini-exposition on why the world is eternal. This notion, however, is ambiguous: it can mean, according to a literal reading of the *Timaeus*, (a) that once the world has been made, it will last forever, or it can mean, more strongly, (b) that the world as we know it had no beginning in time either. The three reasons Calcidius gives for the eternity of the world (chs. 23–5) are (1) in answer to the question who made the world, that the relation between god and the world is not a temporal, but a causal one, that is, that for the world to depend on god, it does not need to have had a temporal starting point; (2) in answer to the question what the world is made of, that there is nothing left of the elements outside of the world, which has taken up all material in its composition, to weaken or dissolve it; and (3) in answer to the question of the model, that the world has been made in the image of an eternal model. The first and third reasons underscore the stronger reading of the eternity of the world, as not having had a temporal beginning as well as being ever lasting. But when Calcidius again discusses the relation between time and eternity, he also claims that the sensible world has been made in a single instant (ch. 105: *uno eodemque momento mundus exaedificabatur sensilis*). This statement does not contradict his earlier claim only if the instant he has in mind does not refer to a moment *in time*, but to the divine eternal present. (He also could not mean *the first moment of time*, that the world came about together with time, even though that is how the later tradition tries to reconcile his account with Genesis. For Calcidius it is Nature, as a causal agent within the world, that is co-eval with time, ch. 24, 74.3–4: *par enim et aequaevum natale naturae ac temporis*; time is a process within the world, but the world as such is not bound by it.) If the world is eternal, so is, *a fortiori*, the World Soul (ch. 26), but, again, this eternity does not prevent the World Soul from being dependent on a higher causal divine agency. Finally, as indicated above, the divine and intelligible realm is not the only extra-temporal side of reality; the powers of soul and body (ch. 31), meaning in this context the lower, vital soul-type and

matter, are primordial as well, and exist independently of divine agency, there to be ordered by its rational influence.

The second part of the commentary, with its focus on physics (chs. 119–267), clearly states the principle of plenitude, that every level in the universe has its own kind of life-form, and that between the heavenly bodies and human beings, there are other intelligent beings occupying the aether, the air, and the humid level close to earth, namely the *daimones*. The principle of plenitude relies on the notions developed in the first part of the commentary, of analogy and of continuous geometrical proportion, whereby two extreme terms that have nothing in common need a third and mediating term to connect them. Calcidius' account appears to have been inspired by the daimonology of the ps.-Platonic *Epinomis*.

His treatment of the Demiurge's speech, and specifically of 'the laws of an immutable decree' (41e2–3: *nomoi heimarmenoi*), leads to an elaborate assessment of Providence and fate (chs. 142–90, with the laws of fate up to ch. 199). This again underscores how central the notion of Providence is to Calcidius' interpretation of the *Timaeus*. There are parallels between this part of the commentary and a treatise *De fato* wrongly ascribed to Plutarch, as well as Nemesius (fourth century CE, *De natura hominis* 34–44). Calcidius is strongly attracted to the Stoic notion of an all-encompassing Providence, yet he is also very careful about distinguishing his position from the Stoic one.

Providence ranks higher than fate; everything that falls under fate is also governed by Providence, but not the other way around. Intelligible reality is exempt from fate, but included in Providence. Fate in substance is the World Soul, fate in act consists of its law(s). Of the entities that do fall under fate, some, such as the heavenly bodies, are eternal and unchanging, others are not. In the sublunary realm, the changes of physical and material entities are controlled by fate. But human beings are exempt from this control to the extent that they can make their own choices. In addition to Providence, fate and human choice, Calcidius also accepts the Aristotelian definitions of chance (*tuchē*) and 'spontaneity' (*to automaton*, which Calcidius renders as *casus*; cf. Aristotle, *Physics* 2.6).

Calcidius faces three main problems in his defence of an all-inclusive Providence. How can fate, and by implication Providence, encompass all of reality, including sublunar, physical reality, without becoming indefinitely varied itself? The answer to this conundrum lies in Plato's notion of the Great Year, the cycle of time it takes the heavenly bodies to find themselves again in the exact same position and alignment vis-à-vis each other: circular time provides the proper boundary for fate. Secondly, if divine Providence is all good and does encompass all of reality, what causes moral evil in humans and ontological deficiency in

the universe? We need the third and final part of the commentary to address this question.

The most important question, however, turns around human responsibility. In a striking move, compared with other Platonist voices,[6] Calcidius tries to establish that divine foreknowledge does not predetermine all outcomes because god knows each thing according to *its* nature rather than his, that is, he knows the contingent ones as necessarily contingent. In human actions as a specific subset of contingent matters, fate is merely hypothetical; it does not prefigure such actions, but merely connects certain consequences with certain occurrences. It is this hypothetical fate that allows for human freedom and responsibility: human beings can choose between good and evil; fate distributes the positive and adverse consequences, the rewards and punishments, according to the choices that have been made. In this manner, Calcidius assumes, fate and the providence that encompasses it can be all-inclusive without jeopardizing human freedom.

Embedded in the treatise of fate are two crucial paragraphs that give us the fullest picture of Calcidius' notion of the divine (chs. 176, 188). The highest god is unknowable, ineffable, and said to be 'above being', by which Calcidius appears to mean the individuality of particular beings, not being as such. The second god is Providence and a first mind, and appears to represent the Demi-urge of the *Timaeus*. Its decrees are passed on to the World Soul, or second mind. Such triadic structures of the divine antedate so-called Neoplatonism. Moreover, the fluidity in Calcidius' distinctions, whereby the second god is called the mind and the will of the first, and both are collapsed into one another in the remainder of the commentary, also point to an earlier phase of Platonism, before a full-fledged notion of the doctrine of emanation and return. Calcidius' schema bears resemblances with Numenius (cf. especially frs. 13, 22 des Places), and with the Stoic relation between a highest divine principle and other divine entities (as, for example between Zeus and Athena in Cornutus, *De natura deorum* 35.7).

Another important and extended sub-treatise in the second part of Calcidius' commentary deals with the substance and the principal part of the human soul, to which he also devotes a treatise (chs. 213–35). Here too doxastic reason, as with the World Soul, is highly valued (ch. 213). Calcidius ascribes to Plato a view that assigns two ruling principles to the human soul (ch. 232): one located in the heart, as spirit in control of the lower appetites and vital functions, the other located in the head, as reason that is to command the soul-body compound in its entirety. Calcidius uses the Latin *vigor* to refer both to spirit as

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[6] Proclus, *In Tim.* 2.352.5–8, 11–16 Diehl, *In Parm.* 965.10ff. Cousin; Boethius, *De consolatione philosophiae* 5.4.24–5, 6.1.

a soul function and to the lower soul as principle of life (cf. above). Hence the term provides the linguistic bridge between this part of the commentary and his earlier exposition of the World Soul's composition.

The third part of the commentary (chs. 268–end) focuses on the topic of matter, but also includes reflections on all the principles of reality. This section of the commentary is carefully structured: it starts with an exposition of points pertaining to Plato's view, then presents both a historical and a systematic overview, and finally returns to the finer distinctions in Plato's account. Calcidius is aware that Plato himself did not use the term matter (*hulē*) as a designation of his receptacle, but that the term was supplied by the subsequent tradition. The section on Aristotle, in the historical overview, is long and detailed (chs. 283–8, with a translation of *Physics* 1.9, 192a3–34). From Aristotle Calcidius accepts the notions of privation and potentiality. These notions apply to matter in the sense that matter has no features in its own right, but is open to all formations, even though Calcidius is careful also to point out that matter's condition does not constitute potentiality and privation in the ordinary sense (chs. 310, 338). (It is clear that Calcidius and his source attribute the notion of 'prime matter' to Aristotle himself, endorsing the distinction between matter *simpliciter* and proximate matter.) As opposed to the Stoics Calcidius does not accept matter to be corporeal; in his view it is neither corporeal nor incorporeal. Like other Platonists before him[7] Calcidius departs from Aristotle in positing both an intelligible form, or idea, and a sensible one, which is embedded in existing things themselves (chs. 330 and following), and he appears to accept the notion of intelligible matter (chs. 272, 278).

While Numenius, as van Winden points out (1959), is a crucial source, in the end Calcidius parts ways with him and his interpretation of the Pythagorean position as well. According to Numenius, and Pythagoras as he sees him, matter and the evil soul inherent in it together constitute the principle of evil (chs. 295–9). Calcidius' own stance is much less starkly dualist: the movement in matter is not intrinsic, it is caused by traces of the elements that inhere in it. (This also means that Calcidius does not attribute this original motion to a soul principle; his lower soul, as mentioned above, is the principle of life.) Calcidius' matter is completely neutral so as to be entirely amenable to the ordering influence of the Demiurge (chs. 269–70, 331, 354). Matter enters into the formation of corporeal things, but it is the traces of bodies, meaning of the elements that 'precede' the Demiurge's activity, that appear to be the cause of disorder. But for Calcidius these traces are mere 'potentialities' of bodies. Moreover, they are

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[7] Alcinous, *Didaskalikos* 155.39–41, 166.4; cf. also Seneca's testimony *Ep.* 58.20, Philo of Alexandria *Leg.* 2.12.

secondary in the sense that they do not rank among his principles of reality. In this section of the commentary the dominant framework consists of god, the ideas as the thoughts of god, and matter; there are two basic principles of reality, god and matter, and the ideas are dependent upon god. Thus it makes sense to call Calcidius' position a minimal dualism: matter coexists with god, but it is not as such the cause of evil.

(iii) Sources: Porphyry

The issues of Calcidius' sources and the extent of his independence are also still among the debated questions. Porphyry's influence in particular is hard to pin down.[8] One example suffices here to indicate the level of complexity involved in the debate. In one instance of an allusion to the Platonic tradition (ch. 301), we can detect an explicit echo of Porphyry. Among the *auditores Platonis* who hold that matter is eternal and not generated: 'There are also who think that, according to Plato, this disorderly and confused motion [discussed in the previous paragraph] is not present in matter but in the materials and bodies alone which are called "principles and elements of the world"' (ch. 301, trans. van Winden). Calcidius' wording here invites a comparison with a passage in Philoponus,[9] explicitly attributed to Porphyry (as noted in Waszink's edition).

Waszink claims that the stance Philoponus attributes to Porphyry coincides with Calcidius' own line, that evil does not result from matter itself, but from corporeality, which has a derivative and secondary ontological status. Yet there are at least two major problems with Waszink's hypothesis. First of all, there is a crucial difference between Calcidius' own standpoint and the one he has reported in his doxographical overview: for him the elements, precisely because they have a derivative status, cannot be considered principles (*initia*, ch. 307). The second point may be even more problematic. Calcidius has included in his doxography, and not in the main body of his argument, a position that is similar to one elsewhere attested for Porphyry. So, are we to assume that Porphyry included himself in a doxographical schema, from a third-person perspective, rather than presenting himself as giving his own view? This would not be in

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[8] Steinheimer 1912 posits a strong influence of Porphyry, but his method has been rightly criticized by Jones 1918: resemblances between Calcidius and Proclus' commentary on the *Timaeus* cannot automatically be attributed to Porphyry, especially for views that are also attested in Platonism before Porphyry. Van Winden 1959 emphasizes the importance of Numenius rather than Porphyry, but the Porphyry hypothesis has been revived by Waszink, in his edition, and Gersh 1986. The problematic hypothesis is central to Sodano's reconstruction of the fragments of Porphyry's commentary on the *Timaeus* (1964).

[9] *De aeternitate mundi* 14.3, p. 546.5 Rabe; cf. also 6.14, p. 164.16ff.

keeping with the practices of Porphyry's philosophical discourse as attested in our other evidence.

Calcidius appears to have had a limited impact on the Latin tradition immediately following him. There are critical resonances of his work to be found in Ambrose. There are echoes in Favonius Eulogius (ed. Sicherl), a contemporary of Augustine, but Augustine himself appears to have relied rather on Cicero's partial rendering of the *Timaeus*, and Boethius does not appear to have used Calcidius either.[10] But from the eleventh century onwards Calcidius came to dominate the understanding of Plato in the West, and was often confused with the latter. For this reason one could call the translation and the commentary 'the Calcidius pass' from antiquity into the Middle Ages.

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[10] Waszink 1965: n. 28, 1972a, 238, 243–4, the 1975 version of his edition: clxxxvi.

NEMESIUS OF EMESA

BEATRICE MOTTA

Nemesius was a Christian bishop of Emesa, a major city of the Roman province of Phoenicia Libani, in the territory of Syria. Of him we know only that he is the author of a fully extant work entitled *Peri phuseōs anthrōpou* (*On the Nature of Man*), universally known in the West by its Latin title *De natura hominis*. Its date of composition, derivable from historical-cultural references in the text, can very likely be placed between the end of the fourth century and the earliest years of the fifth century.[1] The attribution of this work to Nemesius, bishop of Emesa, is a fact which nowadays no one doubts, since such a heading is found in a number of manuscripts. Indeed, since the sixth century Nemesius has been explicitly identified as the author of the *De natura hominis*, although for a time − in the ninth century and for a few centuries after − it was thought to have been written by Gregory of Nyssa. With this prestigious (and false) attribution, the work was known to Latin scholastics such as Albertus Magnus, Peter Lombard and Thomas Aquinas. The first Latin translation of the work is by Alfanus (1015−1085), archbishop of Salerno and author of medical writings. He assigns to the text the title *Premnon phusikōn*, translated into Latin as *Stipes naturalium* (*The Stem of Natural Things*).

The figure of Nemesius himself is shrouded in mystery, but the text indirectly reveals a learned man, who knows philosophy well (with a particular interest in the Platonic tradition) and who presumably pursued his own education outside an ecclesiastical environment, as is suggested by his balanced attitude and lack of acrimony towards heterodox views, by his evident long familiarity with pagan philosophy, and by the importance he gives to medical science in his ethics. Nemesius seems to have an excellent knowledge of medical science; in *De natura hominis* in particular we can trace the influence of treatises of Galen, of which

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[1] The work does not, however, provide certain information as to its date of composition. The strongest hypothesis, which places the writing between the end of the fourth century and the earliest years of the fifth century, is based on the fact that Nemesius mentions the fourth-century theological controversies (over Apollinarius and the Eunomians), and does not include Eutyches and Nestorius, who were at the centre of a fifth-century theological controversy.

he reveals a notable mastery. He was himself probably not a physician, but rather a learned amateur, whose knowledge of medical theory was acquired as part of his evidently broad cultural and philosophical education.

THE *DE NATURA HOMINIS*

The *De natura hominis* is an explicitly Christian treatise. Addressed to a learned public (but not to specialists in philosophy), it proposes a systematic and in-depth analysis of man who is 'admirably composed of an intellectual soul and a body' (1.1.3). The anthropological reflections of Nemesius are distinguished by several unusual features.

In the first place, Nemesius' methodological approach is peculiar. Although he is intent on proposing a conception of man and of the world based on the strictly Christian principles, Nemesius examines human nature in an almost exclusively philosophical manner. He refers to the Holy Scriptures only to con-firm or verify the correspondence of his own theories with the words of the Bible. His ultimate criterion of truth is certainly Revelation, but he feels no need to examine sacred texts or confront related dogmatic questions. It is highly surprising that in the anthropological conceptions of a bishop of the fourth cen-tury the famous passages of Genesis on the creation of man (Gen. 1.26–7 and Gen. 2.7) play no part, either direct or indirect, despite their having until that time formed the basis of Christian anthropological writings. In addition, the importance given to medical–scientific analysis of psychic and physical processes in Nemesius' consideration of human nature is unusual in early Christian litera-ture. The methodological approach is so atheological that some have suggested that the *De natura hominis* was originally a pagan anthropological treatise and was reworked in Christian terms after the author's conversion.[2]

Secondly, the content of the work presents several peculiarities which are not immediately evident. The *De natura hominis* is built upon a skilful reworking of pagan philosophical doctrines, many of which had already become part of the heritage of Christian thought. Despite that, the philosophical project which emerges as a whole presents interesting and even original characteristics.

Man as microcosm and bond between body and soul

The conceptual nucleus of the anthropology of Nemesius is displayed in the first three chapters of the work (which alone constitute almost a third of the forty-three chapters of the entire work). In the important first section, man,

[2] Cf. below, p. 519.

already defined as 'admirably composed of an intellectual soul and a body', is presented at the centre of the cosmos; he is a microcosm in which the two worlds, sensible and intelligible, which constitute the entire creation are united. According to Stoic theory, which had already been assimilated and reworked in Christian thought,[3] the sensible world is a continuous and harmonious reality, structured in ascending degrees which gradually become more perfected. At the apex of sensible reality is man: he not only summarizes the whole sensible universe (created for him by God), but through his rationality he is connected to the intelligible world. Man therefore is defined not only as a *mikros kosmos*, but also as a *sundesmos* (bond) of creation. To such traditional characterizations are also added the description of man as *mesos/methorios* (intermediary between the sensible and intelligible realities), an idea already present in the Platonic tradition and through Philo assimilated into Christian thought.[4] According to Nemesius, such an intermediary nature implies a non-static role for man; endowed with free will, he has the task of perfecting himself and bringing his still fluid and indeterminate nature to completion and thus winning immortality and subjugating the sensible and corruptible reality to the intelligible one.

The conceptual foundation on which rests the idea of man as *mikros kosmos/sundesmos/mesos/methorios*, called to bring to completion his own nature and achieve immortality, is the unity of body and soul. The soul must animate and mould the body to which it is intimately linked, because it is the entire man who is saved and resurrected. The central philosophical problem of Nemesius' anthropology is constituted by the demonstration of how the (presumed and undemonstrated) union between body and soul can occur: that is, Nemesius takes for granted that soul and body are united and demonstrates how this union occurs.

Nemesius therefore brings to the forefront a complex question which had been introduced into philosophical debate by late Platonism and in particular by Porphyry (see his *Life of Plotinus* 13.11). Indeed, before late Platonism, the problem of the nature of the union between body and soul is practically extraneous to the philosophical tradition and not found in the canonical *quaestiones* around which, in late antiquity, the vast debate on the soul is structured. Among the rival philosophical schools of late antiquity only the Platonists, needing to consider the soul as a separate, incorporeal and transcendent substance, addressed the problem of the unity of living things. Christians, too, more urgently and dramatically than Platonists, had to justify the union between the soul (in the fourth-century East already regarded by general consensus as immortal, incorporeal and transcendent) and the body. In fact, in Christian doctrine the bond

[3] See Greg. Nyss: *De op. hom.* 8.   [4] See Phil. Alex. *Opif.* 135.

between body and soul affects not only our contingent status, but eternal life, since it is the entire man who is to be resurrected. In spite of the relevance of this point, however, it is not explicitly tackled by Christian thinkers before Nemesius. In Christian anthropology in the fourth century, we find several strands: a strong adherence to the conceptual patterns of the Platonic tradition, with their own dualistic implications; the reference to a complex biblical definition of man as the image of God (which subordinates the inquiry into man to that into God, his pattern); the violent Christological controversy which shook the Church between the end of the fourth century and the first half of the fifth and which centred on the problem of the two natures of Christ rather than that of psychosomatic human unity. Nemesius, with his rather lay and unconventional approach, directly tackles the matter at the opening of his third chapter: 'Therefore it is necessary to enquire how the union between the soul and the body devoid of soul occurs' (3.38.12). In so doing he joins a widespread debate on the concepts of physical blending (and their anthropological and cosmological implications), that had arisen some centuries earlier in attacks on the concept of total blending[5] which lay at the base of the Stoic explanation of cosmological and psychological unity. Nemesius considers several kinds of mixtures and unions, to find one that is capable of explaining the connection between body and soul. According to him, we must find a kind of blending that is able to explain how 'the body, united to the soul, still remains a body, and how the soul in turn, being incorporeal and self-subsistent, unites with the body and becomes part of the living being while still keeping its own substance distinct and uncorrupted' (3.38.17–20). In the philosophical solution provided by Nemesius there are two fundamental strands which have to be preserved and respected:

(a) The soul, even if united to the body, cannot corrupt or alter its own nature. Inquiry into the nature of the soul is undertaken in the second chapter of *De natura hominis*, where the definition of the soul is critically demonstrated through an analysis of the most notable doctrines regarding it. After analysis of different views on the soul, presented on the basis of widespread doxographical material, Nemesius concludes that the soul is an incorporeal, self-subsistent and immortal substance apart from the body; he clearly wants to conceive the nature of the soul in Platonic terms. It is important to stress that within a defence of nature of the soul, thus understood, there is also the implicit, but clear, assertion

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[5] See Plutarch (*De communibus notitiis adversus Stoicos* – *On Common Conceptions against the Stoics* 1078b), who explicitly ascribes to the scholarch of Plato's Academy, Arcesilaus (316/5–241/0 BCE), the confutation of the Stoic concept of total blending. The debate crosses the centuries, as can be seen by the *De mixtione* (*On Mixture and Increase*) of Alexander of Aphrodisias, *Enneades* 2.7 (the tractate *On complete transfusion*), and the Platonic source from whom Nemesius drew the doctrine of the union/blending between body and soul.

of its pre-existence. Nemesius, in a deliberately cautious yet resolute way, makes an undoubtedly strange choice, arguing for a doctrine associated with the first harsh condemnation of the thought and the figure of Origen that occurred in the very years when he was writing his work.[6] In early Christian thought Nemesius is the only one who posits the theory of pre-existence of the soul apart from Origen, whose theory is much more elaborate and emerges from a very different anthropology.

(b) The body and the soul must be really united: only together can both body and soul lead man to salvation and, in the resurrection of the flesh, they will be together for eternity.

On the basis of these criteria, Nemesius, following an already traditional classification deriving from Aristotle and the Stoics, analyses three kinds of unions or blendings and concludes that all previously recognized kinds of bodily union must be of two sorts: juxtaposition (*parathesis*), in which the components are placed beside each other but separate from each other, and the 'union' (*henosis*) (which for reasons of clarity is usefully referred to as 'substantial union'), in which the components are so deeply united as to give rise to a *tertium quid* implying the total and complete alteration of its components. Nemesius gives these examples: juxtaposition is like dancers in a choral dance or pebbles one beside each other, while union-*henosis* is like the blending of wine and water that is neither pure water nor pure wine (3.38.23–39.9).

Nemesius has to reject both these possibilities, which are contrary to the criteria which he has established, and adds that he also refutes the solution proposed by Plato, that of the soul which almost wears the body, since the garment cannot be indistinguishable from its wearer (3.39.12–16). He finally satisfies the criteria which he has imposed on his own investigation by having recourse to a sort of union elaborated, he says, by Ammonius Saccas (identified as 'master of Plotinus'). It consists of a union which avoids the alternatives of substantial union and juxtaposition, because this union does not suffer the effects of its physical constituents: Ammonius, says Nemesius, has rethought the notion of union in the case of intelligible substances like the soul. The nature of the intelligibles (that is, the soul separated from the body) is such as to allow them to unite with another substance (that is the body) in a union in which the characteristics of both types of blendings previously mentioned – incorruptibility of its components and, at the same time, deep and real union – can coexist simultaneously without conflict. The intelligible unites with another

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[6] The polemic against Origen arose during the fourth century (in this connection the *Panarion* by Epiphanius is relevant). The first official condemnations were issued between 399 and 401 at the Councils of Alexandria, Jerusalem and Cyprus.

substance giving life to a real union, as happens to the components in the substantial union; at the same time its nature remains distinct and incorrupt, as happens in juxtaposition.[7]

Even if Nemesius' doctrines show influence of the views of others, elements of originality are not lacking and indicate an unusual and interesting philosophical project. Two aspects in particular stand out:

(1) Employment of concepts of blending by Christian thinkers is quite frequent at least up to the fifth century, as is the use of the Porphyrian concept of union – this does not seem to have originated with Nemesius, since it is employed by Gregory of Nyssa in the Christological controversy with Apollinarius (cf. Greg. Nyss. *Ant. adv. Ap.* 217).[8] Such concepts, however, are used in theology to explain the problem of the union between the human and divine natures in Christ, to which the anthropological union between body and soul, approached by a sort of analogical reasoning, is subordinated. Nemesius reverses the relation of priority between these two questions, suggesting an explicit philosophical solution to the thorny and crucial problem of human unity, which up till then had been merely latent in Christian thought.

(2) Nemesius not only rearranges concepts already present in the Christian tradition, but seems to combine them with several new and unusual ideas. In fact the notion of substantial union, reread by 'Ammonius' to explain the union between the intelligible and the sensible, is ascribed by Nemesius to Aristotle (see 5.50.8–16). Such a concept, according to Nemesius, would be the sort of physical mixture which corresponds to the Aristotelian notion of entelechy. Therefore Nemesius wants to use an aspect (that is the supposed mixture at the base of the Aristotelian union of body and soul) of the doctrine of the soul as entelechy, which is nonetheless generally to be rejected (as he argues in the second chapter of the *De natura hominis*: cf. 2.26.10–29.18), since it denies the substantial nature of the soul as both immortal and separable from the body. Nemesius, therefore, underlining the limitations of Plato's approach, aims to appropriate an aspect of Aristotelian psychology, which is able to explain how a real union is possible, but to deprive it of its unacceptable implications for the substantial and immortal nature of the soul. Even if his interpretation of entelechy in terms of mixture is not based on Aristotelian

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[7] In a famous and influential study H. Dörrie claimed Porphyrian paternity for the 'doctrine of Ammonius', derived from the lost *Summikta Zētēmata* of Porphyry, from which Nemesius would have reproduced the *zētēma* dedicated to the question of 'how the soul is united to the body' (Dörrie 1959). However, in 1988 Dörrie's thesis was challenged by J. Rist, who hypothesized a Christian tradition of writings of Pseudo-Ammonius as the source of Nemesius (Rist 1988).

[8] Nemesius also refutes Apollinarius' doctrine and the Monophysite theology (see 1.1.11–14; 2.32.3–19; 3.42.10 ff.)

doctrine,[9] however, Nemesius can be seen to be pursuing an unusual philosophical project: the overcoming of Christian cultural enmity to Aristotelian philosophy – which was consistently ostracized and rejected – and the revision, through an independent judgement, of the aspect of this philosophy which justifies the union of body and soul.

In the rest of Nemesius' treatise we can discern two principal thematic sections.

(1) THE PHYSIOLOGY OF MAN AS MICROCOSM   In the second section of his treatise (chapters 4–28), Nemesius analyses – sometimes technically, and relying extensively on medical-scientific doctrines – faculties of the soul and the body, the psychophysical nexus, and a number of aspects of human physiology.

Chapter 4 begins by explaining the doctrine of the four elements, earth, air, water and fire, which are the basic components into which the world is reduced and whose union produces every natural body. After the theory of the elements, which is elaborated in a synthesis of Stoic, Platonic and Aristotelian concepts, Nemesius examines the organic structures which evolve from the four elements through subsequent transformations. This inquiry is structured as a wide-ranging and elaborate analysis of the human faculties. Nemesius presents a number of heterogeneous classifications of the human faculties. In general it seems that he distinguishes:

(a) Physical and vital faculties (chapters 22–5), unrelated to will and reason; the nutritive faculty, the generative faculty, and the faculty associated with cardiac pulses and blood circulation.

(b) Psychical faculties (chapters 6–13): by these Nemesius understands the faculties involved in cognitive activity, which is structured hierarchically: the perceptive faculty (analysed in an articulated examination of the five senses), the imaginative, and the intellective and mnemonic. As well as knowledge mediated by the senses, Nemesius also recognizes a sort of knowledge of intelligibles, independent of the sensibility and higher than sensed-based cognition, for which he refers explicitly to Platonic *anamnēsis*.

(c) Faculties related to the emotional and affective life (chapters 16–21), which can be controlled by reason, but which are not part of the cognitive processes. Such faculties are attributed to the non-rational soul (*pathētikon*), controllable by reason. Nemesius examines pleasure (*hēdonē*), pain (*lupē*), anger (*thumos*) and fear (*phobos*). In his examination of pleasure, Nemesius takes an unconventional approach for a Christian thinker. Most early Christian Fathers prefer the pattern

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[9] On the whole, Nemesius shows that he has a substantially correct knowledge of Aristotelian psychology (even if often in the interpretation of Alexander of Aphrodisias) and that he distinguishes the intellect from the soul.

of *apatheia* to that of *metriopatheia*; on the contrary Nemesius, in defining plea-
sure, rejects Plato's definition and explicitly adopts that of Aristotle, according
to whom it is an 'activity of the natural state'.[10] Physical and psychical pleasures
must not be set in opposition, since they are all activities in accordance with our
composite human nature; since it is natural, pleasure cannot be an evil in itself,
even if physical pleasure, not having the same dignity as pleasure of the soul,
must be enjoyed in moderation and subordinated to its higher counterpart.

With frequent recourse to Galen, Nemesius offers a complex, technical and
detailed examination of human nature. The *phusis* of man is structured on several
levels, of which the lower is always instrumental to the higher: nevertheless
the lower has its own specific role, which exceeds its instrumental function.
Moreover a conveniently structured part of the body is assigned to each psychical
faculty. Finally there is the description of man as a microcosm, in which every
element is related to the others in a specifically integrated or subordinated way:
the properly psychic faculties command, and in general the other faculties, as
well as the body, serve. In keeping with the first section of the treatise, Nemesius
describes the relationship between body and soul as that of an artificer and his
instruments, but explains the relation as intrinsic, not extrinsic. The body is
partly the fruit of the activity of the soul which animates and shapes it; the soul,
though remaining the active and hegemonic principle, is constantly interacting
with the body.

(2) HUMAN FREEDOM   The last part of the *De natura hominis* addresses the crucial
question of human freedom, a problem of considerable interest to Christian
thinkers in the context of the widespread debate on fate in late antiquity more
generally.

The core of Nemesius' thought on moral freedom (chapters 29–34 and 39–
41) is constituted by an almost literal restatement of the first chapters of the third
book of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*[11] (the author's name being conveniently
and prudently omitted), a position with no precedents in earlier Christian
thought. Appropriating Aristotelian doctrine, which he very probably knew
through some unacknowledged commentary, Nemesius analyses the concepts
of the voluntary (*hekousion*) and the non-voluntary (*akousion*): within volun-
tary action (which is generically understood as spontaneous, including all the
impulses and actions which freely come from the agent and also from animals),
there is specifically human voluntary action. This is described as *prohairesis*, a

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[10] Nem. *Nat. hom.* 18.79.8–9; cf. Arist. *EN* 1153a14.
[11] Cf. Nem. *Nat. hom.* 30 and Arist. *EN* 1109b30–1110b17; Nem. *Nat. hom.* 31 and Arist. *EN*
1110b19–1111a20; Nem. *Nat. hom.* 32 and Arist. *EN* 1111a21–1111b3; Nem. *Nat. hom.* 33 and
Arist. *EN* 1111b4–1112a17, 1113a2–1115; Nem. *Nat. hom.* 34 and Arist. *EN* 1112a17–1113a5.

deliberate choice which is both desire for an end and rational deliberation about the means. Nemesius' appropriation of the Aristotelian doctrine of the voluntary act, even if part of a wider reflection, confirms the singularity of his philosophical position in the *De natura hominis*. Once again, he shows that he does not share the suspicion towards Aristotle's philosophy which was prevalent in early Christian thought. In his Aristotelian doctrine of the voluntary act, Nemesius finds the expression of a unitary anthropology: the soul meets the body in the exercise of human freedom. In fact *prohairesis* is constituted by the weaving together of a rational component (linked with man's intelligible dimension), which identifies the end and deliberates on the means, and an appetitive component (linked with man's corporeal dimension), which desires the end and consequently the means to achieve it: 'As we say that the living being is composed of soul and body and it is neither body by itself nor only soul, but body and soul together, so is the choice, too. Choice is desire which deliberates about things in our own power or deliberation which desires things in our own power.'[12]

In chapters 35–8 Nemesius develops an anti-fatalistic polemic which he integrates with the anthropological project which he has outlined up to this point. After refuting Stoic determinism and astrological fatalism, he examines the anti-deterministic view of the Platonists, which in his opinion is incomplete and ambiguous. In a thesis which he attributes to Plato,[13] he acknowledges the existence of a sort of destiny, imposing necessary and inevitable consequences on actions freely chosen and undertaken. According to Nemesius, such an acknowledgement of destiny is incompatible with freedom; numerous examples show that from the necessity of the outcome follows the necessity of choice which is at its origin. Nemesius' criticism of certain aspects of Platonic doctrine again shows his refusal to split either reality or man into two dimensions. On his view, one cannot divide reality into two independent dimensions: the exterior and corporeal world, the domain of fate and necessity, and the spiritual and interior world, the domain of freedom. Freedom is real, because free actions affect the sensible world, reuniting physical and spiritual worlds. Finally, the *De natura hominis*, referring to traditional Christian doctrine on Providence, reaffirms the complete reality of human freedom in relation to divine Providence, which enforces universal justice and goodness (chs. 42–3). So the elaboration of a unitary anthropology reveals itself as the keystone of the philosophical project developed in the *De natura hominis*. Nemesius goes over the ambiguities and hesitations of early Christian thought on this delicate matter, and resolutely

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[12] Nem. *Nat. hom.* 33.101.6–16; cf. Arist. *EN* 1113a10–14.
[13] This thesis is in reality an expression of later Platonic doctrine, as is confirmed by the *De fato* of Pseudo-Plutarch and chapter 26 of the *Didaskalikos* by Alcinous.

claims a unitary anthropological position. The value of his proposal lies not so much in a specific answer to an anthropological problem (the problem of mixture as conceived by 'Ammonius'), since it is neither a very original solution nor a doctrine of great philosophical depth, but rather in the originality of his perspective. His aim is to combine two seemingly unreconcilable desiderata, that of guaranteeing the union of body and soul, and that of safeguarding the soul's Platonic nature. He affirms and defends the 'Platonic' nature of the soul in order to retain the doctrine of the soul's pre-existence, which was no longer current even in the ultra-Platonic Christian culture of the late fourth-century East. At the same time he insists on an intimate union of body and soul, leaning, if not uncritically, towards certain aspects of the Platonic scheme favoured by early Christian thought. He reworks and reuses certain aspects of Aristotelian thought (the 'mixture' between body and soul and voluntary action), making a philosophical choice which was courageous, unusual and progressive for his time.

Finally, Nemesius' philosophical project shows itself to be an interesting restatement, within a Christian anthropological vision, of the attempt, already well established in the Platonic tradition, at reconciling Aristotelianism and Platonism. In achieving it, he demonstrates an independence of critical judgement with respect to the culture of his times, and an ability to articulate pagan doctrines coherently from a Christian perspective.

THE CONTROVERSY SURROUNDING *DE NATURA HOMINIS*

Over the centuries *De natura hominis* has gone through periods of neglect, but on the whole has enjoyed considerable attention. This is evident from the numerous quotations from it and versions of it from the Middle Ages to modern times, in Greek, Latin, Armenian, Georgian and Arabic. Such quotations and versions testify to the diffusion of the work in very diverse cultural traditions.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the work was studied by Werner Jaeger, who wrote an influential monograph on it.[14] His study was concerned exclusively with discovering its sources, and he took the view that the work, though mediocre in its compilation, was a precious collage from which to cull information on lost Stoic and Platonic doctrines. Jaeger's judgement of the work, which was followed by the research of Skard,[15] contributed decisively to an underestimation of the *De natura hominis*. From the mid-twentieth century on, however, several monographs brought Nemesius' work back to scholarly and critical attention. These studies, although differing among themselves, focused

[14] Jaeger 1914.   [15] Skard 1936, 1938, 1939, 1940, 1942.

on Nemesius' anthropological vision and sought to evaluate his contribution to the philosophical debates of the time, and above all to Christianity; they went well beyond Jaeger's observation (however undeniably true) of the presence in the work of other philosophers' doctrines. In this ongoing re-evaluation of Nemesius' work, certain aspects have been particularly highlighted:

- The consideration of the *De natura hominis* as possibly the first anthropological work written by a Christian;[16]
- The markedly unecclesiastical character of the work, which clearly distinguishes it from other Christian literature of that time, especially in its approach to pagan doctrines and in the importance of medical themes;[17]
- Nemesius' interpretation of earlier pagan doctrines as a conscious choice in order to show how his Christian proposals constitute a new and improved reading of several pagan themes.[18] Telfer hypothesized that Nemesius had transformed the *De natura hominis* from a work of pagan anthropology (written before his conversion) to a work of Christian anthropology, which would have been persuasive in its effects on a pagan public.[19] Wyller, basing himself on an analysis of the text, maintained that Nemesius' work is a response to accusations of the Emperor Julian (particularly in his *Oration* 6) against Christian culture. The *De natura hominis* would, on this interpretation, be a demonstration of how the cornerstones of an explicitly anti-Christian philosophical thesis (that of Julian) can constitute the foundations of a Christian vision.[20]
- The unusual presence in Nemesius' thought of Aristotelian doctrines: these were generally rejected by early Christian thinkers, who accused Aristotle of materialism.[21]
- The elaboration of a unitary anthropology: even if such an anthropological vision is one concordant with a Christian doctrine and with the dogma of the resurrection of the flesh, it is not clearly advanced by early Greek Christian thought before Nemesius, because of the strong influence of the dualistic Platonic tradition and the priority historically given to Christological questions in relation to the problem of the union of different natures.[22]

Even though Jaeger's interpretation has recently been restated,[23] the majority of scholars have now distanced themselves from it. Far from being an unoriginal restatement of doctrines (a trait which is common to a good deal of the philosophical literature of the time), the *De natura hominis*, develops a specific anthropological project, one that derives from the traditional mould of the Christian culture of the time but is capable of putting into question certain philosophical choices to which the Church had restricted itself.

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[16] Cf. Domanski 1900, Amand 1945: 549–67, Siclari 1974, Telfer 1962, Wyller 1969.
[17] Cf. Telfer 1955, Valdenberg 1927–8, Young 1983.   [18] Cf. Siclari 1974.
[19] Cf. Telfer 1962.   [20] Cf. Wyller 1969.
[21] Cf. Domanski 1900, Motta 1999–2000, Valdenberg 1927–8.   [22] Motta 2004.
[23] Cf. Charles-Saget 1988.

SYNESIUS OF CYRENE

JAY BREGMAN

1 LIFE

Synesius was born c. 370 CE[1] in the Greek colony of Cyrene, in Libya, to an ancient Dorian aristocratic family. Since late antiquity, scholars have thought him to have been an aristocratic Hellene and a convert to Christianity. Around the time of his mission to Constantinople (c. 400 CE), he perhaps became a 'fellow traveller', attracted to the new religion. Subsequently, he became a catechumen, and was married to a Christian. Eventually, he was baptized, and accepted an episcopal appointment in 411 CE. More recently, a case has been made that he was born a Christian, but this has been challenged and evidence remains circumstantial. Synesius presented himself as a religious Hellene: the only early religious experience he emphasized was his typically Hellenic sense of the divine cosmos (*Ep.* 101.225).[2] Religious Hellenism suffered setbacks in his lifetime, notably, the Christian destruction in 391 of the Serapeum at Alexandria, a major centre of mystical Hellenism. Triumphant Christian orthodoxy nervously continued to attack dissidents, including the post-Constantine philosopher-ideologues, who inspired the Emperor Julian's (r. 360–3 CE) counter-Christian religious Hellenism.[3]

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[1] There is general agreement he was born five to seven years after Julian's death; he lived under the Emperors Valens, Theodosius I, Arcadius and Theodosius II, until his probable death in a barbarian war in 413 CE.

[2] Cf. Julian *Or.* 4.130b–131a. Synesius' family may have owned a house with a Christian inscription, destroyed before he was born, implying that they were probably Christians; if so, then Synesius was born a Christian. However, there is no 'smoking gun' as proof here; thus, we do not know; see Tanaseanu-Doebler 2008: 176–80. Beyond that, his stated religious experience was Hellenic; Cameron and Long 1993: 16, 28, 35, argue for his always having been a Christian. Hagl 1997: 10–20, challenges Cameron and Long 1993: 28–35; he follows Evagrius 1.15 that Synesius was not a convert until his consecration in 411.

[3] Constantine's conversion was in 312 CE. On anti-pagan legislation under Theodosius for Egypt, *Cod. Theod.* 16.10.11; the Senate failed to restore the altar of Victory removed by Emperor Gratian; Symmachus' plea for tolerance failed; their insurrection was quelled by Theodosius in 394; the Goths sacked Eleusis in 396. I will use 'religious Hellenism' or 'Hellenic later Platonism' where

Synesius had two sisters, and a brother he was close to, Euoptius. He was proud of his 'Heraclean' Dorian ancestry, all the way back to the founders of Cyrene in 630 BCE (*Ep.* 41.49; *Catas.* 2.5). Literature and hunting remained major interests throughout his lifetime (*De ins.* 14.4). His work reflects a thorough classical education (*Dion* 18.1–4); he describes Cyrene as a place of respite, where the natives still believe the king is Agamemnon (*Ep.* 148, 297).

Synesius probably arrived in Alexandria in 393 CE, and remained there until 395. His teacher, Hypatia – daughter of Theon the mathematician – wrote scientific and mathematical works. She probably taught a form of more or less Porphyrian later Platonism, not inherently anti-Christian. She probably also taught astronomy and geometry in the context of a Platonic cosmology. Synesius found kindred spirits who came to study the Pythagorean art; letters to friends reveal his religious and philosophical views. Hypatia was 'the genuine leader of the rites of philosophy' (*Ep.* 137, 276). Under her tutelage, he seems to have experienced a conversion to philosophy; which subsequently determined his religious outlook.

After his schooling, Synesius returned to Cyrene, where he established his reputation as a leading member of the local council. Later, in political difficulties, he found it expedient to take a brief holiday that included visits to Antioch and Athens. After his return, he was chosen to be the political representative of Cyrene at the court of Constantinople.[4] There he spent 'three unspeakable years' in Constantinople (*De ins.* 14.4; *H.* 3.l.146) where he became acquainted with the Emperor Arcadius, Aurelian, the Praetorian Prefect of the East, and other powerful orthodox anti-Arian Goth Christians.[5] Synesius made nocturnal visits to 'temples built for sacred mysteries' near Constantinople and Chalcedon, 'supplicated God's . . . sacred envoys . . . crowned with angelic rays' (l.466–9): he

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possible, rather than the loaded term 'Paganism' to describe later Greek religions; it had several branches: the Emperor Julian's favoured sacramental theurgy, to which philosophical interpretation was incidental; Porphyry's (influential for Synesius), primarily philosophical, subordinated cult and 'revealed texts' to Platonic exegesis. Cameron and Long 1993 present as 'unconventional' the idea that the Christianization of the Greco-Roman world has been over-dramatized; there was no real 'conflict' of religions, but rather a slow and quiet acceptance; among intellectuals, there *was* an ideological battle raging. Why did, e.g., Justinian, close the Athenian Platonic school in 529 CE?

[4] With no commonly used system the citations of the letters will be according to *Ep.* number followed by page number in the critical edition of Garzya and Roques 2000; see Tanaseanu-Doebler 2008: 156 n. 3.

[5] On Synesius' circle of friends, see Dzielska 1995: 29–38; Tanaseanu-Doebler 2008: 15–59, Aurelian's brother, Caesarius; Gainias the Goth, essentially a lackey of the Vandal Roman commander Stilicho; Aurelian's actions 'imitated the divine' (*Ep.* 31.35; 35.36); he was a 'dear friend and consul' (*Ep.* 61.77).

may well have visited both Greek 'mystery temples' and temples converted into Christian churches.[6]

At court, Aurelian and the orthodox were in power. Meanwhile, Gainas the Goth raised an army in an attempt to take Constantinople and the throne.[7] In this tense atmosphere, Synesius advocated for Cyrene and the ultimately victorious orthodox cause. He left Constantinople, having secured the needed benefits for his province; at Alexandria, the Patriarch Theophilus presided at his wedding to a prominent Christian.[8] He returned in 404 CE to his Libyan estate, that same year organizing the defence of Cyrene and Pentapolis against barbarian invasion.[9] Once again, he made political enemies; by 409 CE, he went into exile at Ptolemais.

In the summer of 410 CE, Theophilus offered him the episcopate of Ptolemais. Struggling over acceptance for several months, in *Ep.* 105 to his brother (in fact, an open letter to the clergy), Synesius listed practical objections to the office. He wishes to remain married; he is morally imperfect; he prefers intellectual pleasures no priest can afford, and a leisurely, contemplative life along with recreation and friends; he has no political ability, nor will he be able to work out his own salvation. He was ordained, probably, in 411 CE.[10] His reservations comprise an introduction to his non-rhetorical philosophical positions: insistence on the pre-existence of the soul; the indestructibility of the cosmos; and the 'ineffable mystery', contra popular belief, of the doctrine of the resurrection.

In ecclesiastical office, he engaged in a protracted conflict with the provincial governor, ministered to his flock, and settled the border disputes among bishops. In a letter to a friend who had become a monk, his continued privileging of philosophy is apparent. The white mantle of philosophy is clear and luminous,

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[6] His conversion to philosophy would also mean an inclusive religious attitude; thus, an interest in forms of Christian worship does not preclude an interest in Hellenic worship. Significantly, two theurgic later Platonists, who had defended the Serapeum, had subsequently gone to Constantinople, where they taught literature by day, but by night secretly acted as priests of Zeus and Hermes Thoth; Chauvin 1990, 66 and nn. 25 and 26.

[7] Supposedly, the occasion for his speech *On Kingship*; *Ep.* 105.238; concerning *De regno*, see Lacombrade 1951b. Cameron and Long 1993: 127–9, think Synesius' *On Kingship* speech as published was too dangerous to deliver before the emperor.

[8] Tanaseanu-Doebler 2008: 158 and n. 22; apparently, he left Constantinople during an earthquake, probably in 400. Aurelian relieved him of curial responsibilities, *Ep.* 100; *Hymns* other than 1 (MS IX) seem to have been written after his return from Constantinople. Only *Hymn* 7 can be dated more or less precisely to 403–4. *Hymn* 3 (MS I) indicates the mission and return to Libya; 7 indicates his marriage and time before the birth of his first son.

[9] Ausurians ravaged his villa; *Epp.* 130, 132; 133 mentions the recent consulship of Aristaenetus, 405 or 406; his twins were born probably summer 405, *Ep.* 53; for political affairs, see *Epp.* 22, 30, 109, 110, 120; political enemies, *Epp.* 50, 95, 137.

[10] On his reservations *Ep.* 105.238–9 and below section 3.4; Tanaseanu-Doebler 2008: 158–9 and n. 27; Barnes 1986b thinks the year of election 407; Roques 1987: 310ff., election January 411, and ordination January 412.

suited to the pure character, but he whose motive is clearly divine can *even* virtuously wear the black mantle of the clergy (*Ep.* 147.292). As the crisis deepened, Synesius turned to Epictetus (*Ep.* 126.259). A good officer, Anysius, managed to check the barbarians, but this brief respite of 411 was not to last. By 412–13, with Anysius gone, Synesius was prepared to die fighting at the altar; lamenting his fate as the last bishop of Ptolemais (*Catas.* 2.303a–c). He disappeared from history around 413 CE, before the murder of Hypatia at the hands of fanatic monks in 415.[11]

2 WRITINGS

The works of Synesius include the *Hymns*, metaphysical poems written in the style of Greek lyric. They syncretistically include Hellenic and Christian ideas.[12]

His 156 *Epistles* range from personal and family communications to philosophical discussions, including several to his teacher, Hypatia. *Epistle* 105 to his brother is celebrated for his reservations about Christian doctrine. Others deal with theological-political issues, with his Pythagorean circle of initiates into the 'mysteries' of philosophy, or with his status with respect to the Christian Church. They are valuable sources for his life and connections, both before and after he became a bishop.

His prose works consist of literary, philosophical and religious discussions. Synesius wrote most of them during a period of political inaction, during which he turned to philosophical contemplation.[13] There is an early work on hunting, *Cynegetica*, which has been lost, but the comic parody *Praise of Baldness* is extant. In it Synesius laughs at his own condition, asserting the bald head is reminiscent of the sphere, which is the most perfect object in the cosmos; in fact, the cosmos itself is a sphere. The more perfect an object, the more it participates in Form. The bald head is, therefore, superior, because more 'really real' than the hairy head (7–8.4).

In *To Paeonius*, dedicated to an official at Constantinople, to whom Synesius sent an astronomical measuring instrument, speaks of astronomy as a preparation for the contemplation of transcendental ineffable theology.[14]

[11] Synesius outlived Theophilus, who died in 412.

[12] Following Lacombrade 1978: IX in the MS was the first, having been worked on in the 390s; 3, 400 or later; 2 and 4, 407–8; 5 and 9, 408–9; 10 is spurious, apparently a forgery to guarantee that Synesius appeared to be a 'believing and orthodox' Christian. Lacombrade followed the traditional MS order where 3 = 1 and 1 = 9; he thinks Synesius later edited and numbered them in revised order. If this is true, it adds weight to his philosophical objections to Christian doctrine: 1 is the work of a pure Hellenic Platonist.

[13] Schmitt, using *Dion* (and part of *On Dreams*), thinks Synesius became a convert to philosophy from politics around 405–6; Schmitt 2001: 67–130; Kennell 2002: 1–2; Tanaseanu-Doebler 2008: 267–8.

[14] *Praise of Baldness (Calvitii encomium)* is a playful answer to Dio Chrysostom's 'In Praise of Magnificent Hair'; on its date, see Tanaseanu-Doebler 2008: 156, n. 10. Synesius credits Hypatia with a noetic

In his speech *On Kingship*, he outlines a policy of reform in the context of 'topoi' on ideal kingship, with measures attractive to the anti-Gothic faction at court. *On Providence* (or *The Egyptian Tale*) was probably completed shortly after his visit to Constantinople. On the 'historical level', it is a thinly disguised political allegory about people and events in which he played a minor role. Aurelian, and his brother and rival, Eutychianus, are allegorized as the mythical Osiris and Seth-Typhon respectively; Constantinople becomes Egyptian Thebes, the Goths barbarian Scythians. Synesius portrays himself as a philosopher who supports Aurelian-Osiris.[15] Then, moving beyond the historical moment, Synesius rises to the ethical and metaphysical levels. He narrates a Platonic myth about the workings of divine providence in history in which human beings live in a world peopled by *daimones*, some associated with matter. Daimonic manipulations result in the plots and counterplots of history. The highest gods, immersed in contemplation, have no direct regard for human affairs (97b–c). The task of descent is allotted to the lower gods who, though equally desirous of contemplation, must, of necessity, bring order to earthly affairs (98d–99b). At the beginning, the gods give humans 'impetus' (98b), but this runs down, and they have to renew it through periodic interventions (102a–b). Meanwhile, humans must maintain an attitude of constant vigilance (99c–d).

He entertains both Platonic dualism (represented in the *Phaedo* and *Phaedrus*), and the 'pro-cosmic monistic tendency' of the same tradition (represented in the *Timaeus*), well-known 'poles' of Platonism. Souls, as opposed to bodies, are not born from the same earthly parents: 'the indistinct . . . from the ground . . . the luminous . . . suspended from the back of the heavens' (89b–d; *Phaedrus* 247c). Osiris' father reminds him that the gods, engaged in contemplation, avoid earth, but must appear periodically in order to renew its energy. Be prudent, writes Synesius, live as if encamped in enemy territory; be prepared for earthly daimonic attacks.

Synesius platonically avoids extreme forms of Persian conflict dualism; everything in the confluent and conspirant cosmic plenum is interconnected by a

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teaching, beyond mathematics; Lacombrade 2001: 404–21, in his final article, considered her a neo-Cynic and a Pythagorean/Platonist.

[15] On the provenance and authenticity of *On Kingship*, see Tanaseanu-Doebler 2008: 172, and n. 107. References to *On Providence* follow the pagination of Petau, also found in Terzhaghi 1944. On Synesius' concealing serious philosophy under the appearances of a 'lighter' subject, see *On Dreams*, 'Introduction' (130). Cameron and Long (1993: 337–98), have published a translation of *On Providence*, and have done some valuable analysis of its historical level of allegory. Concerning events at Constantinople, c. 400, their assertion (238), that, 'In fact for all its bizarre Egyptian and Neoplatonic coloring, *de providentia* shows itself not only Christian but Orthodox' has no philosophical or theological basis. This is a work of Hellenic later Platonism; to dismiss it as somehow 'encoded Christianity' represents *a basic 'mishearing'* that (typically for these authors) distorts the thought of Synesius.

unifying force, through a network of hidden sympathies. When recurrent stellar and spherical orbits return to their original positions (*apokatastatikas*), earthly effects are the same as in the distant past, and 'the most ancient history' might come back to life (127b–128a).[16] Synesius allowed Christianity a significant role in historical providence in this particular crisis; it was one of many conduits for the divine. With the rise of an intolerant Christian orthodoxy, however, he had to choose; heresy was now equated with barbarism, as his beloved classical culture came under threat by the hated Goths.

On Dreams deals with the phenomenon of dreams, the nature of the soul, its constituent elements and its destiny. It embodies a theory of allegory, and one on the efficacy of dreams for the art of divination. Most interesting is his analysis of the *ochēma-pneuma*, or the 'vehicle of the soul', which formed an important part of the psychology and anthropology of late-antique astral religion.[17]

Synesius' commitment to Hellenism, as both a cultural *and* religious ideal, appears in *Dion* (or *On My Own Life*, 405–6), an *apologia* that includes a discussion of rhetoric, and a description of conversion to philosophy as contemplative practice.[18] Written as a divinely inspired address to an as-yet unborn son, to guide him on the path to wisdom through a proper approach to Greek literature and philosophy, the work engages his hero Dio Chrysostom's abandonment of sophistry (though not rhetorical eloquence) for philosophy. Synesius argues that the active life of a good Hellene, concerned with *paideia* and civic virtue, may be combined with the contemplative life. He contrasts his balanced, Platonic approach to that of spiritual extremists among false philosophers and monastic ascetics.

After his ordination, Synesius wrote two *Homilies*. The first is an allegorical exegesis of a portion of Psalm 75.8. The *logos* of both Testaments is interpreted platonically. *Homily 2*, an Easter eve sermon, is highly syncretistic and appears to be more Platonic and Hermetic than Christian.

The *Catastases*' two speeches (or possibly letters) describe conditions in Libya (c. 411–13). The first one implies the possibility of achieving harmony between the values of Greek philosophy and Christianity (305a). The second *Catastasis* is pessimistic. It is an appeal to save the Pentapolis; in this miniature 'fall of Rome', he invokes the old Roman spirit and his Doric ancestors.

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[16] Cf. *Enn.* 2.8.37. Synesius' views were influenced by Plato's cyclical myth of divine governance in *Politicus* 269b–275a. Synesius allows intervention, if needed, before the preordained time, 102a. The work is too Greek and philosophically technical to be considered Christian.

[17] Written in 405–6, it made a compromise possible on the resurrection for Christianizing Platonists.

[18] Tanaseanu-Doebler 2008: 158 sees the *Dion* and *On Dreams* as works in which Synesius attempts to refute accusations that he is not a genuine philosopher, but rather a rhetorician and *litterateur*. He refers to Dio Chrysostom (46–after 112 CE), his model, as someone who brilliantly combined rhetoric and philosophy.

3 THOUGHT

With the exception of the crucial *Ep.* 105, Synesius rarely expressed his ideas and religious attitudes clearly. They must be reconstructed from important prose passages and his poetic metaphysical speculations. The background and context of the *Hymns* is difficult to reconstruct. Their syncretistic Christian elements must be juxtaposed with the apparently pure religious Hellenism of his contemporaneous prose works; given this, there remains a certain ambiguity of religious outlook. Nevertheless, it is possible to delineate (with some qualification) his essential position, which was based on a philosophical understanding of religion.

3.1 *Hellenic later Platonism:* Hymn 1, the Dion *and philosophical* Epistles

The *Hymns* of Synesius are later Platonic metaphysical poems. *Hymn* 1, a paean to the intelligible world in which he expresses modes of thought and experience characteristic of Hellenic later Platonism, depends on imagery from the *Chaldaean Oracles*. In later hymns, Synesius harmonizes Hellenic religious thought and imagery with Christian doctrines such as the Trinity. He viewed Christianity symbolically and syncretistically, the way Porphyry viewed the traditional cults, and like the tolerant Hellene Themistius, he viewed *all* religions as legitimate partial expressions of the truth.

His letters also attest to lifelong membership in a circle of Alexandrian initiates into the 'mysteries' of philosophy (*Epp.* 11, 16.137–46, 54 and 93). *Ep.* 137–46, to Herculian, bears witness to his religious commitment. He attributed his meeting and immediate connection with Herculian to a divine cause. The initiated are connected by 'a noetic bond . . . divine law demands that we who are united through the intellect, the best thing within us, should honour one another' (*Ep.* 137.276).

Philosophy enables us to release the 'eye of the soul' within us (*Ep.* 137.277). Exhorting Herculian, Synesius makes an allusion to the last words of Plotinus: 'Farewell, philosophize, raise the divine in you to the first-born divine' (*Ep.* 139.280; Porphyry, *VP* 2).

In *Ep.* 140, invoking the divine (*thespesion*) voice of Plato, Synesius enumerates the ascending hierarchy of purifying virtues through which the adept must pass in order to prepare for union with the divine, to go beyond the 'earthly *tetraktys*' and achieve 'manliness of soul' at the third and fourth (spiritual) levels of virtue (*Ep.* 140, 280–1). In *Ep.* 143, Synesius the Pythagorean alludes to '. . . our foursome (*tetraktys*) of holy friendship: . . . let the . . . *tetraktys* among the principles (*archai*) be passed over in silence (*euphemeisthō*)' (*Ep.* 143.285). He

rebukes his friend for divulging divine secrets to the uninitiated, and admonishes him to read a letter of Lysis the Pythagorean: 'to philosophize among the populace is to stir up among men a great contempt for the divine' (*Ep.* 143.285).

Synesius' *Hymns* are later Platonic metaphysical poems in the guise of classical lyric. *Hymn* 1, the most purely Hellenic, emphasizes the path of illumination that leads from the imperfect sensible realm to the noetic. It comprises a complete account of procession from, and return to, the First Principle. Following an invocation for divine guidance and wisdom (ll.1–51), he moves to the One.

The First Principle is the 'monad of monads', the 'monad at the head of the first intelligible triad':

> Self sprung *archē*
> He is guardian Father of the things that are
> Unengendered, established above the peaks of heaven
> *Theos*, sits steadfast
> Rejoicing in his absolute glory
> Pure unity of unities
> First monad of monads
> Unifying, he bears the simple natures
> Of highest beings
> Through super-essential engenderings
> Whence itself sprung forth
> Through first generated form,
> The monad ineffably poured out
> Holds the three-summit-force,
> The superessential fount
> Crowned by children's beauty,
> Who spring from the centre and
> Flow back about the centre (ll.53–70)

By its transcendent activity (ll.61–70), the ineffable One mysteriously manifests as (Chaldaean) trinity through its first generated form. It acts as the super-essential source of procession and return.

Synesius beautifully captures the rhythm of the intelligible cosmos, its meta-physical 'unfolding and enfolding'. Proceeding from the One, the unified realm of Platonic Ideas, *nous* (One-Many), whence arises 'the good principle of the human spirit, indivisibly divided', paradoxically exemplifies the later Platonic principle 'all things are in all things – but appropriately (*all' oikeiōs*)'.[19] The noetic realm, the One's self-specification and articulation, as it were, is at once

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[19] Such ideas make it possible to talk of procession without rigid reification. Proclus, *El. th.* Prop. 103. Synesius also understood the later Platonic distinction of *noeric* (Ideas as thoughts) from *noetic* (Ideas as objects of thought); *Ep.* 154.304.

divisible and indivisible (all the Ideas interpenetrate each other); the divine never completely loses its power or character, yet 'sees itself' under a divided aspect (implying soul). Thus, the sensible world effortlessly arises.

Soul (One and Many) introduces the succession of events (space-time, in which the ideas instantiate serially). It 'turns the heavens . . . and presides over the division of forms (*morphai*) allotted for specific tasks' (ll.88–90). One part, over the paths of the stars, another, over the angels. A third (individual soul), by a 'chain with downward inclination' (*reponti desmōi*), finds an earthly form and is cut off from its generators, 'wondering at the joyless earth, a god looking on mortal things' (cf. *Enn.* 4.2.12, 17; 4.8.6).

Lines 100–134 depict the return of the purified soul fleeing the 'bark' of matter, which perceives a 'certain anagogic power' that can lead it back to its transcendent origin. In *nous*, it 'knows the divine depth'. The 'noetic plain' and the 'principle of beauty' become manifest. In a final prayer of *intention* on the One, Synesius entreats his soul to drink at the fount flowing Good: ascend as a god and dance in *theos* the Father (ll.128–34). Synesius, the convert, sees philosophy as a way of life culminating in a religious *experience*.

In the *Dion*, Synesius combines the active with the contemplative life: 'the philosopher . . . Hellene to the core (4.3) . . . will acquire knowledge as a man of letters (*philologos*), but will criticize . . . each and all things as a philosopher' (5.2). The philosopher communes with himself and the gods through philosophy, but with men through the subordinate powers of language. Philosophy is Apollo singing in harmony with the Muses; it transcends *paideia* (4.5; 5.1).[20]

We are *nous* in the soul of a living creature. When our souls descend from contemplation, they will be refreshed by letters, rather than descending further into matter. Synesius juxtaposes his balanced spiritual ideals and love of litera-ture against those who oppose his eloquence; certain fanatic philosophical and religious contemporaries: ' . . . some of those who wear the white mantle and some who wear the dark . . . think it fitting that the philosopher hate literature and concern himself exclusively with divine matters' (*Ep.* 154.301).[21]

In the *Dion*, Synesius criticizes 'false philosophers' and certain 'barbarous men' whose noble ideals are compromised by contempt for *paideia*; their sacred songs and symbols keep their spiritual path ordered (7.1); in order to 'keep their natural inclinations in check' and to avoid further descent into matter, they weave baskets (7.2; 7.4–5). When the Hellene must descend, however, he

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[20] The melody chanted is '*melos to ieron kai aporrēton*', almost the same words Synesius uses to describe the resurrection in *Ep.* 105.

[21] Are the dark mantled here monks?, as in *Ep.* 147; or Greek philosophers; both groups (Hellene and Christian) wore both colours'. Though Synesius does not identify the white mantle group, he alludes in his correspondence to charlatans and popularizing counterfeiters of philosophy.

situates himself in the 'neighbouring area . . . the royal road' (*diexodos)* to *nous* (8.2). Literature adorns *the spiritual eye* within us, and rouses it little by little until it is accustomed to its [proper] objects of vision, that it may ' . . . contemplate a higher object, and not blink . . . looking intently upon the sun' (i.e., the Platonic Good; 8.3).

The Hellenic upward path is ordered, as if ascending a ladder, but the barbarian way is 'like a Bacchic frenzy . . . an irrational motion to the realm beyond reason' (8.5). Since ascent involves an irrational (or supra-rational) element, it must be approached with caution (8.6). Synesius *contrasts* philosophy and monasticism, rather than turning monasticism *into* philosophy (as does Evagrius of Pontus).[22] A few autodidacts from different traditions have been able to reach the divine (10.5), but we, less gifted, must use an intelligible method to approach the noetic (10.6). The *Dion* celebrates the *superior way* of later Platonic philosophical religion![23]

3.2 The incarnation

The incarnation was not as difficult to harmonize with Platonic notions as other Christian doctrines. Synesius presented it symbolically in the *Hymns*, and raised no objection to it in *Ep.* 105.[24] Yet basic problems persisted, chief among them, the incoherence of an historically specific incarnation of the *entire logos* in one individual. Why should God (whose creation was already perfect) ignore all the generations up to the first century CE, and then send a lowly saviour from an outlying province of the empire (Origen, *C. Cels.* 4.7; 4.78)? A suffering god contradicts divine impassibility; the crucifixion was absurd and shameful (Porph. fr. 84). The sage's *apatheia* was preferable to the lamentations of Jesus on the cross; Jesus' 'miracles' are the works of yet another magician (*C. Cels.* 1.6; 2.24; Porph. fr. 4, 62–3). Philosophical objections are summed

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[22] On Evagrius, see the conclusion to this chapter. The monk and the philosopher apply different means to similar ends.

[23] Armstrong 1990: xiii, 10–11 suggests, ' . . . an anti-Christian stance [of a later Platonist like Porphyry] could also issue in a tolerant pluralism or on considerably more positive attitudes towards Christianity. The kind of probably more or less Porphyrian later Platonism which he learned from Hypatia . . . helped Synesius in his decision to accept episcopal office . . . The conviction that the only true religion is philosophical religion, and that the stories and practices of non-philosophical religion are at the best, no more than helpful popular expressions of philosophic truth for non-philosophers.'

[24] According to Nock 1963: 232, the idea of God having a son was not wholly repellent to a 'pagan'. A god could die and be reborn; a Hero could be divinized and 'year gods' could have a passion and a resurrection; the *theios anēr* of the 'Hellenic Gospels', such as Pythagoras and Apollonius, who appear as neither men nor gods ('Pythagoras is that Third thing'), but rather paradoxical 'god-men'. Hierocles thought Apollonius a 'counter-Christ' around 300 CE. Soon after that date, tolerant religious syncretism was no longer an option.

up by Porphyry; he ridicules believers in the virgin birth as more foolish than the simple-minded Greek who thinks gods are really in statues (Porph. fr. 77). Synesius' metaphysical and poetic images did not disrupt this Platonic paradigm.

In *Hymn* 6, emphasizing the ineffability of the saviour's birth, Synesius describes the generation of the *logos*, the divine intellect ordering the cosmos, and his immanent soteriological function (ll.20–3). He calls upon the Son, 'orphically', to 'dry up the destructive waves of *matter*' (my italics) (ll.26–7). He introduces the *logos* incarnate in 5 (ll.1–9): the Father's 'ineffable counsels and sacred labour . . . manifested the form of man conveyer of . . . light'. In addition, in *Hymn* 7, 'Jesus of Solyma' appears: 'I am first to discover your mode . . . to strum my lyre with new harmonic forms' (ll.4–7).[25] He is a Heraclean 'god among the heavenly and corpse among those below earth' (ll.33–9). The magus wondered 'what manner of infant was born/who the concealed/god or nether shade or king?' (ll.23–6). Synesius sustains the syncretistic theme of the Son's saving mission: the chthonic serpent offered the forbidden fruit to the *primal youth* (*H.* 9, ll.4–6). The new Heracles causes Hades and his man-devouring hound to shudder (*H.* 9, ll.13–27).

The incarnate saviour Platonically *bears* a mortal body (*H.* 9, l.15). Like Synesius' saviour, another god-man, Apollonius of Tyana, 'was not just a philosopher, but something midway between the gods and man'. Philostratus ought to have called his book *The Visit of God to Mankind* (Eun. *Vit. Soph.* 454).[26]

3.3 On Dreams*, the* Chaldaean Oracles*, dualism, and the resurrection*

The *Chaldaean Oracles* play a significant role, especially in Synesius' analysis of the *ochēma-pneuma* or 'spirit-vehicle'.[27] It accompanied the soul upon entry into the cosmos, joined it to the body, and remained with it on its return journey as far as it could, ultimately being absorbed in the empyrean *aether* (itself the *ochēma-pneuma* of the cosmos).

Allegory explains away the 'vulgar falsehoods' in the old myths. Zeus's superiority in force really means strength of mind (*nous*) and wisdom (1.3–4). The harmony of opposites and sympathy of the whole unify the cosmos. Following the Hellenic hierarchy of hypercosmic and encosmic gods, Synesius mentions 'an offering to some god, of those who are in the cosmos' (2.3).[28]

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[25] Homer's *Solymoi*, the ancestors of the Israelites; Tacitus, *Hist.* 5.2.

[26] Pythagoras remains on a derivative level of procession. It is thus possible to connect humanity and divinity without disturbing the metaphysical order.

[27] References to *On Dreams* follow the text pagination of Lamoreux and Aujoulat 2004.

[28] In late Platonist-influenced Islamic theory, it is an individualized microcosmic instance of the entire realm of Soul, where the Ideas become 'imaginalized'.

The *ochēma-pneuma* is a 'ship' that the soul mounts upon its entrance into the cosmos, potentially enabling union with a body. In actual union, it becomes the faculty of imagination (*phantasia*), the connecting link between the noetic and sensible realms, and basis for sense-perception and consciousness, as if a 'halfway-house' between spirit and matter. It resides in 'the interior [of the body, i.e., the head] and . . . controls the living being as from a fortress (*akropolis*)' (5.2). Not subject to time, 'noetic events' are reflected in the pure *pneuma* and form veritable dream images.

When the soul has departed from the physical body, the *pneuma* accompanies it. While embodied, the imprint of the imagination is stamped on the *pneuma*; the soul rises with an image (*eidōlon*) of its sensible existence. The *Oracle* says: 'It shall not leave behind the residue of matter on the precipice; but the image also has a portion in the realm surrounded by light' (9.1). Synesius' commentary comprises his theory of the *pneuma* (*Or. Ch.* fr. 158). The soul combines with the 'summit' of the elements on its descent into the *eidolic* nature, which accompany it on its return journey (7.4). The *pneuma* is 'the divine body' (9.2); the vehicle 'tastes the light' (9.3); but it seems to remain at the ethereal 'borderline'.[29]

The 'risen *pneuma*' was the only philosophical compromise with the popular belief in the resurrection that made Platonic sense. In an original contribution, the 'imagination' becomes the *first body of the soul*. Porphyry's 'ethereal body' corresponds to the rational soul, and after the soul *descends* further, the 'imagination' corresponds to the 'solar body'. Porphyry's *pneuma* attaches an *eidōlon*; Synesius' *becomes* one (cf. *Sent.* 22). His exploration of the transformation of physical elements into an ethereal substance by contact with the *pneuma* pushes the boundaries of contemporary Platonic thought. Yet, despite Synesius' bold, provocative speculations, including a spontaneous poetics (i.e., the 'imagination' as a noetic vehicle that can energize the power of the Muses in the dreamer), the work remains difficult and perplexing.

3.4 Epistle 105

Before accepting an appointment as bishop Synesius openly and clearly stated his philosophical reservations:

It is difficult . . . if not right well impossible to dislodge opinions demonstrated dialectically, which a soul has received as scientific knowledge. You know philosophy strongly opposes those commonly discussed doctrinal opinions. Never will I carelessly consent

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[29] If Synesius follows Porphyry here, the vehicle is dispersed; though he may be closer to Iamblichus, in which case the vehicle (itself ethereal), 'is not subject to destruction or dissolution of any kind'.

to the belief that the soul is generated after the body, nor affirm that the cosmos, with all its parts, will one day perish. I consider the resurrection, a common current belief, to be a sacred ineffable mystery, on which I am far from agreement with the majority's understanding. Though being an 'initiate' (*epoptēs*) of truth, the mind of the philosopher consents to the use of falsehood (*pseudous*). By analogy: light is to truth as the eye is to mind; whereas it is bad for the eye to enjoy too much light; while darkness is very beneficial for ophthalmia; so then, I determine falsehood to be advantageous for the people and truth harmful to those lacking sufficient strength to incline their mind toward the brilliance of real being. If . . . the customary laws of our priesthood allow me these reservations . . . I can become a priest . . . one who philosophizes in private and 'mythi-cizes' publicly . . . if not engaged in teaching, I will not teach new ideas; thus allowing maintenance of the ones already held. But if it is said that I must move in the direction – as priests should – of doctrinal agreement with the people; then I will quickly reveal my feelings. Indeed, what do philosophy and the people have to do with each other? The divine truth must needs be ineffable, and the multitude needs another way (*hexis*) . . . it is in no way at present necessary that a wise man engage in refutation . . . I will make no pretence regarding doctrine. I bear witness . . . before God and men. Truth belongs to God, before whom I wish to be blameless in all things. In this one thing alone I will not practice deception. (*Ep.* 105.238–9)

Epistle 105 is a basic 'proof text'; it cannot be dismissed as 'rhetoric'. Synesius continued to believe that philosophical demonstration is the soul's measure of true knowledge. Those unable to look upon unmediated reality are to be taught a 'fiction', i.e., a palatable 'diluted' version of the truth. Only the philosopher understands the truth behind the myth. Synesius' first Platonic objection is based on the soul's ontological priority to the body; in discarnate periods, it returned to its intelligible origins.[30] Marrou claims that, on this doctrine, Synesius was not really opposed to the Church;[31] it was not yet firmly fixed. In order to address this difficult issue, it was usual for Patristic authors to suggest the *creation* of a Platonic hierarchy of substances, e.g., angels, souls, *then* bodies and the sensible realm. Synesius, in concert with contemporary Greek Christian thought, easily could have done this, *yet he did* not *suggest that the basis of the soul's pre-existence is a spiritual creation that preceded the material creation*. Furthermore, he *chose* to bring up the problem as one of his differences with the Church. It does not stand alone, but as part of an *overall view of reality*. His objections, *taken together rather than in isolation*, imply a purely Platonic position, including an uncreated divine soul and a divine uncreated cosmos.

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[30] In contrast to the official Christian position then being worked out, that the soul is a created thing immortalized by divine grace.

[31] Marrou 1963: 146; Augustine called it *dificillima quaestio*. Nemesius of Emesa openly proposed the pre-existence of the soul; he was refuting Methodius of Olympus' naïve idea that the soul was created after the body, implying ontological inferiority; the latter was trying to refute Origen's pre-existence doctrine; but Origen also posited a prior spiritual creation.

Synesius' second objection follows: 'I will never affirm that the cosmos and all its parts will perish.' The super-lunar bodies were considered indestructible; the sub-lunar region was 'this muddy vesture of decay' in which individual bodies were perishable. There was no time when the world was not; there never was any specific act of creation.[32] (The Plotinian hypostases enjoy logical and metaphysical, but not temporal, priority.) He did not have to bring up creation per se; it did not even enter the picture. A world that could not perish could not be a created world, nor did Synesius attempt to reconcile creation with 'emanation' of the cosmos from the divine hypostases.

The bishop-elect's third objection focused on the 'sacred ineffable mystery' of the resurrection. He did not allude here to the compromise solution available to Christianizing Platonists, i.e., the 'vehicle of the soul' as the resurrection body. Only Synesius, among Patristic authors, enumerated and juxtaposed all three points, as if they comprised a single 'gestalt'. This was not trivial at a time when the intellectuals' Hellene-Christian 'culture war' was still current.[33] Yet, the issue remains complex. When Synesius raised serious reservations, he did not say *therefore I am not a Christian*! In an era when the only coherent ideas about God were Platonic, more interesting is what it meant for Synesius, and others like him, to be (or become) Christian. Thus, he 'exoterically' accepted exclusively Christian symbolism and hierarchy, while 'esoterically' remaining a Hellenic later Platonist.

3.5 *Hellenic/Christian syncretism in the* Hymns*; Hermetic Easter and the resurrection*

Hymn 3 first combines Christian with Platonic ideas and imagery. Ideas from the *Chaldaean Oracles* and the *Anonymous Commentary on the Parmenides* enabled Synesius to develop a unique, basically orthodox version of the trinity. The *Commentary's* First Intelligible Triad's Father, his Power, and his Intellect, become respectively the Father, Holy Spirit (here in the *second* rather than the third position), and the Son in the trinity.[34] Synesius equates a mystery term

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[32] Like most contemporary Platonic thinkers, and unlike Plutarch of Chaeronea and Hierocles, who interpreted Plato's Demiurge myth in the *Timaeus* 'literally' to mean creation of the world in time, Synesius was a 'steady state' rather than a 'big bang' advocate.

[33] Alexandrian later Platonists would be concerned with these problems until the sixth century; two tractates of Philoponus were attempts to answer difficulties posed by Greek philosophy: *On the Eternity of the World Against Proclus* and *On the Resurrection*.

[34] Identified with the 'paternal labour'; 'median principle'; 'creative will'; '*centre* of the Son, both Mother and Daughter', gives birth to the 'hidden root'; (i.e., the Son; *Hymn* 4, l.21). Synesius uses *pnoia* for the Holy Spirit, e.g., 4.l.98. In 2, he employs Chaldaean imagery for the Trinity: the 'Paternal Depth (*o buthos patrōios*, l.2), source of the Son and the Spirit (l.32; *agia pnoia*). The

(*sphragis*), also used for Christian baptism, 'the seal of the Father' (*sphragida patros*, l.620),[35] with the *Chaldaean Oracles*' *sunthēma*, and its synonym, *sumbolon*. Both refer to occult symbols that enable theurgic union with the divine: 'Grant me your token, your seal' (*sunthema didou, sphragida tean*; ll.539–40). If he means Christian baptism here it has been harmonized symbolically with Hellenic Platonism.[36]

The *Hermetica*, with its ideas of rebirth and salvation, and primarily Platonic outlook and suggestions of religious liturgy and ritual, provided potential bridges between philosophical Hellenism and Christianity. For his heterodox ritual, Synesius as bishop accepted revelation as *gnōsis:* 'For one spirit inspired the prophet and the apostle . . . after the fine ancient painters, he drew . . . the features of the *gnosis*' (*Hom.* 1.296d). This fragmentary allegorical exegesis of a Psalm reads like an exercise from the catechetical school of Alexandria: the 'cup of unmixed wine in the hand of the Lord . . . the word of God . . . is able to raise us to Intellect (*eis noun*)'. Where we expect *logos*, the Platonist bishop says *nous* (295c)! The unity of the *logos* in both Testaments is the perfection of Christian *gnōsis*.

Synesius virtually transforms the nocturnal ceremony into a Platonic/ Hermetic Initiation: ' . . . the demiurgic light manifests itself to the purified . . . a light far surpassing that of the sun'. Uncreated, it illuminates souls and the visible sun. Evoking Hellenic spirituality, the creation is a *dēmiourgēma*, and the newly baptized are warned about the danger of incurring pollution (*molusma*) after purification (*catharsis*) (297c). The *Hermetica*, with its creative and salvific noetic entities (*nous-dēmiourgos; logos; anthrōpos*), provides analogues to the Christian myth.[37]

Synesius imagined the resurrection once: Titan Helios calls the ascending saviour 'offspring of god/mind, the best artificer, source of his own fire'.

Paternal Depth is identified with the 'one source, one root', which contains the entire noetic realm in the Chaldaean scheme (ll.59–74).

[35] The term is also used in non-Christian contexts; e.g., Porphyry, *De abst.* 2.44, talks about *hagneia* as a *sumbolon* with respect to a *theia sphragis* in the context of apotropaic rites; this comes close to Synesius; Clement uses Eleusinian terminology for Christian salvation; Christ appears as the hierophant who seals the initiand (*Protrept.* 12.20.1); so *sphragizein* may have played a part in mystery cults. Synesius equates terms and then follows the model of Chaldaean soteriology; thus structurally the hymn remains Orphic/Platonic/Chaldaean.

[36] In Hellenic sacramentalism, *sunthēma* is connected to union granted to initiates by 'grace' (unasked for gifts). Synesius seems to have conceived a more or less Porphyrian 'intellectual theurgy', connected with practice, but not dependent on it; it could thus be applied and even transformed for different kinds of worship. He also refers to the Hellenic cosmos' 'angelic chain' of procession, with its hierarchical hyper – and encosmic orders, ll.280–90; that is not a periphrasis for Christian angels.

[37] Text references to the *Homilies* follow the Petau page numbers adopted by Terzaghi 1944.

Ascending through the cosmic to the hypercosmic realm (ll.55–71), vaulting the azure heaven, he commands the pure intellectual spheres. The ineffable 'silent heaven' of the *Chaldaean Oracles* is, paradoxically, a *coincidentia oppositorum:* ' . . . eternity . . . ageless itself at once young and old . . . ' (ll. 67–71).[38]

4 CONCLUSION

Hellenic later Platonism determined Synesius' conception of reality. Perhaps he was a Christian from birth; but the little knowledge of Scripture he had could have also been acquired as an outsider, in the same way Porphyry acquired knowledge of Judaism. Synesius mentions Christianity only in his hymns and letters. His early works are Hellenic, as are his later prose works, both philosophically and religiously. Once he saw a rising orthodox Christian empire as the wave of the future he had to make a choice. In the light of his conversion to philosophy, whether or not he was born a Christian becomes irrelevant. In his form of Christianity, 'philosophical reason' exceeds 'revelation', with Platonic and Chaldaean symbols equated with, and (where possible) assimilated to, Christian symbols.

He continued to speak of divine intervention in terms of '*the gods* descending'. The saviour figure in his *Hymns* seems closer to the Hermetic *anthrōpos* than to the saviour figure of orthodox Christianity. The 'return' from noetic contemplation for Synesius *reinforces philosophy* per se, not Christianity.[39] Unlike most Patristic authors, he did not identify classical culture solely with rhetoric and letters, nor did he identify or equate Christianity with philosophy.[40] For example, Justin thought that pre-Christian philosophers living by the *logos*, such as Heraclitus or Socrates, counted as 'Christians before Christ' (*Apol.*

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[38] On solar theology, Macrobius, *Sat.* 9. l.67–71; cf. Orphic fr. 54, *chronos ageraos;* l.64, *su men areen, su de theelus;* Synesius, *H.* 2, 60–72; 4, 60–80.

[39] One need only read Augustine's gloss on the *Symposium* as a Christian mystical experience, *Conf.* 9.10, which *reinforces Christianity, not Platonic philosophy*; Augustine 'lands', so to speak, in the Church; Synesius 'lands', reading Greek literature to cushion the descent from the heights, achieved by a purely philosophical climb up the ladder of Platonic dialectic, as a *philosopher.*

[40] Like, for example, the Cappadocians. Gregory of Nazianzen, refuting Julian, was adamant: we are Greeks in language and culture, Christians in religion (*Or.* 4.5). Synesius never asserted anything like this. Nor did he ever think they were essentially the same thing, and thereby practically equate them, like, for instance, Augustine (Bk. 10.23, *DCD*). Augustine was idiosyncratic; he read 'Platonic books' on his way to conversion; see *Conf.* 7.9.13; 8.2.3; see Hadot 2004: 239–40, and n. 7. By the fourth century, the Cappadocians and Evagrius of Pontus were interpreting the Alexandrian tradition in monastic terms, 240–1; as 'Christian philosophy', 242–3; 247–52.

11.13), while Clement of Alexandria thought that the *logos* educated the Greek philosophers (*Strom. PG* 8.164b). Nevertheless, for philosophical Christians, it was revelation alone that determined the final truth (*Protrept. PG* 8.172b–176b; 912b).

In Origen's *De principiis* and his refutation of Celsus, Christianity assumes the character of a philosophical system. The Cappadocians identified classical culture with letters and rhetoric, and philosophy (innovatively and polemically for the 'culture war') with Christian contemplative monasticism: the monk is a philosopher *par excellence*. Philosophy, however, was scripturally based; doctrines in conflict with revelation were rejected. Evagrius of Pontus assimilated Plato's tripartite soul to monasticism. Christianity became the 'sole eternal philosophy'.[41]

By contrast, for Synesius, *any* revealed doctrine was to be interpreted through, and (in principle) not to contradict, 'rational demonstrations'. Thus it becomes seriously misleading to ignore the content of Synesius' thought, or to make of him *merely* a cultural Hellene or an unconventional Christian who happened to love philosophy.

Compared to contemporary professional philosophers, Synesius was perhaps not a first-class philosophical intellect, but he *was* a seminal metaphysical poet. Anticipating the future, he is ideologically close to Muslim philosophers, most notably Al-Farabi, who placed exoteric Islam in a similar social position to the traditional religion depicted in Plato's *Laws*. Establishing a broad new religious horizon, based on the idea that the Platonic and other traditions were part of a primal revelation coeval with the Mosaic, fifteenth-century Florentine Renaissance 'Synesii' (his 'mirror images'), such as Ficino (who translated and was influenced by *On Dreams*) and Pico della Mirandola, thought later Hellenic Platonism compatible with Christianity, but out of the *strength* of their culture. Only one generation after Julian's Hellenic revival, in the wake of the destruction of the mystery shrines, the *very* different context of Synesius' age made it still dangerous to be a Platonic philosopher. Synesius attempted to reconcile later Platonism with Christianity from a higher perspective; if his synthesis remained incomplete, it was nevertheless bold. With apparent success, he insisted on

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[41] Hadot 2004: 237–8 points out that because of the ambiguity of the word *logos*, word, discourse, divine principle (in the principle was the *logos*, etc.), rational force, immanent in human beings and in each individual, 'Christianity could be presented as a philosophy'; Plotinus' student Amelius (in Eus. *PE* 9.19) could credit 'the Barbarian', i.e., John the Evangelist, with a version of the *logos* as the World Soul, creating life and even donning flesh before it returned to its original, pre-incarnate state as God; divine yet somehow mixed with body; a version of the incarnation possible for a Greek philosopher; 238–9, and nn. 2, 3.

the integrity of his own mind. From his perspective of a convert to Hellenic later Platonism, Christianity was a symbolic and allegorical expression of things only fully understood by philosophy. To the extent that Christian doctrine was incompatible, it became the 'philosopher-bishop's' 'noble fiction' (*Rep.* 376e–392c; 414b–415e) in the new 'Republic' (of 'Platonism for the people'), the Church.

MARIUS VICTORINUS

STEPHEN A. COOPER

1 LIFE AND WRITINGS

Our sources for the *vita et opera* of Marius Victorinus – Jerome, Augustine, Boethius, and Cassiodorus – depict him as a celebrated teacher of rhetoric and a scholar, 'who had read and weighed so many of the philosophers' (Augustine, *Conf.* 8.2.3). His surviving pre-Christian works, however, barely hint at the metaphysical interests on display in his theological treatises, which constitute one of the most audacious ventures in philosophical theology to arise within credal orthodoxy, still nascent in his time. Bringing an exceptional level of philosophical learning to the theological debates rending the Church,[1] Victorinus interpreted the Christian Trinity in line with currents of Platonist theology, incidentally preserving inadequately witnessed phases of the history of philosophy.

Born in Roman Africa c. 280, Victorinus attained local renown as state professor of rhetoric in Rome. Honoured late in his career in 354 with a statue in Trajan's Forum (Jerome, *Chronicon* 2370), he was subsequently elevated to the senatorial order. Shortly thereafter (probably 355), Victorinus converted to Christianity 'in advanced old age' (Jerome, *De vir. ill.* 101) after a period of purely intellectual adherence (Augustine, *Conf.* 8.2.4). Augustine (*Conf.* 8.5.10) recounts Victorinus' subsequent resignation from his chair when Emperor Julian in an anti-Christian measure mandated (17 June 362; *Cod. Theod.* 13.3.5) that academic appointees be approved by municipal council and emperor.

Three pre-Christian works survive: an *Ars grammatica*; a commentary on Cicero's *De inventione*, the earliest extant; and a manual of definition, *De definitionibus*, for rhetorical instruction. Victorinus' *Commentary on Cicero's Rhetoric* elaborates philosophical aspects of this textbook, injecting elements of Platonism – discussions of God and nature, Being, the soul, and time and

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[1] 'Arian Controversy' is a misleadingly simplistic term; see Hanson 1988: xvii ff.; Barnes and Williams 1993.

space – or Aristotelian logic and dialectic (1.9; 1.22). His comments on Cicero's discussion of 'probable' and 'necessary' arguments contain a reference to Christianity largely regarded as a witty jab at Christian credulity. Following Cicero's rhetorical parlance whereby *necessarium* indicates the highest degree of persuasiveness an argument may possess (rather than any basis in logical or physical necessity), Victorinus claims both sorts of arguments ultimately depend on what a given audience happens to find persuasive: 'a necessary argument is one already found persuasive in light of an opinion' (*In Cic. rhet.* 1.29). Christians, he says pointedly, do not consider accepted propositions – 'a woman has given birth, so she had sex with a man' and 'if a man is born he will die' – as necessary arguments. In the eleventh century, students of dialectic made creative but incendiary use of these comments, inciting greater ire against fledgling faculties of arts and theology. Victorinus' own attitude toward such breaches of physical law is not wholly clear. On *De inv.* 1.43 he states that 'what dissents from common opinion will be called unbelievable', but goes on to say that 'what is false can be believable and what is unbelievable can be true'. He cites the apocryphal story of Simon Magus flying in Rome (in a contest with St Peter, see Ps.-Clem. *Hom.* 2.32) and concludes 'that Simon flew is true, but it is still unbelievable (*incredibile*)'.

On Definitions, transmitted under Boethius' name and restored to Victorinus in 1877, discusses the indispensability (1.1–2.2) and nature of definition (2.3–3.24). Rhetorical definitions (3.24–6.24) are merely *credibile* or *probabile*; philosophical definitions are 'substantial' and explain 'what a thing is, not its quality' (6.30–7.3).

Unfortunately lost are the 'Books of the Platonists' (Augustine, *Conf.* 7.9–17) Victorinus translated. This collection probably included some of Plotinus' *Enneads*[2] and at least one work by Porphyry, the *De regressu animae* quoted by Augustine in *City of God* (Smith 1993, frs. 283–302). Indeed, none of Victorinus' translations from Greek survives intact. His translation of Porphyry's *Introduction to Aristotle's Categories* is partially preserved in Boethius' first commentary on the *Isagoge*. One recension of Cassiodorus' *Institutes* (2.3.13) attributes to him translations of Aristotle's *On Interpretation* and *Categories* (the latter with eight books of commentary); but as Boethius makes no reference to them, the attribution is dubious. Parts of a lost treatise *On Hypothetical Syllogisms* were incorporated by Martianus Capella and Cassiodorus, who also preserve vestiges of the rhetor's four-book commentary on Cicero's *Topics*.

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[2] Courcelle 1969: 7. Beatrice 1989 identifies the *libri Platonicorum* with Porphyry's *Philosophy from Oracles* (containing *ex hypothesi* extracts from the *Enneads* and identified with Porphyry's *Kata christianōn*).

Victorinus' surviving Christian writings[3] consist of three hymns and nine treatises on the Trinity (composed between 357 and 363) as well as commentaries on Pauline epistles, the first in Latin. The first four treatises are framed as an epistolary exchange between Victorinus and a fictional Arian named Candidus. The earliest modern editor, Johannes Sichardus (1528), regarded the fourth and fifth treatises as two books of a single work extending to the sixth, seventh, and eighth treatises, entitling them *Against Arius* 1–4 after Jerome's remark that Victorinus 'wrote very obscure books against Arius' (*De vir. ill.* 101).

The fictional correspondence opens with a 'Letter of the Arian Candidus to the rhetor Marius Victorinus about the divine begetting' (*Cand.* 1). The second treatise, 'Letter of Marius Victorinus, rhetor of the city of Rome, to the Arian Candidus' (*Ad Cand.*), uses Candidus' philosophical vocabulary to refute him. A brief second letter 'Of the Arian Candidus to Marius Victorinus' (*Cand.* 2) quotes an epistle of Arius to Eusebius, bishop of Nicomedia, and part of one from Eusebius to Paulinus of Tyre. This Arian correspondence was the initial basis for the second refutation of Candidus in Victorinus' fourth and lengthiest treatise, *Adversus Arium* 1 (*Adv. Ar.* 1A). Victorinus' reading of a document assembled at Sirmium in 358 by Basil of Ancyra's party (Hilary, *De syn.* 9) affected his composition. His scriptural survey (chs. 2–27) erupts into polemics (chs. 23, 25, 28–30, 43, 45) and argumentation against Basil's doctrine that the Son was of 'like substance' (*homoiousion*).[4]

The fifth treatise, 'That the Trinity is *homoousios*' (*Adv. Ar.* 1B) responds to questions raised by Basil's party concerning the names for God, Son and Spirit, hence was likely composed not long after the previous one. This work and *Adv. Ar.* 4 contain the richest philosophical material.

The sixth treatise, 'On the *homoousios* in both Greek and Latin against the heretics' (*Adv. Ar.* 2) responds to the Council of Ariminum in 359 (9.1–3) and was written before the death of Constantius on 3 November, 361 (9.50). The treatise demonstrates that the Bible contains the words *ousia* and *hupostasis*. Although Scripture mostly does not apply these terms to God,[5] the rhetor maintains that his opponents' admission of God's existence, which they qualify as 'nonsubstantial' (*anousios*),[6] prevents them from asserting God to be 'without

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[3] Three works ascribed to Victorinus have been judged pseudonymous on grounds of content and style. The *Liber ad Justinum Manichaeum*, *De verbis scripturae: factum est vespere et mane dies unus*, and *De physicis* are printed in Migne (*PL* 8).

[4] Basil introduced the term to oppose the ban on *ousia* proclaimed by the Synod of Sirmium in 357 (Hilary, *De syn.*1).

[5] The exceptions he cites at *Adv. Ar.* 2.5 and elsewhere are the uses of *hupostasis* in Jer. 23.18–22 and Ps. 138.15 (in the Septuagint).

[6] Victorinus says 'certain people' use this term to indicate that God is *huperousios*, 'transcendent substance' (*Adv. Ar.* 2.1.33).

substance' – an argument that depends on Victorinus taking 'substance' to be broadly synonymous with existence (1.23–8). Thus God can be called substance: 'To Be [*esse*] is for God his own substance . . . God, bestowing To Be from himself to himself, is the primary substance, universal substance, substance before substance' (1.28–32).

The seventh, 'On *Homoousios*' (*Adv. Ar.* 3), like the eighth, was probably written shortly after the sixth, 360–2. The work elucidates the parallel structures of the *logos* as the image of God and the soul as the image of this image. Victorinus' citation of a Trinitarian formula in Greek – 'Thus it is said by the Greeks: from one *ousia* there are three hypostases' (4.38–9; also in Latin, *Adv. Ar.* 2 4.51) – indicates some currency with the Greek side of the controversy, where various parties allied against the neo-Arianism of Aetius and Eunomius were moving, in anticipation of the Cappadocian solution, toward the employment of *ousia* to express what is one in the Godhead and *hupostasis* to express what is three.

The eighth treatise, likewise entitled 'On *Homoousios*' (*Adv. Ar.* IV) argues for the mutual implication of the persons of the Trinity, especially the dyad of Christ and Holy Spirit. Aware of the obscurity caused by 'the repetition of terms' (3.34–5), Victorinus moves to a dialectical argument proceeding from the confession that 'God exists' and that this *esse* must in agreement with Scripture be denominated as 'spirit' (ch. 4).

The ninth treatise, 'On the necessity of accepting *homoousios*' (*De hom. rec.*), is almost an abbreviation of *Adv. Ar.* 2 and presents scriptural and philological arguments for the applicability of the term. The treatise reflects developments of 362–3, when western bishops were unifying against the statement of the Council of Ariminum in late 359 (Victorinus, *De hom. rec.* 1.1–3 and 4.15, 33–5; cf. Hilary, *Hist. frag.* A 6.1 and B 4.4).

Victorinus' hymns lack the metrics of classical poetry but follow a developing Christian form of rhythmic strophes based on accent. The first and third hymns bristle with the philosophical vocabulary of his treatises while the second articulates a personal Platonist-Christian piety.

The commentaries on Paul refer to the treatises for fuller discussion and are probably his final productions, completed not before 364 or 365. Extant are two books each on Galatians and Ephesians and one on Philippians; lost are commentaries on Romans and Corinthians.[7] With the tools of grammar and rhetoric, Victorinus expounds the context of each epistle, clarifying the apostle's theoretical and practical precepts. Paul's profound pronouncements

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[7] References to a commentary on Romans: *In Gal.* 4.7, 5.8, 5.15; to a commentary on 1 Corinthians: *In Gal.* 5.6, *In Eph.* 4.11–12; to 2 Corinthians: *In Gal.* 6.14, *In Eph.* 4.10.

elicit occasional philosophical digressions designed to provide a platform for understanding the apostle's full meaning (*In Eph.* 1.4, *In Phil.* 2.6–11, *In Gal.* 4:6).

2 PHILOSOPHICAL THOUGHT

Victorinus' philosophical learning came to fruition in his Trinitarian works, rich soil for *Quellenforschungen*.[8] The rhetor resembles later Christian authors like Nemesius or Synesius in the relatively advanced character of the Platonist thought underlying his theology.[9] With the single exception of Plato (*Adv. Ar.* 4.5.31), however, Victorinus names no philosophical authorities, contrary to the practice of his secular works. Employing a technical philosophical vocabulary,[10] he often uses or translates Greek terms, quoting and paraphrasing other works with various degrees of transparency. Victorinus' chief contribution is his philosophical conception of God, aptly dubbed 'the first metaphysical theory of a self-reflexive Absolute in the context of Latin theology'.[11]

2.1 Ontology

Fundamental questions of philosophy for Victorinus were the prerogative of no one sect: 'Philosophers and the biblically learned have made inquiries into being (*on*) and *logos*, about what and where they are' (*Adv. Ar.* 4.18.62–4). Victorinus sketches an ontological schema to answer the question 'What is God and among which realities does God exist'? (*Ad Cand.* 12.1). The location of the embodied soul with respect to higher and lower realities receives particular emphasis in his monistic and hierarchical system. The 'body of the whole universe' is no 'heap' (*acervus*) of different elements. Rather, reality holds together 'like a chain' (*catena*) of interlinked parts: 'God, Jesus, the Spirit, *nous*, soul, angels, and then

[8] Hadot assembled three sets of 'literary unities' (Hadot 1968: vol. II, 13–55), identifying them as Porphyrian in origin but not quotations from any extant work. These three groups of passages are found almost entirely in three treatises (*Ad Cand.*, *Adv. Ar.* 1B, and *Adv. Ar.* 4) and treat respectively three themes: the modes of being and non-being; the One and the intelligible triad; the relation between To Act and form, or To Live and life (Hadot 1968: II, 68–74).

[9] Henry and Hadot 1960, 1968, argue for Porphyry as the major influence, in part due to Hadot's ascription of *Anon. in Parm.* to Porphyry (see ch. 18 above). Bechtle 1999 and Corrigan 2000 argue that *Anon. in Parm.* antedates Plotinus (thus positing a significant Middle Platonic source for Victorinus); for objections to this hypothesis see Majercik 2005 and Zambon 2002: 40. Further uncertainty about the dating of Victorinus' sources arises from dispute concerning the common source of *Adv. Ar.* 1B.49–50 and *Zostrianus* discovered by Tardieu and Hadot 1996 (see below). Baltes 2002b distinguishes in Victorinus an underlying philosophical system distinct from his theology (115–23) which he dates after Porphyry and maybe after Iamblichus.

[10] See: Hadot 1957a; the Greek–Latin index of Hadot 1968: vol. II; Tommasi 1995: 2006.

[11] Beierwaltes 1998: 28, who sees Victorinus' influence extending at least to Augustine and Eriugena.

all corporeal beings constitute a chain' (*Adv. Ar.* 1A.25.40–2). This is the earliest extant philosophical employment of 'the great chain of being' terminology.[12] God is the author of the whole, the 'cause of all things . . . both those which exist and those which do not' (*Ad Cand.* 3.8–9). One may speak of 'non-being' (*id quod non est*) in four modes: a total negation or privation of existence; the non-being of the relative; the non-being of what is potential; and non-being as an appropriate expression for what transcends being (*Ad Cand.* 4). Victorinus adduces a four-fold classification of existents resembling that found in later Platonists:[13] 'things which really exist; things which exist; things which are not really non-existents; and things which do not exist' (*Ad Cand.* 6.5–7; Greek at 8.20–1). He rejects any further category of non-being, 'things which really do not exist', as outside 'the plenitude of God', i.e., the fullness of being. Such non-entities – presumably centaurs, giants, etc. – exist only as 'an epiphenomenon (*enfasi*) of thought' (*Ad Cand.* 6.8–10; cf. Seneca, *Ep.* 58.15).

At the top of the hierarchy of being is God, 'the primal To Be' (*Adv. Ar.* 1A.26.6), who is above the 'things which really exist' or *intellectibilia* (*Ad Cand.* 7.1–13). These *intellectibilia* or 'knowable realities' compose a triple realm, ranging from 'the one and only Being (*on*)' to the triad *existentialitas, vitalitas, intelligentitas*[14] and further to a list of 'supercelestials' which despite the nomenclature do not refer to the divine proper: 'spirit, *nous*, soul [World Soul, see below], knowledge, training, powers, *logoi*, opinions, perfection, existence, life, and thinking'. These constitute an intelligible realm to which 'our *nous*' can ascend, be formed by and emerge from the 'confusion characteristic of seeking' to stand on its own thought (*Ad Cand.* 7.7–9). Individual souls, despite their capacity to rise, belong to the next lower level, the 'things which merely exist' or *intellectualia* (*Ad Cand.* 7.13–14). Below *intellectualia* are 'things which are not really non-existents', namely, 'the whole world consisting of matter and form in a state of mixture' (*Ad Cand.* 9.15–17). Only matter – he uses the Greek term, *hulē*, throughout this discussion – is among 'things which are not' (*Ad Cand.* 10.28–32). Without soul, matter is 'unproductive' (*effeta*). Matter, conceived apart from qualities (which are themselves material)[15] as the 'underlying thing' (*subiectum*), is 'indeterminate'; once 'determinate it is called a quality, not *hulē*

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[12] Macrobius (*Somn. Scip.* 1.14.15) is the earliest author using the term 'chain' for this idea cited by Lovejoy 1936: 63. Behind Macrobius' use is probably Porphyry's exegesis of the *Chaldaean Oracles*, thus Theiler 1942: 27.

[13] Found in fuller form in Proclus (*In Tim.* 1.223.1).

[14] In *Adv. Ar.* 4.5.24ff., he lists these three as among what 'Plato calls ideas, the chief forms of all the forms in existing realities', to which three he adds 'sameness' and 'difference' in Greek.

[15] Victorinus takes the Stoic view of substance as a complete union of substrate and quality but rejects the corresponding view of the soul as a material entity (*Ad Cand.* 10.25), much like Nemesius, *Nat. hom.* 2.12 (both probably dependent on Porphyry).

of some kind' (*Ad Cand*. 10.11–12). Matter no more exists by itself than do qualities without matter.

Embodied *intellectualia* have sense-perception (*sensus*), an endowment stemming from Intellect in its two-fold operation. The lower, material *nous* (see below on the soul) operates 'by means of sense-perception in imitation of intellectual activity'; *sensus* is 'a copy (*simulacrum*) of Intellect' (*Ad Cand*. 9.8–9). Here Victorinus follows Plotinus (4.6 [41] 1–2; 5.5 [32] 1) and Porphyry (*Sent*. 43 and 44) in granting the similarity between the cognitive processes of Intellect and those of sense-perception but emphasizing the limitations of the latter due to the externality of its objects known only through representation. But when sense-perception 'fully grasps the activity of Intellect . . . it becomes similar and akin to a pure intellect, this being the sort which comprehends the heavenly bodies, the aetherial realm, and the things born and reborn in nature and matter' (*Ad Cand*. 9.8–13; cf. *In Eph*. 1.4.60 ff.). Bare sense-perception grasps 'nothing but qualities, neither perceiving nor comprehending the underlying thing (*subiectum*), that is, the substance' (*Ad Cand*. 9.23–5).

2.2 God the Trinity

Victorinus expounds his Trinitarian doctrine along the lines of Platonist theologies *via negativa* and *via positiva*. The chief element of his positive theology – the triad of Being, Life and Thought in their infinitive form – are introduced by Candidus, who following the tendency in Platonism,[16] takes the claim in Plato's *Sophist* (248e) that 'absolute being' (*to pantelōs on*) can lack neither life nor thinking (Plato uses the infinitives *zēn* and *phronein*) as a theological statement: 'God is One and Alone (*unum et solum*). For God is sheer To Be (*esse solum*), and this To Be is itself both To Live and To Understand' (*Cand*. 1.3.15–17). Candidus does not distribute this *vivere* and *intellegere* implicit in the divine *esse* across the Trinity but applies it to God *qua* 'unbegotten' (*ibid*. 3.25), i.e., the Father. Victorinus for his part interprets this triad – the intelligible triad understood by Platonists as the articulation of being on the level of Intellect (*nous*), the second hypostasis – as the Trinity of consubstantial persons, with no principle above it. The persons are themselves triadic, individually distinguished by the predominance of either To Be, To Live, or To Understand within each (*Adv. Ar*. 1B.63.11–16; *Adv. Ar*. 3.4.36–8, 5.30–1). Victorinus envisions the divine realm as a 'sphere' in which *esse*, *vivere*, *intellegere* 'circulate among themselves, participating mutually in each other' (*Adv. Ar*. 1B.60.15–19; cf. Plotinus 6.5 [23] 5).

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[16] E.g., Plotinus 5.6 [24] 6.20–1: 'And being [*sc.* the hypostasis just below the Good] is fulfilled when it has the form of thinking and living' (tr. Armstrong).

The Father is the 'point' from which a 'line' – the procession of *nous* or *logos* – emerges and traces the periphery of the whole: 'the point is the line potentially and activates the line; the point both departs from itself and does not depart, being always in rest and in motion at the same time, always circulating around itself in a circle, being everywhere a sphere, since God exists everywhere' (*Adv. Ar.* 1B.60.22–26).

Victorinus' quotation of the opening of Plotinus' treatise 5.2 [11] establishes the identification of the One with the Christian God. The rhetor's introductory gloss makes 'God' the subject: 'Some have said that God as "the One is all things and not one of them, for he is the principle of all" – whence he is not all things – "but he is all things in that mode" he says' (*Adv. Ar.* 4.22.8–9). Victorinus translates Plotinus' adverb *ekeinōs* with *illo modo* ('in that mode'); he goes on to explain the transcendent manner in which the One as the 'cause of all things' (*ibid.* 22.18)[17] can be 'all things in all' (cf. 1 Cor. 12.6) without partaking of the mode of being proper to individual entities. But the relation of God the One as 'principle of all things' to all that comes later is not unmediated. 'It is necessary', Victorinus declares, 'that a source and beginning of all universally extensive powers (*potentiarum universaliter universalium fons et origo*) would be born from God, "the principle of all"' (*ibid.* 23–4). He does not clarify here why it is 'necessary' to have a second principle responsible for the arising (*iste . . . rerum progressus*) of subsequent realities, but the assumption of such a premiss was demanded by both Platonism (e.g., Plotinus 5.1 [10] 6) and Christianity (John 1.1–3). This second principle or source is 'a universal power', 'the form produced and arising by the act of living (*actu vivendi*)' which is God (*Adv. Ar.* 4.23.7).

The key to Victorinus' Trinitarian doctrine lies in the distinction between the pure activity of the primal To Be (cf. *Anon. in Parm.* 12.23–6) and the 'form' that eternally accompanies this activity, because the generation of the second principle is the divine Intellect in its self-constitutive and self-revelatory movement.[18] This 'form' is the basis not only of all subsequent being and life but also the basis of any knowledge of God on the part of the creatures (see *Adv. Ar.* 4.27–8). Along these lines Victorinus' third hymn avows that God is 'incomprehensible' but declares 'a kind of form without form of what is unknown and incomprehensible' (lines 226–8). Birth imagery expresses the root idea of the divine procession: 'What is above Being is concealed Being (*absconditum on*). Indeed, generation is a manifestation of the concealed' (*Ad Cand.*14.11–12) . . . 'A

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[17] Plotinus gives the same reason at 5.2 [11] 2.26.
[18] On his notion of form here, cf. Plotinus 6.3 [44] 2.25: 'in the intelligible the form is activity and motion' (tr. Armstrong).

pregnant woman holds hidden what she is about to give birth to' (*Ad Cand.*
14.17). This motif of concealment/manifestation is a corollary of the inconceiv-
ability of the first principle, rendered comprehensible only by the primal divine
act of self-determination resulting in the second principle, to which Victorinus
also attributes auto-determination: 'The Father moves himself from himself; the
Son begets himself from himself' (*Adv. Ar.* 1.32.3–4). The actor and the act are
both 'self-begotten . . . and self-powered', *autogona* and *autodunama*, as he puts
it in Greek (*De hom. rec.* 3.15–16). Victorinus' attribution of this inner activity
to his highest principle allows him to correlate the 'living God' of the Bible
with the philosophical vision of the divine in Plotinus' statement that 'life is the
activity of the Good, or rather an activity from the Good, and Intellect is the
activity already bounded and determined' (6.7.21, 4–6; tr. Armstrong).

   The movement of the first to the second principle comes to the fore in
striking passages of negative and positive theology in *Adv. Ar.* 1B.49–50, par-
allel to one of the Platonizing gnostic treatises from Nag Hammadi, *Zostrianus*
(chs. 64–8, 74–5, 78).[19] Thus the negative theology:

Before all things which really exist there was One, say, Oneness (*unalitas*) or the One
Itself; before accompanied by Being it was One. You must speak of that One and
understand it to contain no shade of otherness: it is purely One, simply One, One by
concession . . . The One is without existence, without substance, without knowledge,
for it transcends these, being measureless, invisible, indiscernible. (*Adv. Ar.* 1B.49.7–19)

Further negative attributes culminating with a denial of form to the One,
'even the very form by which all things are formed', are followed by the key
positive attribute – 'first cause of everything' – which ushers in the positive
theology. Much of this latter could be described more nearly with the scholastic
term *via eminentiae*, a term he employs[20] in dependence on Platonist theological
discourse.[21] That the One is *unum per concessionem* indicates Victorinus' sense that
even the idea of oneness is imperfect for expressing the sheer indeterminateness

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[19] A work entitled *Zostrianus* was critiqued by Plotinus' circle (*VPlot.* 16). Abramowski (1983, 2005,
2006) and Majercik (1992) think this treatise as we have it was revised in light of post-Plotinian
Platonism, specifically Porphyry, *contra* Tardieu 1996: 112. Scholars are divided on the question as
to whether the parallels in Victorinus to Gnostic material result from his direct reading of Gnostic
texts, see: Orbe 1958; Abramowski 1979, 1983, 2005, 2006; Tommasi 1996, 1998b, 2002; Turner
and Majercik 2000; Turner 2007.

[20] See *Ad Cand*. 13.5–6: 'We will by necessity speak of God through his elevation and pre-eminence
over beings (*per eminentiam tōn ontōn*).' Cf. also his recourse to the *via analogiae* in *Ad Cand*. 28.6:
'When we speak so as to say God lives, understands, and foresees, we are talking about God's actions
on the basis of our own.'

[21] Alcinous (*Did*. 10.5–6 [165]) enumerates three ways to arrive at a conception (*noēsis*) of God: the
first two are technical terms corresponding to the *via negativa* (*kat' aphairesin*) and the *via analogiae*
(*kat' analogian*); the third 'intuits God, in virtue of his pre-eminence (*huperochēn*) in honour' (tr.
Dillon).

he ascribes to the existence – 'or better, pre-existence' – of that first principle: 'Indeed, the first *esse* is so unparticipated that it can not even be called one or alone except by its pre-eminence (*per praelationem*)' (*Adv. Ar.* 4.19.1–11). Because God qua *esse* is 'infinite, indeterminate for all others, though not to himself', the apprehension of the first is not possible through thought but must be approached in a manner that resembles various forms of medieval mysticism. The *primum esse*, Victorinus states, 'is heard of by a kind of thought, and it is received, recognized, and believed on the basis of a pre-understanding[22] more than by understanding' (*Adv. Ar.* 4.19.14–16).

The assertion of God's transcendence culminates in an almost ecstatic proclamation: 'This is God, this the Father, a pre-existing pre-knowledge, a pre-existence keeping to its own happiness and its own self, and for that reason in need of no other, perfect above perfect, triple-powered in the oneness of spirit,[23] perfect even beyond spirit' (*Adv. Ar.* 1B.50.1–5). Victorinus' integration of the term 'spirit' into his Platonist system (which had already de-materialized aspects of Stoic physics to give them metaphysical application)[24] required setting aside the term's materialist connotations, both the Stoic sense of the divine but material *pneuma* and the Platonist pneumatic vehicle of the soul.[25] Victorinus uses the term to signify the non-material substance of God, 'a particular existing, living, and knowing substance . . . "God is Spirit" [John 4.24] means that Spirit is the To Be of God . . . God's substance' (*Adv. Ar.* 4.4.9–10, 19–20, cf. 9.8–9).

But 'Spirit' could not be restricted to a general term for the divine *ousia*, for the Spirit is the name of the third person of the Trinity, which he regards along Pauline and Johannine lines (cf. *In Gal.* 4.6, *Adv. Ar.* 3.6) as the Spirit of Christ. Father and Son constitute a first dyad of a double-dyadic Trinity (cf. *Adv. Ar.* 1B.49.1–3). Victorinus treats the emergence of a second One from the first One (the first hypothesis of the *Parmenides*) as a description of the generation of the Son: 'With this [first] One existing, One sprang forth, a One-One' (*unum proexsiluit unum unum*). This One-One is itself a dyad, being two in one: 'it is one in substance and one in motion, for motion is also an existence, since existence too is a motion' (*Adv. Ar.* 1B.50.22–4). This duality of the One-One whereby it appears as activity and determinate substance (both of which exist in potency in the First One) Victorinus christens Son and Spirit (cf. *Adv. Ar.*

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[22] *praeintelligentia* corresponds to *proennoia* of *In Parm. Comm* 2.20, likewise Nag Hammadi texts, see Majercik 2005: 279 and Tommasi 2006: 509–10.

[23] This unusual term *tripotens* (cf. *Adv. Ar.* 4.21.26) appears also Augustine (*De ord.* 2.5.51) and Gnostic treatises.

[24] Porphyry, almost certainly the source of the conceptual parallels between Victorinus and Synesius' *Hymns* uncovered by Theiler 1942 (see Hadot 1968: 455–74)

[25] He refers to that as *hulicus nous* or *hulicus spiritus* (*Adv. Ar.* 1A.62.32–5).

4.32.20–2). As *logos* it is the thought of the Father which comes into its own as the internal activity of the divine generating an external movement. The Son, Victorinus repeats, is 'double . . . life and knowledge' (*Adv. Ar.* 3.8.30). This movement of filiation is 'life', which corresponds to the middle entity – *dunamis* – of the Chaldaean triad, Father–Power–Second Intellect. This 'life' is the indeterminate, hence dyadic power of the first, thus a 'feminine' phase of the *Logos* according to Victorinus (female principles feature in some forms of Platonism, deriving from Pythagorean and early Platonist speculation on the indefinite Dyad as the principle of multiplicity and on the infinite receptivity of matter).[26] There is no separate procession of the Spirit; the 'ingenerate generation' of the divine is a single generation (*Adv. Ar.* 1B.57.7–8). The descent and ascent of Christ corresponds to the Platonist schema of procession and retrogression: 'the descent is life, the ascent is knowledge' (*ibid.* 51.27). The Holy Spirit is thus the 'link' (*conexio*) between Father and Son – the 'embrace (*complexio*) of the two' – which reconnects all things to the Father (*Hymn.* 3.242–6).

Although Victorinus regards the Son as the 'universal power' of the Father and 'cause' with respect to all that comes later (*Adv. Ar.* 1A.24.44), the same language applies to the Father as containing in potency all that is explicit and determinate in the Son. God is *potentia potens praestandi quod est esse omnibus*, 'a power capable of furnishing existence to all things', albeit 'through the ministering *logos*' (*Adv. Ar.* 1B.52.10, 14). Victorinus' *quod est esse* clearly means 'existence' here, making him one of the earliest thinkers to employ the distinction – the roots of which are in Plotinus – between essence and existence, between what a thing is and the fact that it is.[27] This is evident when he distinguishes God's *esse* from the existence of all else:

> This To Be we are talking about, however, must be understood as one thing in the case of that which is To Be (*quod est esse*) and something different in the case of that which is to be in a certain condition (*quod est ita esse*), to the effect that one belongs to substance and the other to quality. The latter obtains here among perceptible things and in the world, but among divine and eternal realities the two are one. (*Adv. Ar.* 3.1.20–4)

Although Victorinus' interest here is to establish an ontological distinction between the divine being and that of creatures, in so doing he conceives the existence granted them as a separate factor – a distinct and prior reality – in

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[26] See Aristotle, *Metaph.* 1.5, 986a25 (Pythagorean link of the 'female' with the limitless and plurality) and 1.6, 987b26 ff. (Plato's characterization of the 'unlimited' as the 'great and small'). Plato's identification of the 'receptacle . . . and nurse of all becoming' (*Tim.* 49a) *qua* 'recipient' as 'mother' (*Tim.* 50d) strengthened the female associations of the unlimited and its presence not only among the highest principles but also in soul and matter.

[27] Key to the Latin development of the concepts (rather differently reprised in Aquinas) is Boethius, whose *De hebdomadibus* distinguishes between *quod est* (what a thing is) and *esse* (its existence), ultimately dependent on an *esse primum*.

the composite of form and matter constituting such entities, which exist only because of the activity of the higher hypostases.

This conception of God as *esse*[28] entails for Victorinus rejecting any distinction between God and the Being of God, just as Plotinus (following Aristotle, *Metaph.* 8.3, 1043b) rejected making 'soul' and 'the To Be of soul' discrete realities (*Enn.* 1.1 [53] 2). Victorinus allows his fictional Arian to agree with him on the issue: 'God is not one thing and To Be God another (*aliud deum esse*), for God is a simple reality. God does not therefore exist in relation to a pre-existent substance' (*Cand.* 1.2.8–10). Victorinus returns to exclude this possibility:

If the To Be of God [*deo esse* = essence] and God's existence (*deum esse*) are two different things, there is a pre-existent To Be of God, in which case God would obviously be in a state of potential in view of the To Be . . . But scripture and all understanding say that this God you conceive is also To Be and that before God there is nothing. (*Adv. Ar.* 1A.33.4–15)

If God's form or essence were separable from its existence, then the form would require an act to fulfil its potency. That would make God less than absolute, a conclusion Victorinus thought abhorrent to Scripture and *intelligentia*, both of which establish God as the necessary first term.

2.3 The soul

'The soul descends from divine realities', Victorinus admonished students of rhetoric, 'but the acuity of even a perfect soul is entangled and mired in a kind of thick coat of the body' (*In Cic. rhet.* praef.). If his commentary on Cicero emphasized the role of habit and wisdom in recovering the original nature of the soul, the Christian works reveal a more elaborate philosophical anthropology. Victorinus follows the Platonic doctrine of a World Soul to the point of positing 'soul' (*anima*) on the level of the things that really exist (*intellectibilia*). This soul, as a life-giving power possessed of its own To Be, To Live, and To Know (*Adv. Ar.* 1B.63.17), enacts on a lower level of being (i.e., a less integral one) what the more divine life does on the higher:

Just as the more divine unitary trinity . . . made by its radiance (*effulgenter*) the soul a subsisting reality and its own proper substance in the intelligible world . . . so too the soul, a second unitary trinity, has unfurled its image-making power (*imaginatio*) in the sensory world – the same soul, which always existing above, gives birth to worldly souls. (*Adv. Ar.* 1B.64.1–7)

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[28] The 'determination of the highest principle as pure being' in *Anon. in Parm.*, Victorinus and Boethius is treated by Leinkauf 2002.

A more direct appropriation of the Platonist World Soul is hardly to be encountered in such an otherwise orthodox Latin Christian context. As the Son is the image of the Father and is life, 'the soul is created (*effecta*) as an image of life. But with its own *nous*, which is from the reality of *Nous*, the soul is a power of intelligent life' (*ibid*. 61.5–8). The individuation of 'worldly souls' from the World Soul result from inattention to the higher: 'Tilting downward and away from *Nous*, soul drags itself and its *nous* downwards . . . If it fixes its gaze on inferiors – because it is wanton (*petulans*) – it becomes a life-giving power which makes the world and the things in the world live, even a stone in the manner of stones' (*ibid*. 61.10–17). This attention to the lower results in the soul becoming 'shadowy' and it 'is led downward', i.e., souls become embodied composite entities.

This fall from the heavenly realm occurs – with obvious parallels in Origen and Plotinus – through the soul's freedom (*suae licentiae*). Notwithstanding its 'deprivation of the true light', the soul is summoned to the higher realities 'on account of the faint spark[29] (*scintilla*) of its own *nous*' (*Adv. Ar.* 1B.61.21–4). With a metaphysical nudge from the 'Paternal Intellect' (*nous patrikos*, a term from the *Chaldaean Oracles*), with 'the Spirit having sent from above figures of intelligible reality written from eternity in our soul', souls ascend to the higher levels via 'a certain elevation of the mind of our soul' whereby it can behold 'ineffable realities' (*Ad Cand*. 1.6–10; cf. *Chald. Or.* 108). Victorinus configures the ascent of the soul to the Father as its transformation from female to male, i.e., from carnal to spiritual (*In Eph*. 4.13). This mirrors on a lower level the outward movement of the Son *qua* life as a 'feminine power' which, 'returning to the Father is made male' (*Adv. Ar.* 1B.51.19–26; cf. *In Gal*. 4.3–4). The soul can ascend to higher realities based on its ontological structure; but for this it requires enlightenment, ethical-ascetic exercise, and the gracious condescension of the divine (*In Eph*. 1.4–8; *In Gal*. 4.5–6).

Victorinus' fullest anthropological discussion is elicited by the need to interpret Gen. 1.26 ('Let us make man according to our image and likeness') consonant with his teaching on God and the soul (*Adv. Ar.* 1B.61.28–9). He mentions four views, of which his is the last: 'a four-fold body of the four elements along with a double soul and double *nous*'. That God 'took dust and formed Adam' (cf. Gen. 2.7) signifies the earth, including 'the high point of earth and its flower'[30] which together constitute 'the principles of the body'. Our endowment with a 'double intellect (*nous*) and a double soul' is allegorically revealed in the gospel story of two men working in the field or two women grinding

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[29] The notion of the *scintilla animae* took on great significance in Meister Eckhart and later mystics.
[30] Terms from the *Chaldaean Oracles* (see frs. 1, 37, 76) and ch. 9 above.

grain (Matt. 24.39–41; Luke 17.34–3). More precisely, there is 'a heavenly *nous* or *logos* and a heavenly soul, but also a material *logos* and material soul'. These four nest within each other and all within the body:

As the power of sense-perception, the material *nous* is situated in and consubstantial with the material soul. This being so, the heavenly *logos* – meaning *nous* or divine spirit – is in the divine soul. But this divine soul is in a material spirit [sc. the *ochēma* or pneumatic vehicle], and the material spirit in a material soul, the material soul in the fleshly body, which must be purified with all three in order for the person to receive eternal light and eternal life. And this is what faith in Christ brings about. (*Adv. Ar.* 1B.62.32–9)

This is not far from Plotinus' dying commission: 'Strive to lead the god in us up to the divine in the all' (*VPlot.* 2.26–7). Victorinus refers to soul as 'divine'[31] without thinking it is God; here as elsewhere in his writings, motifs of Platonism are retained but attenuated to fit the needs of Christian theology.

CONCLUSION

It is typical of the era that this most learned representative of mid-fourth century Rome should bring his philosophical studies to bear upon a doctrine of salvation. The tendency among Platonists from the second century CE onward to admit divine oracles – even 'barbarian' texts – as authoritative utterances to be integrated into their philosophical thought parallels Victorinus' willingness to treat scriptural and credal doctrines as premises from which binding conclusions could be reached by abductive reasoning. Reason could understand and thus vindicate what was proclaimed by way of creed.[32] Victorinus' basic theological commitments, however, led at times to intellectual difficulties and inconsistencies on the philosophical side. On the theological side, Victorinus' inclusion of Platonist and Gnostic ideas outside the mainstream of Christianity – a feminine principle in the divine and the pre-existence of souls 'in Christ' (*In Eph.* 1.4) – made him eccentric in Christian thought. But despite being a marginal character in the history of theology and a minor luminary in the history of philosophy, Marius Victorinus is an exemplar of the pervasive confluence of Greek philosophy and Christianity in late antiquity. He has rightly been recognized as the origin of a remarkable synthesis of Christianity and Platonism in the Latin world; and in this regard Victorinus was a forerunner of the medieval philosophical systems of the Christian West.

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[31] One might translate this into contemporary idiom as 'spiritual'.

[32] Thus in *Adv. Ar.* 4: 'As this is [scripturally and doctrinally] correct, it is also very true in light of reason' (6.23; cf. 3.26: *ratio docebit et ipsa veritas adprobabit*).

AUGUSTINE

GIOVANNI CATAPANO

1 LIFE AND WRITINGS[1]

Augustine was born in Thagaste (today's Souk-Ahras, in Algeria), a *municipium* in the Roman province of Proconsular Africa and the ecclesiastical province of Numidia, in 354. His mother, Monnica, educated him in the Christian faith. His first encounter with philosophy took place in Carthage in 373, when he read a now-lost dialogue by Cicero, the *Hortensius*, and was won over by its exhortation to love wisdom, that is, to be a philosopher. Disappointed by the non-classical language of the Scriptures, Augustine was captured by the preaching of the Manichees, who promised him they would explain revealed truth by reason only. Throughout his adhesion to Manichaeism, he was in the lower ranks of the Hearers. He studied Aristotle's 'so-called *Ten Categories*' by himself in 374, maybe in some paraphrased or commented version (*Conf.* 4.16.28–9). After becoming a teacher, he read books on the liberal arts (dialectics, geometry, music) and memorized 'many writings of the philosophers' (*Conf.* 5.3.3), chiefly astronomical books by pagan authors, which revealed to him the untenable nature of the Manichaean myths. His readings during this period included Cicero's philosophical works and doxographical texts like those by Varro. Augustine wrote his first theoretical treatise, two or three books *De pulchro et apto*, in 380/1. It had already been lost by the time of the *Confessiones* (*Conf.* 4.13.20–15.27).

He moved to Rome in 383 and to Milan the following year, where he held the chair of rhetoric and abandoned Manichaeism once and for all. Despite his sceptical attitude shaped by the philosophy of the New Academy, Augustine attended Ambrose's Sunday sermons and became convinced little by little of the reasonableness of faith in the Scriptures. A crucial event in Augustine's intellectual development happened in 386. He read 'some books of the

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[1] We are well informed of Augustine's life by many autobiographical passages in his works. Books 1–9 of the *Confessiones* narrate the events from his childhood to Monnica's death; Possidius' *Life*, written a short time after Augustine's death, narrates the rest.

Platonists', translated from Greek into Latin by Marius Victorinus, which made him able to conceive of God as a spiritual being and to solve the problem of evil. There are good reasons for thinking that these books included both some treatises by Plotinus (the *Plotini paucissimi libri* mentioned in *De beata vita* 1.4) and some writings by Porphyry, but we do not know exactly either how many or what they were, since there is no literal quotation in Augustine's early works. The Plotinian and Porphyrian texts quoted in later writings like the *De civitate Dei*[2] do not prove that Augustine had read them in 386. In any case, it can be said that Augustine had known what we usually call 'Neo-Platonism' since 386, and this philosophy was to be the most influential on his thought from then on.

Listening to exemplary conversions stimulated Augustine to give up teaching and his plans for a career and marriage. During the grape-picking holidays of 386, he retired to the country, in a place named Cassiciacum. There he wrote the dialogues *Contra Academicos*, *De beata vita*, *De ordine* and *Soliloquia*. After Epiphany, he returned to Milan to attend baptismal catechesis. During Lent, he wrote the treatise *De immortalitate animae* as a 'memorandum' for the completion of the *Soliloquia*, and he planned a series of books on the liberal arts. He was baptized by Ambrose that Easter (387). Then he decided to return to Africa. His mother died in Ostia, shortly after an ecstatic vision narrated in *Conf.* 9.10.23–6. Being forced to stay in Rome for some months, he wrote the treatise *De moribus ecclesiae catholicae et de moribus Manichaeorum* and the dialogue *De quantitate animae*, and began to compose the dialogue *De libero arbitrio*, which he finished after his ordination as a priest (i.e. after the beginning of 391). Towards the end of 388, he settled again in his native town, where he founded a sort of monastic community with his friends and wrote the dialogues *De musica* and *De magistro* (a dialogue with his son Adeodatus), and the treatises *De Genesi contra Manichaeos* and *De vera religione*.

Augustine succeeded Valerius as bishop of Hippo in 395/7. In the same years he began *De doctrina christiana*, which was finished only in 426/7, and wrote *De diversis quaestionibus ad Simplicianum*, where 'much effort was made in defence of the free choice of the will, but God's grace won' (*Retr.* 2.1.1; see § 2.6 below), and *Contra epistulam Manichaei quam vocant Fundamenti*. From 397 to 403, he wrote the *Confessiones* (no doubt his best known work nowadays), *Contra Faustum* (against a distinguished Manichaean bishop), *De catechizandis rudibus* and probably *De natura boni*, and he began the fifteen books *De Trinitate* (finished after 420) and the twelve books *De Genesi ad litteram* (finished toward

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[2] In this work, Augustine quotes from *Enn.* 1.2 [19] 1; 1.6 [1] 7–8; 3.2 [47] 13; 4.3 [27] 12; 5.1 [10]; 5.6 [24] 4, and Porphyry's *Letter to Anebo*, *De regressu animae* and *Philosophy from Oracles*.

415). Probably from 403 to 405 he wrote *Contra Secundinum Manichaeum*, which he judged his best anti-Manichaean book in *Retr.* 2.10. In 406 he began the 124 *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* (finished after 419), and the following year he preached the ten *In epistulam Iohannis ad Parthos tractatus*. In 410 Augustine replied to the student Dioscorus with *Epistula* 118, where he discusses the relationship between Platonism, the other philosophical schools and Christianity. The same year, Visigoths sacked Rome. The Christian religion was accused of depriving the city of the gods' protection. Hence, Augustine was urged to put into writing his thoughts on paganism, the Roman Empire, the Church and salvation. The outcome was the great work *De civitate Dei*, whose twenty-two books were written from 412 to 426.

Up until 411, Augustine was involved in the controversy with the Donatists. Donatism was a schismatic movement, which claimed to be the only true Church after the last persecution of the Christians under Diocletian (303–4). In a conference held in Carthage in 411, the Donatist bishops were confuted by their Catholic colleagues and convicted by the imperial officer Flavius Marcellinus. In order to spread knowledge of the event, Augustine prepared a numbered summary of the proceedings, the *Breviculus*. Before 411, he had written many anti-Donatist works; the extant treatises are *Contra epistulam Parmeniani*, *De baptismo*, *Contra litteras Petiliani*, *Contra Cresconium* (including an interesting defence of dialectics in theology), and *De unico baptismo*. Among his anti-Donatist writings post 411, the treatise-letter *De correctione Donatistarum* (= *Ep.* 185) deserves attention with regard to the problem of religious coercion.

Urged by Marcellinus to engage in the controversy with the Pelagians, Augustine wrote the treatise *De peccatorum meritis et remissione et de baptismo parvulorum*. From 412 to 418 he wrote the books *De spiritu et littera*, *De natura et gratia*, *De perfectione iustitiae hominis*, *De gestis Pelagii*, and *De gratia Christi et de peccato originali* against the teachings of his contemporaries Pelagius and Caelestius. In 419–20 he replied to the young man Vincentius Victor in the four books *De anima et eius origine*, where he defended his own hesitations about the origin of human souls. In 420 he began a fierce controversy with Julian, the Pelagian bishop of Aeclanum, against whom he wrote book 2 of *De nuptiis et concupiscentia* and the treatises *Contra duas epistulas Pelagianorum*, *Contra Iulianum*, and *Contra Iulianum opus imperfectum*.

At the request respectively of a certain Consentius and of the layman Laurentius, Augustine wrote *Contra mendacium* and the 'handbook' (*Enchiridion*) *De fide, spe et caritate* in 421–2. In 426–7 he met the objections made by some monks of Hadrumetum (modern Sousse, in Tunisia) regarding his theory of grace (*De gratia et libero arbitrio* and *De correptione et gratia*). In the same years, he composed the *Retractationes*, where he revises and corrects '93 [of his] works,

divided into 232 books' in chronological order, letters and sermons excluded,[3] and held a public debate with the Arian bishop Maximinus, which was transcribed (*Conlatio cum Maximino*) and recapitulated (*Contra Maximinum*). From 428 to 430 he wrote *De haeresibus* at the request of Quodvultdeus, a deacon of Carthage, and met the objections made by some monks of Marseilles (called 'semi-Pelagians' nowadays) to his theory of predestination, writing two books *De sanctorum praedestinatione*, which are wrongly known as two distinct works (*De praedestinatione sanctorum* and *De dono perseverantiae*).

Augustine died in Hippo in 430, while the town was besieged by the Vandals.

2 THOUGHT

Immediately after his conversion, Augustine believed that there were only two philosophical questions, one concerning the soul and the other concerning God. The former asks us to know ourselves and is the first for learners, the latter asks us to know our origin and is the first for learned people (*De ord.* 2.18.47). In the same period, he mentioned Plato as the author of a complete system of philosophy, made up of morals, the science of natural and divine things, and dialectics (*C. Acad.* 3.17.47). Some thirty years later, Augustine went back to the tripartition of philosophy into *naturalis* (physics), *rationalis* (logic) and *moralis* (ethics), and used it to expound the thought of Plato and his followers, which culminated in the recognition of God as respectively the author of all natures, the light of all minds, and the supreme good (*De civ. Dei* 8.4 and 6–8; 11.25). By combining the bipartition of the philosophical subjects suggested by Augustine with the traditional tripartition of the philosophical disciplines, we will present first Augustine's doctrines on the soul and then on God, and we will articulate both questions according to the triple view of physics, logic (understood as theory of knowledge) and ethics. So, in the first place we will look at Augustine's teachings on the soul as a created nature (§ 2.1), on the ways of human knowledge (§ 2.2) and on individual and collective happiness (§ 2.3); then we will consider his theories on God in himself and as the Creator (§ 2.4), on the understanding of the Scriptures, where God's will is revealed (§ 2.5), and on the grace by which God saves men lapsed into sin (§ 2.6).

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[3] At present, Augustine's letters (including those of his correspondents) amount to 309. Some of them are real treatises, which Augustine himself counted among his *opuscula*: *Ad inquisitiones Ianuarii* (= *Epp.* 54–5), *Quaestiones expositae contra paganos numero sex* (= *Ep.* 102), *De gratia testamenti novi ad Honoratum* (= *Ep.* 140), *De videndo Deo* (= *Ep.* 147), *De origine animae* (*Ep.* 166), *De sententia Iacobi* (= *Ep.* 167), *De correctione Donatistarum* (= *Ep.* 185), *De praesentia Dei ad Dardanum* (= *Ep.* 187). There are nearly 600 authentic sermons (the exegetical collections of *En. in Ps.*, *In Io. Ev. Tr.* and *In Ep. Io. Tr.* excluded). The most exciting discovery in this field was made in 1990 by François Dolbeau, who found twenty-six new sermons of great importance and interest in a manuscript of Mainz Stadtsbibliothek.

2.1 The soul as a created being

The first problem regarding the soul Augustine faced after his conversion was that of immortality. In the *Soliloquia*, Reason (a character of the dialogue) frames a complex proof of the soul's immortality, which can be summarized as follows: if something exists only in a subject (*in subiecto*) and lasts forever, its subject lasts forever, too; now, dialectics exists only in the human soul (*animus*) and lasts forever because it is identical in being with truth, that is, with what makes every kind of knowledge (*disciplina*) true; hence, the *animus* lasts forever as well (*Sol.* 2.13.24). The notion of 'existing in a subject' as the inseparable existence of something in something else, and the idea that the soul is the 'subject' of knowledge, come from Aristotle's *Categories* (cf. Aristot. *Cat.* 2.1a24–6; 1b1–2 and 8–9). The use of Aristotelian concepts for upholding so typically a Platonic theory as the immortality of the soul shows traces of Porphyrian works such as the *Zētēmata*, the *Isagoge* and the *Commentary on the Categories*. In *De immortalitate animae* the proof of the *Soliloquia* is consolidated with many other arguments which owe much to Plotinus and Porphyry. One argument shows that the soul does not extend in space, since the soul as a whole perceives the affection suffered by any part of the body and is able to locate it precisely. This means that the whole soul is simultaneously present in every single particle of the body, and hence that it has no mass, because each particle of mass is smaller than the whole and occupies a different place from the others (*De imm. an.* 16.25). This argument, which Augustine repeats in several works (cf. *C. ep. Man.* 16.20; *De Trin.* 6.6.8; *Ep.* 166.2.4), comes from Plotinus, perhaps via Porphyry.

The unextendedness of the soul is the hard core of *De quantitate animae*. Augustine wants to persuade his friend Evodius that the soul is great in power and not in size, for it has no dimension. The dialogue lingers in digressions whose declared aim is to accustom Evodius to giving up his materialistic view of the soul. The analysis of the three geometrical dimensions, for instance, makes Evodius understand that the soul is superior in being to the body, since it is able to keep separate these dimensions, which are inseparable in the bodies (*De quant. an.* 14.23). The true 'greatness' of the soul, that is, the value of its activity, displays itself in seven ascending degrees: the vegetative functions, the sensitive ones, culture, purification, the preservation of purity, the tendency to gaze at the truth, and finally the contemplation of the truth (*De quant. an.* 33.70–6).

Some questions which are only skimmed over in *De quantitate animae* are investigated in subsequent works. The first one concerns the 'derivation' of the soul. On the one hand, the human soul comes from God, who created it; on the other, it is not made of physical elements and has its own substance (*De*

quant. an. 1.2). Augustine's theory of the creation of the soul is based upon an interpretation of the Genesis account. Against the Manichees, Augustine claims that the insufflation of the breath of life into Adam's nostrils (Gen. 2.7) does not at all mean that the human soul is of the same substance as God. If it were so, unhappiness, vice, error and mutability would be attributed to God (*De Gen. c. Man.* 2.8.10–1). On the contrary, the soul, therefore, comes from God by creation and not by generation or emanation (*De Gen. ad litt.* 7.2.2). The most reasonable opinion is that Gen. 2.7 refers only to the insufflation of an already created soul, whereas Gen. 1.27 refers to the creation in the beginning of Adam's completed soul, not of its 'causal reason' (*De Gen. ad litt.* 7.24.35; 10.2.3). Eve's soul may have been created this way as well (*De Gen. ad litt.* 10.1.2; see note 46 below). That the soul was created in the beginning, and so *ex nihilo*, does not exclude the possibility that it was created from spiritual matter, which was former not in time but in origin, just as voice precedes song (*De Gen. ad litt.* 7.27.39).

The origin of the soul is more doubtful with regard to the descendants of the first progenitors. In *De libero arbitrio* (3.20.56–21.59), Augustine admits four hypotheses regarding the souls of the descendants: (i) they derive from Adam's soul; (ii) they are created in time for every single man who is born; (iii) they pre-exist in God, who sends them to vivify the bodies of individuals; (iii) they pre-exist 'somewhere else' (*alibi*) and come into bodies spontaneously. Although often urged to take up a definite position, Augustine always deemed his initial hesitation right, because he never found unequivocal biblical passages nor absolutely evident rational arguments on this matter.[4] The problem was exacerbated during the Pelagian controversy.[5] Augustine's aim was not only to exculpate God from the charge of being responsible for human sins, against the Manichees,[6] but also to defend the need for baptism even for the salvation of new-born children. From this point of view, he considered only two hypotheses: traducianism (= hypothesis (i) of *De lib. arb.*) and creationism (= hypothesis (ii)). The former fitted better with the transmission of original sin, but ran the risk of falling into materialism, as the case of Tertullian made clear. The latter was unable to explain how souls, created one by one *ex novo*, could contract original sin.[7] The only hypothesis that Augustine rejects decidedly, on the

[4] Cf. *De pecc. mer.* 2.36.59; 3.10.18; *De Gen. ad litt.* 10.3.4–10.17; *Epp.* 143.7–11; 190.1.2; 5.17; 202/A.4.10; 7.15; *De an. et or.* 2.14.19; 4.24.38; *Retr.* 1.1.3.

[5] After *De libero arbitrio*, all the other Augustinian texts on this topic date from 412 onwards. According to Augustine, however, the problem of the (uncertain) origin of souls must be carefully kept separate from the question of the (certain) transmission of original sin, and the former must be resolved in a way consistent with the latter: cf. *C. ep. Pel.* 3.10.26.

[6] The hypotheses of *De libero arbitrio* were addressed to them: cf. *Ep.* 166.3.7.

[7] Cf. *De Gen. ad litt.* 10.11.18–26.45; *Epp.* 166.4.10–9.28; 190.4.13–6.24; 202/A.4.10–6.14; 8.18–20; *Retr.* 2.45.56.

grounds of Rom. 9.11, is that the soul is precipitated into the body because of sins committed in a previous life.[8]

Another subject discussed briefly in *De quantitate animae* is the soul's likeness to God (*De quant. an.* 2.3). Again, the basis of Augustine's theory is again the Bible. According to his interpretation, the statement that God created man in his own image and likeness (Gen.1.26–7) means that man is the image of the Holy Trinity only in what differentiates him from the beasts, that is, in the rational and intellectual part of his soul, which is named 'mind' (*mens*; cf. *De Gen. ad litt.* 3.20.30).[9] The image of the Trinity exists in every human mind. The search for this image is developed in the second part of *De Trinitate* (books 8–15). Augustine finds the first inner trinity in self-love. The mind, the love by which the mind loves itself, and the self-knowledge (*notitia sui*) without which the mind could not love itself, though being three distinct things, are of the same substance, and they are equal, inseparable, and immanent in each other (*De Trin.* 9.2.2–5.8). By examining the question of self-knowledge closely, Augustine reaches a 'more evident' mental trinity: memory, intelligence and will (*memoria-intellegentia-voluntas*). The mind always has self-knowledge, even when it does not think of itself, and this continuous *notitia sui* may be called self-memory. The mind always has self-understanding and self-love as well, and that is why it is so hard to distinguish these three things. The distinction becomes easier if one examines the passing process of thought (*cogitatio*; *De Trin.* 10.12.19; 14.4.7–7.10; 10.13). The mind thinks of itself appropriately when it turns its inner eye directly to the self-knowledge kept in memory. In this way, the mind generates an inner word (*verbum*), by which it 'says' itself, that is, understands itself explicitly before any particular linguistic expression. The *voluntas*, which joins the mind and its word together, is a kind of love, which proceeds from the mind when it finds itself (*De Trin.* 9.7.12–12.18). The trinity of self-thought is the enigmatic mirror by which the faithful can catch a glimpse of the divine Trinity in this life. The Father corresponds to the self-knowledge contained in memory, the Son to the inner word by which the mind understands itself consciously, and the Holy Spirit to the will/love which springs from them both (*De Trin.* 15.7.11–16.26; 20.39–27.50). However, the reason why the mind is the image of God is not its self-remembering, self-understanding and self-loving,

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[8] Cf. *De pecc. mer.* 1.22.31–2; *De Gen. ad litt.* 10.7.12; 15.27; *Epp.* 166.9.27; 190.1.4; 202/A.8.17; *De civ. Dei* 11.23 (about Origen); *De an. et or.* 1.19.34.

[9] The refusal to admit that man is the image of God regarding his body has a polemical intent against the Manichees (*De Gen. c. Man.* 1.17.27–8): they rejected the biblical doctrine of the *imago Dei* as anthropomorphism (= God and man are similar in bodily shape; cf. *Conf.* 3.7.12), whereas Augustine learned from Ambrose that this doctrine must be understood in a spiritual way (*Conf.* 6.3.4–4.6).

but its capability to remember, understand, and love its Creator, that is, to become wise, by being converted and improving itself step by step up until the final vision of God (*De Trin.* 14.12.15; 15.21–19.25).

2.2 Knowledge

Augustine's *philosophia rationalis* begins with a refutation of Academic Scepticism. This is the subject of the dialogue *Contra Academicos*. Were knowledge impossible, philosophical research would make no sense. The Academics (Arcesilaus and Carneades, whose thought Augustine knew through Cicero's works) seem[10] to maintain that nothing can be known for certain (*nihil posse percipi*) in philosophy, because there is no 'cognitive impression' as it is defined by Zeno the Stoic, and therefore the wise man (*sapiens*) never assents to any *visum* (*Contr. Acad.* 2.5.11). Augustine objects that Zeno's definition of the cognitive impression is either true or false. If it is true (and it is), there is something true in philosophy; if it is false, that is, if it is not true that what is likely to be confused with the false cannot be known for certain, there is no longer any reason for being sceptical (*Contr. Acad.* 3.9.18 and 21). Augustine proceeds to give some examples of indubitable cognitions, concerning philosophical subjects and comprehensible even by men who are not yet wise: e.g., either there is one world or there is not one; if there is not one world, then the number of worlds is finite or infinite, and so on. If anybody can gain sure cognitions like these, all the more reason the wise man can perfectly know, and so assent to, something, at least his own wisdom (*Contr. Acad.* 3.10.22–14.32).

In later writings, Augustine assembles and nearly reduces his anti-sceptical arguments to the emphasizing of one fundamental truth, which one cannot doubt and refuse to assent to: the truth of existing and living. This truth is not only probable, but absolutely certain, incontrovertible, and capable of withstanding any sceptical assault. Suppose I were mistaken in thinking that I am existing and living: nevertheless, it would be true that I am existing and living, because he who neither exists nor lives cannot be mistaken. *Si enim fallor, sum* (*De civ. Dei* 11.26). Moreover, I can know that I am sure of my existence and life, and I can know that I know this, and so on without end. The Academics, who wish not to be mistaken, can be sure of their wishes at least (*Ench.* 7.20; *De civ. Dei* 19.18).

[10] Augustine believes that the true purpose of the Academics was to fight Stoic materialism in defence of Plato's doctrine, which was based on the distinction between the sensible and the intelligible world (*Contr. Acad.* 3.17.37–20.43; *Epp.* 1.1; 118.3.16).

The mind knows itself with an *intima scientia* (*De Trin.* 15.12.21), which is different from its knowledge of sensible things. In *De quantitate animae*, sense-perception (*sensus*) is defined as a bodily affection of which the soul is aware through the affection itself (*passio corporis per seipsam non latens animam*). The conditions for sense-perception, therefore, are three: (i) the body undergoes a modification; (ii) the soul is aware of it; (iii) the soul is aware of the bodily modification through nothing else than the modification itself (*De quant. an.* 23.41–30.58). By 'affection' (*passio*) Augustine means a passive alteration. In this sense, only the body is 'affected' in sense-perception. The soul changes as well, but it is active, not passive toward the body, as is explained in the dialogue *De musica*. The sensible things affect the body, and the modifications they cause in it hinder or favour the soul's control of the body. The soul reacts to the modifications of the body by increasing its own attention (*adtentius agere*) and hence its awareness of its operations on the body. Accordingly, pain and pleasure arise respectively to the greater difficulty or ease with which the soul operates. In the case of the five senses, the modification is undergone by the material elements in the sense-organs (cf. *De Gen. ad litt.* 3.4.6–5.7). For instance, the soul vivifies and moves what is similar to the air in the ear; when the sound causes a movement in the aerial element of the ear through the vibration of the air, the soul reacts by moving that element in a different way and with more attention, and the awareness of this operation (and of the bodily modification to which it reacts) is the auditory perception. In sense-perception, therefore, the body alone is passive (*De mus.* 6.5.8–12). The idea of the non-passivity of the soul in sense-perception, and the vocabulary with which it is described, probably come from Plotinus.[11]

Augustine discerns a trace (*vestigium*) of the Trinity in the relationship between the sensible objects and the attention of the soul. In visual perception, for instance, three things can be distinguished: what is seen (that is, the visible body), vision (*visio*) and the attention of the soul (*animi intentio*). Augustine calls 'vision' the form (*forma*) which is imprinted by the visible body on the sense of the eyes (*sensus oculorum*), namely, on the rays of light which come out of the pupils very quickly and get literally in touch, like a stick, with the objects.[12] The resemblance between vision and the form (*species*) of the object is such that reason alone is able to distinguish them. Vision lasts only as long as the visible object is seen, that is, as long as the *intentio* of the soul joins the sense of the eyes to the object (*De Trin.* 11.1.1–2.5). Vision, however, generates a

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[11] The clearest lexical correspondence is between the expression *non latere* used by Augustine and *mē lathein* of *Enn.* 4.4 [28] 19.25.

[12] Cf. *De quant. an.* 23.43–4; *Ep.* 137.2.8; *Sermo* 277.10.10; *De Trin.* 9.3.3.

further image of the seen form in memory, and this image is the first term of another 'trinity'. When we remember a thing perceived in the past, in fact, the will turns the gaze (*acies*) of the soul to the mnemonic image of that thing, and this mnemonic image imprints a form, called 'inner vision' (*interna visio*), on the mental glance. So, in every recollection (*recordatio*) there are three things: the mnemonic *species*, the inner *visio* and the will. The union of the former two constitutes the 'imaginative representation' (*phantasia*), whereas the union of all three constitutes thought (*cogitatio*). Every thought, therefore, is based on memory, even the thought of false things, since the will has the power to bring together different mnemonic tracks and to build a fictitious representation (*phantasma*) with them (*De Trin.* 11.3.6; 7.12–10.17).[13]

Since *phantasiae* and *phantasmata* derive from sense experience (*Ep.* 7.2.3–3.7), they must be left aside if one wants to think of invisible things such as God and the soul, contrary to what the Manichees believed.[14] Thought presupposes memory, but this does not exclude the possibility of thinking without using imagination, because memory is not only of sensible things perceived in the past, but also of intelligibles. Through memory, in fact, we can see again an intelligible we had already seen before proceeding to contemplate other intelligibles. From this point of view, Augustine admits Socrates' theory that what we learn is not imported in us as something new, but is merely recalled to mind (*Ep.* 7.1.1–2). The intelligibles which can be 'recollected' are not only the notions of the liberal arts and the rules of arithmetic (*Conf.* 10.12.19), but also the rational principles (*rationes*) of bodily and temporal things.[15] In this life, only a few can reach these *rationes*,[16] and nobody can contemplate them for a long time. So, the thought of everlasting things is transitory; through the *disciplinae*, it is committed to memory, so that the mental gaze may go back to the intelligible content of that thought. In case of oblivion, one can go back to the same intelligible under the guidance of a teacher (*De Trin.* 12.14.23).

The possibility of finding the intelligibles again by recollection, however, does not imply that human souls have already lived here below, as Plato (according to Augustine) meant by the maieutical experiment in the *Meno*.[17] In that case, only

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[13] On the distinction between *phantasia* and *phantasma* (which has a Stoic origin: *SVF* 2.54–5), cf. *De mus.* 6.11.32; *De Trin.* 8.6.9.

[14] Cf. e.g. *De vera rel.* 10.18; 20.40; 34.64–35.65; 49.95–6; 55.108; *Conf.* 3.6.10; *Ep.* 120.2.7 and 10–2; *De Trin.* 10.5.7–8.11.

[15] These *rationes* seem to coincide with the eternal and immutable ideas contained in the divine Intellect, on the basis of which generable and corruptible things were created (*De div. qu.* 83.46.2).

[16] Some pagan philosophers (the Platonists) could grasp the eternal reasons, but only starting from created things (as is said in Rom. 1.20), and without seeing the past and future development of temporal things (*De Trin.* 4.16.21; 17.23).

[17] Augustine probably knew it through Cic. *Tusc.* 1.24.57.

a few could remember geometry, because it is likely that only a few practised geometry in their previous life; moreover, maieutics should work not only for intelligible things, but also for sensible ones. Augustine suggests another explanation. Incompetent people can give true answers when they are wisely asked about certain disciplines, because every human mind is created in such a way as to be naturally connected (*subiuncta*) to the intelligibles and to see them in an incorporeal light *sui generis* (*De Trin.* 12.15.24), which is the light of eternal reason (*Retr.* 1.4.4).

Such an explanation is connected to a much debated theory traditionally called that of 'illumination'. The incorporeal light, in which the mind sees the intelligibles, is the light of truth (*De Trin.* 14.15.21), of the inner truth[18] which coincides with Christ (*De mag.* 11.38–12.40; *In Io. ev. tr.* 54.8), that is, with God's Wisdom by means of which everything was created (*De civ. Dei* 11.10.2–3). As the sun makes earthly things visible by shining upon them, so God makes the truth of the disciplines intelligible with his light (*Sol.* 1.6.12; 8.15). So the intelligible light, thanks to which the soul understands, judges, discerns and is sure (*Ep.* 120.2.10; *De civ. Dei* 11.27.2; 12.3), is above the soul, because it is God himself (*De Gen. ad litt.* 12.31.59). In the letter *De videndo Deo*, Augustine states that the light of the mind, in which the mind 'sees' the intelligibles, does not coincide with the divine light, which is the Word above our intellect, but is the effect of illumination by the divine light (*Ep.* 147.18.45).

Since knowledge of the intelligibles comes from God, God's existence can be demonstrated by analysing man's cognitive powers. The proof is developed in *De libero arbitrio* and aims at showing the existence of truth above the human mind. The argument can be divided into two parts. In the first one, Augustine demonstrates that reason is the best thing in man (*De lib. arb.* 2.3.7–6.13); in the second part, he argues that the intelligible and unalterable truth of wisdom and number is better than the human reason (*De lib. arb.* 2.7.15–14.38). This immutable truth, in fact, cannot be inferior to reason, because reason judges according to it but cannot judge it, nor can truth be equal to reason, otherwise truth would be mutable like our mind. If there is anything above unalterable truth, this is God; otherwise – and this is Augustine's opinion – truth itself is God.

Augustine managed to discover the unalterable light of divine truth above his mind, by going gradually back to the origins of the ability to judge, only after reading the 'books of the Platonists' (*Conf.* 7.10.16; 17.23). The project

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[18] Truth dwells in the 'inner man', according to Eph. 3.16–17 (cf. *De vera rel.* 39.72). At the same time, inner truth is transcendent: cf. *Conf.* 10.26.37; *De Trin.* 12.3.3 (*supernam et internam consulimus veritatem*).

of the *Disciplinarum libri* was one effect of that discovery. Its aim was to lead Augustine and the others step by step *per corporalia ad incorporalia* (*Retr.* 1.6). The result of the metrical analyses made in *De musica* (the only extant work of the project actually written) is the hierarchical grading of the rhythms (*numeri*) and the definition of equality (*aequalitas*) as aesthetical criterion. The rhythm of a verse exists on different ascending levels: in the material sound of the verse, in the auditive perception of the verse and in its mnemonic track, in the act of pronouncing the verse, and in the natural judgement on the pleasantness of the verse. On this last level, Augustine notices that the more the parts of the rhythm approach equality, the more we (or rather the ancients according to their aesthetical canons) like the verse. Now, sensible objects never present perfect equality; the idea of such an equality, therefore, cannot be drawn from the senses and must come from God, who is eternal and unalterable.[19]

The human mind's ability to judge the bodily things depends, in conclusion, on its connection to the unalterable *rationes* the mind can discern above itself in the light of God. When it turns to intelligible truth, the mind exerts its contemplative function; when it turns to bodily and temporal things in order to run and use them, the mind exerts its active function. If the active function is rightly subordinated to the contemplative one, the mind has both wisdom (*sapientia*) and knowledge (*scientia*). Rational cognition (*cognitio rationalis*) of temporal things,[20] historical events included, and their good usage by means of the cardinal virtues belong to knowledge, whereas intellectual cognition (*cognitio intellectualis*) of eternal things belongs to wisdom (*De Trin.* 12.2.2–4.4; 8.13–15.25; 13.1.1).

The dependence of human knowledge on divine illumination involves some consequences concerning the function of language. This is the subject of the dialogue *De magistro*. According to Augustine, there are essentially two aims of language (*locutio*): teaching (*docere*) and reminding (*commemorare*). Words are signs and, as such, they signify something.[21] Words can signify either other signs or

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[19] A similar ascent from sensible beauty to God, through the analysis of equality as standard, is described in *De vera rel.* 29.52–32.60; 39.72; 52.101.

[20] Only of those helpful to faith; the rest are known by vanity or curiosity (*De Trin.* 13.1.2; 14.1.3).

[21] In *De doctrina christiana*, Augustine defines a sign in general as something which is applied to signify something else (1.2.2), or 'something which by itself calls to mind (*faciens in cogitationem venire*) something else beyond the appearance (*speciem*) which it presents to the senses' (2.1.1; cf. *De dial.* 5, where there is a distinction between (i) the word as such, (ii) the signified thing, (iii) its mental concept, or *dicibile* – the Stoic *lekton* – and (iv) the word as a sign of the thing, or *dictio*); he also divides signs into 'natural' and 'given' (2.1.2–2.3). Words, sonorous signs of which the written letters are visual signs, belong to the given signs (2.3.4–4.5). In many other places, moreover, Augustine makes the distinction between (i) the uttered word, (ii) its mental image (that is, the word uttered in silence), and (iii) the word of thought: the former two differ according to the various languages (Latin, Greek, etc.), whereas the latter is the same as the concept and does not

things different from signs called *significabilia* ('things which can be signified'). However, nothing is learned by its signs. 'When I am given a sign, it cannot teach anything to me, if I do not know of what it is the sign. On the other hand, if I already know of what it is the sign, what do I learn from the sign?' (*De mag.* 10.33; cf. *De Trin.* 10.1.2). All we learn from words is just their sound. As for the signified things, words remind us of them if we already know them, or stimulate (*admonent*) us to seek them if we do not know them yet. Since knowledge of things cannot be conveyed by words, pupils judge by themselves, in the light of the inner Truth, whether what their teacher says is true or false. So there is only one Teacher of everybody, God according to Matt. 23.8.

Augustine also makes in *De magistro* a distinction between faith and understanding which is fundamental to his theory of knowledge. 'I know everything I understand, but I do not know everything I believe' (11.37). Understanding (*intellegere*) means resting on evidence, believing (*credere*) means relying on some authority. Believing is different from presuming (*opinari*), because the man who presumes thinks he knows what he does not know, whereas the man who believes understands he does not know. So presumption is always censurable, whereas faith sometimes is commendable (*De ut. cred.* 11.25; *De mend.* 3.3). It is impossible to believe nothing in the practical life, and it would be socially destructive to believe only what is known. We can but believe, for instance, the identity of our parents and the benevolence of our friends (*De ut. cred.* 12.26; *De fide r.q.n.v.* 1.2–2.4). We also need to believe the historical events which happened before us and in geographical places we have never visited (*Conf.* 6.5.7). Faith is needed especially in religion, as Augustine claims against the Manichees, particularly in *De utilitate credendi*. The Manichees criticized the Catholic demand for faith before understanding and promised to demonstrate truth by reason only. Augustine was first attracted and then disappointed by Manichaeism precisely because of this promise. Actually, the promise was contradictory. As a promise, in fact it required to be believed; what is more, it claimed to explain true Christian doctrine, and so presupposed faith in Christ. Men, or at least the majority, can grasp such a deep mystery only by degrees, so it is reasonable to ask them to believe it first. Faith purifies the eye of the mind and makes it fit for sustaining the divine light[22] (*De serm. dom. m.* 2.3.14; *Sermo*

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belong to any determinate language; Augustine compares it to the divine Word, which already existed before becoming visible with the Incarnation (cf. *De doctr. chr.* 1.13.12; *De Trin.* 15.10.17–11.20). Elsewhere, Augustine compares Christ to the word of thought and John the Baptist to the voice (cf. *Serm.* 288.3–4; 293.3; 293/A.5;293/A augm. = Dolbeau 3.5–12; 293/B.2; 293/C.1; 293/D.3).

[22] Augustine first thought that the soul can see God even in this life; then he realized that the contemplation of God's light will be full only in the life to come (cf., on the one hand, *Sol.* 1.7.14; 13.23 and, on the other, *De cons. ev.* 4.10.20; *De spir. et litt.* 24.41, and letter 147 *De videndo Deo*;

Dolbeau 25; *Ep.* 120.1.3).[23] Augustine often quotes Is. 7.9 (LXX): 'You will not understand, if you do not believe before' (*Nisi credideritis, non intellegetis*). In his opinion, the highest knowledge starts from faith.[24]

2.3 Ethics and politics

The starting point of Augustine's ethics is an axiom taken from Cicero's *Hortensius* (fr. 36 Müller = fr. 58 Grilli = Hagendahl 1967, test. 182): we all want to be happy. Though we have different opinions about what happiness actually is and what makes us happy, we all have some knowledge of happiness, because nobody can love and seek what he does not know at all (*Conf.* 10.20.29–21.31; *De Trin.* 13.3.6–4.7). Having what one wants is an indispensable condition for being happy, but it is not enough. He who wants to gain what is not decent, as Cicero had put it (*Hortensius*, fr. 39 Müller = fr. 59a Grilli = Hagendahl 1967, test. 183), is more unhappy than he who does not gain what he wants (*De beata vita* 2.10; *Ep.* 130.5.10; *De Trin.* 13.5.8). So two things are needed for happiness: on the one hand, an object of will such that one can always have it without being afraid of losing it, that is, an eternal good; on the other hand, a good will. The eternal good is God (*De beata vita* 2.11). As for will, it is not good when it abandons the higher goods and turns to the lower (*De civ. Dei* 12.6) which means that every sin boils down to preferring temporal things to eternal ones (*De lib. arb.* 1.16.34). So, good will is that which places the eternal (God) before all the rest. To sum up, the happy man (or angel) is someone who loves God more than anything else and has him forever.

The enjoyment of God will be perfect only in the life to come, because God will be for ever contemplated 'face to face' (1 Cor. 13.12) only in the afterlife (see note 22 above). Therefore, Augustine rejects any pagan philosophers' claims to be happy in the earthly life; his subtle arguments are expounded in *De civ. Dei* 19.1–4 and *De Trin.* 13.7.10–9.12. The other requirement for happiness, good will, is a gift of God. In fact, it cannot be produced by the creature's will, which would have been either bad or neither good nor bad before. Bad will,

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Augustine acknowledges his change of mind in *Retr.* 1.2; 4.3; 14.2). The inability to gaze at the divine light is a consequence of sin; Christ, as the Truth made flesh, cures this infirmity: cf. *Conf.* 7.10.16; 17.23–18.24; *De civ. Dei* 11.2; *De Trin.* 15.27.50.

[23] In Augustine's view, Platonism and Christianity agree on the need for purification: cf. *De vera rel.* 3.3; *De civ. Dei* 8.3. They disagree on the means of purification: theurgical (actually diabolical) practices or one's own virtue alone according to Porphyry, faith in the Word made flesh according to Christians: cf. *Sermo* Dolbeau 26.28 ff.; *De Trin.* 4.10.13; 15.20; *De civ. Dei* 10 passim.

[24] Before believing, however, one must understand what one needs to believe: one can believe that '*p*' only if one understands what '*p*' means (*intellege ut credas, crede ut intellegas*: *Sermo* 43.9). Moreover, thought is essential to faith, since the believer reflects before believing and judges it right to believe (*ipsum credere nihil aliud est quam cum assensione cogitare*: *De praed. sanct.* 2.5).

in fact, cannot produce good, nor can a creature become by itself better than it was created (*De civ. Dei* 12.9; *De pecc. mer.* 2.18.30).

God, on the contrary, is not the author of bad will, because he is absolutely good. Nor is bad will the effect of a dark principle opposed to God, as the Manichees thought, because no substance is bad by nature (see §2.4 below). The cause of bad will is nothing but will itself, which is free. In general, man acts badly when he acts from a culpable longing (*culpabilis cupiditas*), which is called passion (*libido*) and lies in loving what one can lose in spite of oneself, that is, temporal goods. He who is dominated by passion is foolish (*stultus*). Nobody can be compelled to be foolish, so foolishness is voluntary, and unhappiness is the right punishment for it (*De lib. arb.* 1.3.6–4.10; 9.20–12.24). If there is a cause of bad will, Augustine says with one of his typical plays upon words, it is not efficient but deficient, for will becomes bad when it defects (*deficere*) from God, who *summe est*, to the creature, which *minus est*. The supposed cause of bad will, therefore, diminishes the being of the sinner. Wanting to find such a 'deficient cause', that is, the reason why the will freely sins, is like wanting to see darkness or to hear silence (*De civ. Dei* 12.6–8). God's foreknowledge does not prevent sin from being voluntary. The foreknowledge of something is not its cause, just as the memory of something does not make it necessary. Therefore, God is right in punishing the sins he foreknew (*De lib. arb.* 3.3.8–4.11).

Although all the deeds done under the influence of passion are punished by divine providence, they are not always punished by civil law. Some of them, such as murder in self-defence, are allowed so as not to make things worse, and the laws which allow them are not unjust. Civil law is called 'temporal', because it is susceptible to change with the passing of time, and it draws its justice from 'eternal' law, according to which everything should be in the best order (*iustum est, ut omnia sint ordinatissima*). Temporal law is imposed on the unhappy people, who are dominated by passion and prefer things subject to the inconstancy and the caducity of time, like wealth. Temporal law allows the possession of such things so long as peace and community are preserved. What it punishes is not love for temporal goods, but the stealing of them. The punishment is the privation of these goods (*De lib. arb.* 1.5.11–6.15; 15.31–2).

Since temporal law is made by men, it sometimes may be unjust; in that case, not obedience but disobedience is right. However, an unjust law cannot properly be called 'law'; thus, as a general rule, one must obey the law. In order to be just, one must not only do what the law prescribes, but also have upright intentions, that is, act for the sake of justice (the 'chaste fear' of Ps. 19[18].10), not for the fear of punishment (the servile fear of 1 John 4.18). The love of justice belongs to the virtue of charity, which man receives through the gift

of the Holy Spirit.[25] The charitable intention sometimes makes the difference between the goodness and the wickedness of the same action, so Augustine enounces a *breve praeceptum*: 'Love, and do what you want!' (*In ep. Io. Tr.* 7.7–8). However, no good intention can make some acts right; this is, for example, the case for lies, which Augustine examines in *De mendacio* and *Contra mendacium* (cf. also *De doctr. chr.* 1.36.40 and *Ench.* 6.18–7.22).

The distinction between good will, which is a gift of God and one requirement for happiness, and bad will, which is the effect of a perverse use of freedom and the cause of unhappiness, is the origin of two 'cities' (*civitates*) mentioned by the Scriptures: the city of God and the earthly city. The second part of *De civitate Dei* illustrates their origins (books 11–14), their development (books 15–18), and their ends (books 19–22). The remote origin of the two cities is the division of the angels after the fall of the devil. Among human beings, the two cities are formed respectively by those living according to the flesh (that is, according to themselves) and those living according to the spirit (that is, according to God). Generally speaking, the earthly city is founded on self-love to the point of contempt for God (so on bad will), the heavenly city on the love of God to the point of self-contempt (so on good will). Augustine next reconstructs the development of the two cities from the time of Cain and Abel to the persecutions of the Christians. The two cities are mixed and muddled in history; they will be separated only at the end of time, when one will be accepted into heaven, the other damned into hell. In this historical perspective, events are no longer the cyclical repetition of the same pattern or the blind results of chance: they gain sense in their course toward an end. For this reason, the *City of God* is regarded as the first work in theology of history. Books 1–10 form its *pars destruens* against the heathen. Books 1–5 refute the idea that forbidding polytheistic worship was the cause of the misfortunes suffered by the Roman people after the Emperor Theodosius; books 6–10 criticize the claim that the worship of the gods is useful for the afterlife. Following Varro's *Antiquitates*, Augustine distinguishes three kinds of *theologia* (that is, of study of the gods): the mythical, the civil and the natural. The most eminent representatives of the last one are the Platonists, whose teachings are expounded in book 8 after an interesting *excursus* on the history of philosophy. Book 9 deals with Apuleius' demonology; book 10 tackles Porphyry's theory of purification.

The treatment of peace and justice in book 19 of *De civitate Dei* stands out among Augustine's ethical and political thought. Peace is the aim of every natural and human act, even wars and revolts. It can be defined as the 'tranquillity of

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[25] Cf. *En. in Ps.* 127.7–9; *In Ep. Io. Tr.* 9.4–8; *De spir. et litt.* 32.56; *Epp.* 140.21.53; 145.4; *Serm.* 145.3–4; 178.9.10–10.11; 270.4; *In Io. Ev. Tr.* 43.7.

order', where 'order' means the disposition assigning everything to its place. Earthly peace is desired both by the citizens of the heavenly city and the citizens of the earthly city, but in a different way. The latter seek it for the advantages of this life, whereas the former make use of it as an aid in their pilgrimage to God. The citizens of the heavenly city obey the laws of the earthly city as useful to peace; they only disobey pagan religious law and what prevents them from worshipping the true God. Earthly peace is external and defective, because it does not flow from obedience to God, which is one requirement of inner peace and the cause of true peace among men. Without submitting to God, in fact, man is not able to reduce his passional and bodily dimensions to the obedience of reason (see §2.6 below), nor to realize enduring and orderly harmony in society. In other words, personal and collective justice is impossible without faith. The morality of human actions, in fact, depends on their aims, and their true ultimate aim should be the eternal enjoyment of the supreme good, which is God.[26] The very essence of virtue is the ordering of love (*ordo amoris*), according to which God is loved above all the rest.[27] Unjust peoples could not be called 'peoples' at all, if 'people' were defined, according to Scipio in Cicero's *De re publica*, as the whole multitude of human beings bound together by an agreement on right (*iuris consensus*) and a community of interests. In this sense, in fact, there is no people without right (*ius*), that is, without justice (*iustitia*), and there is no State (*res publica*) without people, the State being 'a good of the people' (*res populi*). Since justice gives to each his or her due, the pagan peoples are unjust, because they do not give man to God, so they are not true peoples and do not have a State. The people, however, can also be defined as the whole multitude of rational beings bound together by the community of what they love; from this point of view, even the pagan peoples were really peoples and their States were really States. Anyway, Augustine agrees that the city of impious people lacks true justice,[28] and a State without justice is not different from a criminal association (*De civ. Dei* 2.21; 4.4; 19.21–4).

As a bishop, Augustine interacted with public authorities in various circumstances. For instance, he asked magistrates not to inflict the death penalty on the Donatists (cf. *Epp.* 100; 133; 134; 139). Every punishment, in fact, should have a corrective and re-educative function (*Epp.* 153.1.3; 6.16–17). On the other

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[26] Augustine rejects the Stoic idea that virtue itself is the supreme good: cf. *De civ. Dei* 5.20; 19.4; *Sermo* 150.7.8–8.9.

[27] Cf. *De mor. eccl.* 1.15.25; 19.35–25.46; *De spir. et litt.* 27–8.48; *Ep.* 155.3.9–10; *De civ. Dei* 15.22; *C. Iul.* 4.3.17–21; *De Trin.* 13.20.26; 14.1.3.

[28] Augustine does admit that pagans can act justly with each other on the social level and do noble and even heroic deeds; however, he thinks that only the grace of Christ can give man the virtue of justice in all its dimensions, which include the relationship with God.

hand, Augustine justified religious coercion against the Donatists.[29] Persecution may be just, if the victims of persecution are unjust and the aim of persecution is to make them acknowledge their faults without using too much force (*Epp.* 93.2.8; 185.2.11).

Augustine is often mentioned as the first Christian theorist of the 'just war'. Commenting on Josh. 8.2, where God orders Joshua to capture a town by laying an ambush, Augustine argues that the ambush was not unjust, since it was ordered by God, and goes on by pointing out that just war is usually defined as that which avenges injuries, when a political community does not punish wrongs done by its members or does not give back what it has wrongly seized (*Qu. in Hept.* 6.10). Nevertheless, Augustine thinks that war is always undesirable, and even more undesirable when it is just, because it presupposes injuries and wrongs to be avenged (*De civ. Dei* 4.15; 19.7). The just war must be waged with the purpose of freeing the enemy from injustice; hence, soldiers must take mercy on the vanquished and prisoners (*Ep.* 189.4–6). Political authorities should try to avoid war as far as possible, for 'it is a greater glory to kill war with the word than to kill men with a sword, and to procure or keep peace with peace rather than with war' (*Ep.* 229.2).

2.4 The Trinity and creation

The young Augustine assigned the task of correctly teaching and explaining the Christian mystery of the Trinity to 'true philosophy' (*De ord.* 2.5.16). Although this expression refers to the Platonic theory of the 'intelligible world' in *Contr. Acad.* 3.19.42, a theory which at *Cassiciacum* Augustine identified with Plotinus' philosophy (*Contr. Acad.* 3.18.41) and with the Christian doctrine of the divine Word (*De ord.* 1.11.32), Augustine never conceived of the Trinity as a Plotinian triad. He sometimes calls the Father 'One' and the Son 'Intellect',[30] but he never identifies the Holy Spirit with the Soul, for the Soul is a created being and it is not of the same substance as God (see §2.1 above).[31] His early Trinitarian theology seems to be influenced more by Christian authors like Marius Victorinus than by pagan Platonists. What seems to be 'Plotinian' in Augustine's doctrine of the Trinity is the theory of the Son as the divine Intellect

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[29] At first, he was adverse to it: cf. *Epp.* 93.5.17; 185.7.25; *Retr.* 2.5.

[30] Cf., in his early writings, *C. Acad.* 3.19.42; *De ord.* 1.8.24; 2.5.16; 18.47; *De mus.* 6.17.56; *De vera rel.* 12.24; 36.66; 43.81.

[31] Augustine seems to (wrongly) interpret the Plotinian theory of the inferiority of the soul to the Intellect as a theory of the non-divinity of the soul: cf. *De civ. Dei* 10.2 and 23. As for the Porphyrian triad, cf. *De civ. Dei* 10.23 and 29, where Augustine admits that Porphyry caught a glimpse of the Trinity, though in a confused way and with a much less accurate language than the Christian one.

containing the eternal *rationes* of mutable beings; however, the Nicene dogma of consubstantiality prevents Augustine from accepting the Plotinian idea that the divine Intellect, as the locus of a multiplicity of Forms, is inferior to his Father.

Augustine carried out the task assigned to 'true philosophy' at *Cassiciacum* systematically in *De Trinitate* many years later. The aim of this work is to illustrate that the Trinity is one God, and the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are of one and the same substance or essence. After interpreting the Scriptures in books 1–4, Augustine attempts to refute Arianism with rational arguments, making a massive use of ancient philosophical notions, especially Aristotle's doctrine of categories. No doubt, God is *substantia* or *essentia*, and, indeed, since He is immutable, He possesses being itself (*ipsum esse*) in the highest degree, from which the name *essentia* derives.[32] That stated, Augustine reproduces this Arian argument: 'What is said of God is said not in the category of accident (*secundum accidentem*) but in the category of substance (*secundum substantiam*). Therefore, the Father is said to be ungenerated in the category of substance, and the Son is said to be generated in the category of substance. Now, to be ungenerated is not the same as to be generated; so the substance of the Father is different from the substance of the Son.'

Augustine admits that nothing is predicated of God in the category of accident. 'Accident' usually means what can be lost as a consequence of change in the being to which the accident happens. Even the so-called inseparable accidents, such as the blackness of a crow's feathers, may be lost, because their substratum may change into some other kind of thing (as the feathers change into earth after the death of the crow), but nothing is mutable or can be lost in God. Nor can the accident happen in God, if accident means what can decrease or increase (such as the life of the soul, which lives more when it is wise, less when it is foolish), because God is absolutely unalterable. From the fact that nothing is predicated of God in the category of accident, however, it does not follow that all is predicated of Him in the category of substance. Something, in fact, is predicated of God in the category of relation, a relation which is not accidental because it is not mutable: the Father is said to be such in relation to the Son, and vice versa, and the Father never began to be such, but was always such and will always be such. 'Generated' is said in a relative sense as well, since it has the same meaning as 'son'. As a consequence, 'ungenerated' also has a relative meaning, because the negation of a term belongs to the same category as that term. The difference between 'ungenerated' and 'generated', therefore, is a

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[32] In Augustine's opinion, this is the meaning of God's name as revealed to Moses in Ex. 3.14: cf., e.g., *De doctr. chr.* 1.32.35; *De Gen. ad litt.* 5.16.34; *De civ. Dei* 8.11.

difference of relation, not of substance. As for the attributes predicated of God in a real substantial sense, i.e., not in a relative or figurative sense, such as 'great', 'good', 'eternal', 'omnipotent', they are only different ways of meaning one and the same reality, because each of these attributes is identical with God's being. In fact, creatures are great in that they share greatness, which is great in a primary and much higher way, whereas God is great in that He is his own greatness (otherwise He would share a greatness greater than Him, which is absurd). Since God is his greatness, his goodness, etc., his greatness is the same as his goodness, etc.[33]

To the Manichaean ideas of evil as a principle antithetical and coeternal to God, and of the world as the effect of the struggle between Evil and God, Augustine opposes the idea of evil as corruption and the theory of the natural goodness of every creature. Having learned from the 'books of the Platonists' to grasp divine Truth above his mind (see § 2.2 above), Augustine discovered that things inferior to God have neither an absolute being nor an absolute non-being. They 'are' in that they derive from the divine Being, and they 'are not' in that they are not the divine Being itself, which is the only true being thanks to its unalterability. Their corruptibility shows both their inferiority in being to the Creator and their goodness. In fact, corruption is bad, and it is bad because what is corrupted is deprived of some good; when the corrupted being is deprived of all its good, it does not exist any more, otherwise it would have become incorruptible, that is better, which is absurd. But if what is deprived of all its good does not exist any more, it is good as long as it exists. Therefore, evil is not a substance, because, if it were a substance, it would be either incorruptible or corruptible, that is, either a great good or good. So, everything is good by nature, and every substance was created by the supreme good, God.[34]

The first commentary written by Augustine on the biblical account of the creation is also a polemic against the Manichees.[35] Later on, Augustine commented on the same verses systematically in two works entitled *De Genesi ad litteram* ('On Genesis in its literal sense'), and in some books of the *Confessiones* (11–13) and *De civitate Dei* (11–14). The very first verse of the Bible, *In principio fecit Deus caelum et terram*, gives rise to many questions. What does *in principio* mean? Apart from its allegorical meaning, it can be understood in three ways: 'at the beginning', or 'first of all', or 'in the Principle' i.e., in the Word. Augustine refuses to believe that there were times 'before' creation, when God would

[33] Augustine sums up this argument in *De civ. Dei* 11.10 by saying that relations between the Persons of the Trinity excepted, God is what He has, and so He is simple.

[34] Cf. *Conf.* 7.11.17–16.22; *De mor. eccl.* 2.1.1–9.18; *De vera rel.* 19.37–20.39; *C. ep. Man.* 25.27; 33.36–37.42; *De nat. b.* 1; 4; 6; 10; 12–3; 17; 19; *De civ. Dei* 11.22.

[35] They did not accept the book of Genesis and countered its contents with the New Testament: cf. *De Gen. c. Man.* 1.1.2 –2.3; *C. Adim.* 1–5; 9; *Sermo* 1; *C. adv. leg.* 1.1.1.

have been at a standstill. Time 'begins' to exist when change begins, so when something is created, since the creatures are more or less changeable, whereas God is absolutely changeless;[36] time itself is a creature and is not coeternal with God. So, it makes no sense to ask why God decided to create 'at a certain moment'.

However, this does not mean that the world has always existed, in a sort of eternal creation. Augustine rejects this view, which he attributes to some unspecified pagan Platonists, chiefly because it fails to explain the state of the rational souls. If their happiness or unhappiness begins in time and lasts forever, then it is false that everything that is endless has always existed, and there is no reason to interpret what Plato says in his *Timaeus* on the beginning of the world in a sense different from the literal one. On the other hand, if the souls eternally change from happiness to unhappiness and vice versa, then they never are really happy, because neither a soul which knows that it will become unhappy nor a soul which foolishly cherishes the vain hope of being forever happy can be happy (*De civ. Dei* 10.31; 11.4).

In order to make it clear that eternity is not an endless sequence of moments, Augustine investigates the concept of time in book 11 of the *Confessiones*. Time is a problem. 'What is time, then? If nobody asks me about it, I know what it is; if I want to explain it to somebody who asks me about it, I do not know what it is' (14.17). One thing is sure: if nothing passed, there would be no past; if nothing came (*adveniret*), there would be no future; if nothing existed, there would be no present. But if the past no longer exists, and the future does not exist yet, and the present turns into past immediately, how can time exist? And how can we speak of 'long' or 'short' times, if the present alone exists, and it is one indivisible instant? How can we measure and compare times, if only what exists and lasts can be measured? Augustine answers that the existence of time, and consequently its length and measurability, take place in the soul (*in animo*), which makes the past and the future exist in memory and expectation, and 'fixes' the present in attention. Augustine criticizes the identification of time with the movement of the sun, the moon, and the stars. Even if the heavenly bodies kept still, and the little wheel of a potter rotated, time would exist, by which the rotation of the wheel could be measured. Moreover, we can imagine that the periods of astral movements change, i.e., take different times; but if time coincided with movement, those periods would

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[36] Cf. *De Gen. ad litt.* 5.5.12. However, two creatures are not subject to time, although they are not coeternal to the Creator. They are the 'heavens' and the 'earth' mentioned in Gen. 1.1, that is, the intellectual nature lasting in the contemplation of God and the formless matter of the bodies (*Conf.* 12.9.9–13.16; see below). Matter precedes formed things in origin, not in time: cf. *Conf.* 12.29.40; 13.33.48; *De Gen. ad litt.* 1.15.29; 5.5.13 and 16.

remain the same.[37] In general, we can measure the duration of movement with time, but time is not movement itself. If it were the same as movement, we would be able to measure the duration of movement by merely observing movement taking place – on the contrary, we need to see its beginning and its end, or to compare it with another one – and we would not be able to measure the duration of the state of rest. When we measure time, we merely measure the affection (*affectionem*) the passing things produce in us. So, time as duration exists thanks to the activity of the soul, which 'stretches' (*distenditur*) from expectation to memory through attention. Actually, the stretching out of the soul (*distentio animi*) extending its activity in expectation, attention and memory, is a kind of distraction and dispersion of the soul's energy and a consequence of original sin. The way God creates and knows temporal things is different, since it needs neither expectation nor memory. So He did not create the world in time. 'The world was not created *in tempore*, but *cum tempore*' (*De civ. Dei* 11.6). Time began existing together with the changing world.

Among the possible meanings of the expression *in principio*, Augustine prefers the third one mentioned above, according to which *principium* means the Word, the same Word by means of which everything was made, as is said in the Prologue of John (*Sermo* 1). In Augustine's opinion,[38] this text accords with the 'books of the Platonists', although the latter include idolatry and lack the mystery of Incarnation (*Conf.* 7.9.13–4). The doctrine at issue, in fact, is the theory of Ideas, i.e., of the eternal reasons which form the 'intelligible world'. Augustine seems to simply accept this Platonic theory as an implication of the Christian doctrine of creation, without discussing the complicated problems arising in the philosophical debate from the *Parmenides* onwards. In his view, the Ideas or Forms (*formae*, *species*) are the primordial reasons (*rationes*) for what is subject to generation and corruption. If one admits that the mutable things were created by God (and this can be proved: see below), one must also admit that God created everything neither irrationally nor unawares, but according to a rational plan, which makes every kind of thing (man, horse, etc.) correspond to one reason. Moreover, if one cannot think that God found these reasons outside of Himself, one must conclude that they exist in the divine mind, and so that they are eternal and unalterable truths.[39] Created things exist by participation in them. Only the mind of a rational being is able to see the eternal reasons,

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[37] Astral movements are not time, but signs of the passing of time: cf. *De Gen. c. Man.* 1.14.21.

[38] Augustine follows Simplicianus on this point: cf. *Conf.* 8.2.3; *De civ. Dei* 10.29.2.

[39] They were not created: cf. *De Gen. ad litt.* 5.4.8. So, they seem to be within God's substance, and their multiplicity would seem to make God multiple. Augustine does not face this problem and does not explain how the theory of the divine *rationes* is consistent with the doctrine of God's simplicity (on the latter, cf. *De Trin.* 6.6.8–8.9; *De civ. Dei* 11.10).

and only if it is pure; vision of them makes it perfectly happy. Plato was the first to call them 'ideas', but it is likely that others deduced their existence before him.[40]

Since it contains the ideal forms according to which the supreme Architect created the world, the Word is called 'the form of everything' and 'God's art'.[41] The existence of this primary Form can be demonstrated by the ontological structure of mutable things. Every mutable thing, in fact, is also formable (*formabilis*); but nothing can give itself its form, otherwise it would already have the form it has to receive; thus every mutable thing receives its form thanks to an unalterable and eternal Form. It can be called 'providence', because nothing can subsist without it (*De lib. arb.* 2.16.44–17.46), and it is God, as the Platonists understood (*De civ. Dei* 8.6). For the same reason, one must admit that God created things from nothing, because what is absolutely formless is nothing. Even if the world was made from formless matter (see below), matter itself was created from nothing, since its capacity to receive form is a good, and all goods except God derive from God. On the other hand, God did not create things from his own substance, otherwise they would be unalterable like Him. Therefore God created everything from nothing.[42] Finally, what exists without having been made does not change. Mutable things were not self-made, otherwise they would have existed before existing. So, we can not only believe, but also understand that the world was created by God (*Conf.* 11.4.6).

What are 'the heavens and the earth' God created from nothing *in principio*? According to Augustine, 'heavens' can mean the 'highest heavens' (*caelum caeli*) mentioned in Ps. 115[113/B].16, and this means an intellectual (angelical) creature, which never abandons its full contemplation of God, whereas 'earth' can mean the 'formless matter' of Wisdom of Solomon 11.17, which must be postulated in order to explain the passage of the bodies from one form to the other.[43] Other interpretations are legitimate (*De Gen. ad litt. imp.* 3.9–10; *Conf.* 12; *De Gen. ad litt.* 1.1.2–3).

The 'six days' of creation, and God's rest on the seventh day, must be understood in a symbolic way. Creation was simultaneous, as it is said in Sirach 18.1.

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[40] Cf. *C. Acad.* 3.17.37; *De vera rel.* 3.3–4; *De div. qu.* 83.46; *De Gen. ad litt.* 5.13.29–15.33; *In Io. ev. tr.* 1.16–9; *Retr.* 1.3.2.

[41] Cf. *Ep.* 14.4; *De lib. arb.* 3.15.42; *De mus.* 4.4.6; 6.17.57; *De div. qu.* 83.23; 78; *De vera rel.* 31.57; 36.66; 43.81; 55.113; *C. Faust.* 21.5; *De Trin.* 6.10.11–2; *Sermo* 117.2.3.

[42] Cf. *De Gen. c. Man.* 1.6.10; *De vera rel.* 18.35–6; *De Gen. ad litt. imp.* 3.10; 15.51; *Conf.* 12.7.7–8.8; *De nat. b.* 10; 18; 25–7; *C. Fel.* 2.18–9; *C. Sec.* 2.4.

[43] In this view, the expressions 'formless and empty earth', 'darkness over the deep', and 'waters' of Gen. 1.2 mean formless matter (*De Gen. c. Man.* 1.3.5; 5.9–7.12; *De Gen. ad litt. imp.* 4.11–14.16; *Conf.* 12.3.3–4.4; *De Gen. ad litt.* 1.2.3; 9.15), whereas the creation of light in Gen. 1.3 means the creation of the angels through the immediate conversion of spiritual matter to God (*De Gen. ad litt.* 5.21; *Conf.* 13.2.3–3.4; *De Gen. ad litt.* 1.3.7;9.17; *De civ. Dei* 11.9).

The number six means activity – both in the ages of the world and in the spiritual progress of the individual (*De Gen. c. Man.* 1.23.35–25.43) – and the perfection of work (*De Gen. ad litt.* 4.2.2–7.14; *De civ. Dei* 11.30). The sequence of evening and morning can be referred to the angels' knowledge of creatures, which the angels know in themselves or in the light of the Word.[44] God's rest, in the end, must be understood both in the sense that God needs no creatures and in the sense that God will give eternal rest to the just, for the good deeds of the just are in reality the work of God.[45]

Against the Manichees (cf. *De Gen. c. Man.* 1.22.33; *C. Adim.* 2.1), Augustine maintains that John 5.17 (Jesus says that his Father is always at work to this very day) does not contradict Gen. 2.2–3 (God rested from all his work on the seventh day). God also works during time, because He administrates what He created in the beginning. What comes into being during time, derives from causal reasons[46] which were created at the beginning and placed into the bodily elements of the world. God's *administratio* merely runs the development of things from their original 'seeds', that is, it brings what existed potentially and invisibly as a causal reason from the very beginning to its completed and visible form at the right time.[47] Even the bodies of the first human couple were created 'invisibly, potentially and causally' at the beginning; later on, at a certain moment in time, they were drawn out from their causal reasons, which were placed in the material elements. The two distinct accounts of Gen. 1.27 on one hand ('God created them male and female') and Gen. 2.7 and 22 on the other ('Then the Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground' and 'The Lord God formed a woman from the rib He had taken out from the man') refer to the two phases of creation (*De Gen. ad litt.* 6.1.1–6.10; 11.19; 15.26). This does not mean that the way in which the bodies of the first man and woman were formed during time had already been predetermined in their causal reasons; perhaps this way existed in the causal reasons just as one possibility. In general, we do not know the nature of a being so perfectly that we can know whether what happens to it depends on internal or external causes (*De Gen. ad litt.* 6.13.23–18.29; 9.17.31–18.34). For the same reason, some phenomena seem prodigious or unnatural to us just in relation to our limited experience, which makes us consider 'natural' only what is usual. Actually, nothing happens to a

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[44] Cf. *De Gen. ad litt.* 4.21.38–35.56; 5.1.1–5.16; 17.35–19.37; *De civ. Dei* 11.7; 29.

[45] Cf. *De Gen. c. Man.* 1.22.34; *C. Adim.* 2.2; *Conf.* 13.36.51–37.52; *De cat. rud.* 17.28; *Ep.* 55.10.19; *De Gen. ad litt.* 4.8.15 –20.37; *De civ. Dei* 11.8; 31; 22.30.4.

[46] *Rationes causales*. Augustine sometimes calls them *rationes seminales*, but he does not conceive of them in a materialistic way, as did the Stoics (*logoi spermatikoi*). On the contrary, his idea of *rationes* resembles the Plotinian conception of *logoi* as intelligible causes of development, put inside living beings.

[47] Cf. *De Gen. ad litt.* 5.20.40–23.46; 6.4.5; 10.17–8; *De Trin.* 3.8.13–9.18.

being against its nature, but it is either a necessary effect of that nature or a possibility consistent with it; in any case, its primary and supreme cause is the will of the omnipotent God (*De Trin.* 3.2.7–6.11; *De civ. Dei* 21.2–8).

2.5 Biblical hermeneutics

The reading of the *Platonicorum libri* (see § 1 above) was a crucial experience for Augustine. On the one hand, it showed him the possibility of knowing God's existence from created beings; on the other, it made him understand that lack of faith in the Incarnation leaves man imprisoned in idolatry and carnal weakness (*Conf.* 7.9.13–21.27).[48] This led Augustine to acknowledge the capacity of reason and at the same time its limitations, that is, its need to be supported by a reliable authority and to be purified by the mediation of a saviour. We will speak about salvation in § 2.6; now let us examine the theme of authority, especially that of the Scriptures.

The appeal to authority in a philosophical context is anything but surprising in late antiquity, the time of the *Chaldaean Oracles* and the great commentaries on Plato's and Aristotle's writings. The originality of Augustine's approach lies in the explicit theorization of the relationship between authority and reason. He had distinguished and connected them since the time he was at *Cassiciacum*. They are compared to a double weight by which we are driven to learn (*C. Acad.* 3.20.43) and to a double path which we follow in order to overcome the scandal of disorder in events (*De ord.* 2.5.16). Authority is prior in time (*De mor. eccl.* 1.2.3; *De vera rel.* 24.45) and fits everybody (*De quant. an.* 7.12), whereas reason is prior in value and fits few. Even reason, however, needs to start from authority, because 'no man becomes competent (*peritus*) without having been incompetent before', and no incompetent (*imperitus*) knows by himself how to become competent; on the other hand, authority alone does not provide the kind of knowledge which makes man happy (*De ord.* 2.9.26). Therefore, first of all one must trust in a worthy authority; then one must seek by reason the understanding of what one believes. So, reason is an intermediary between faith and vision, and its work is the work of philosophy.

Immediately after his conversion, Augustine conceived philosophical activity as the gradual ascent from the sensible to the intelligible world with the help

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[48] In Augustine's opinion, the pagan Platonists' refusal to believe in Christ's Incarnation is a consequence of their pride, not of their philosophy. If they think that the human body is united to the human soul, which is incorporeal, all the more reason they can admit the possibility that the incorporeal human soul of Christ is united to his incorporeal divine nature (*De civ. Dei* 10.29). Therefore, Platonism is not incompatible with faith in the Incarnation and, indeed, Christianity is the fulfilment of Platonism, since the Word made flesh and his followers succeeded in persuading the masses of the same truth that the Platonists found it difficult to defend among the philosophers (*C. Acad.* 3.19.42; *De vera rel.* 3.3–4.7; *Ep.* 118.3.16–21; 5.32–3).

of the liberal arts. In his opinion, learning (*eruditio*) made minds aware of the presence and the power of the One, and so ready to understand both their own immortality and the harmony of the whole universe (*De ord.* 2.12.35–19.51). The project of the *Disciplinarum libri*, from which the dialogue *De musica* arose (see § 1 above), was based on the optimistic belief that philosophy, allied with the liberal arts, could reach its goal in this life. But Augustine soon realized that the vision of God 'face to face' (1 Cor. 13.12) is possible only in the afterlife (2 Cor. 5.7; see note 22 above). He never denied the mind's capacity to ascend from creatures to the Creator (Rom. 1.20) and to discern traces of the Trinity in created beings (*De civ. Dei* 11.24–8; *De Trin.* 9–15); however, he emphasized God's incomprehensibility and man's never-ending search for Him (cf., e.g., *De Trin.* 5.1.2; 8.2.3; 9.1.1; 15.2.2–3), and he assigned the liberal arts a new task: the understanding not of God's reality but of his will as revealed in the Scriptures (*De doctr. chr.* 2.27.41–38.57).

Augustine devoted three of the four books *De doctrina christiana* expressly to biblical hermeneutics. Books 1–3 deal with the way of finding what needs to be understood in the Scriptures (*modus inveniendi*), whereas the last book deals with the way of expounding what has already been understood (*modus proferendi*). In the preface, Augustine replies to those who base the right interpretation of the Scriptures solely on a gift from God. If it were so, even the reading and the explanation of the Bible would be superfluous. Book 1 summarizes the main contents (*res*) of the Scriptures. They teach that God alone must be enjoyed (*frui*), i.e., loved for Himself, whereas our neighbour must be 'enjoyed' only in God, so that he or she enjoys God with us; all the rest must be used (*uti*). Anyone who thinks he has understood the Scriptures without building love for God and his neighbour, has not yet understood them. On the other hand, whoever draws from the Scriptures a sense which is useful to the building of such a double love, but different from what the sacred authors meant, neither makes a bad mistake nor lies, although he still needs to be corrected.

Books 2–3 suggest some rules for clearing up the obscure passages of the Scriptures. The basic rule is to explain these passages with clearer ones. Obscurity is due to the signs of the contents, i.e., to the words, when their literal or figurative sense is unknown or ambiguous. Augustine lists four remedies for ignorance of the literal sense: consultation of experts, knowledge of the original languages, collation of the available Latin translations (with a preference for the most literal ones), and emendation of their manuscripts. Knowledge of things is the best remedy for ignorance of the figurative sense, and can take advantage of the teachings developed by the heathen. Among these teachings, one must distinguish those concerning things instituted by men and those concerning past events or things instituted on account of God's will. The latter

(historiography, geographical and natural sciences, astronomy, technical knowledge, logic and arithmetic) are to be accepted,[49] whereas the former must be rejected, if they are superstitious (like astrology)[50] or superfluous. As far as the teachings of philosophers are concerned, Christians must vindicate the truth contained in them, as the Jews despoiled the Egyptians of their golden and silver ornaments and their clothes (Ex. 3.22; 11.2; 12.35).

If a locution contrasts with morals and faith in its literal sense, it must be understood in its figurative sense (cf. *De Gen. c. Man.* 2.2.3; *De Gen. ad litt.* 8.1.4; 11.1.2). What really contrasts with morals is what is directed by desire (*cupiditas*), that is, by a movement of the soul which does not aim to enjoy the self, God and our neighbour for God's sake and so is contrary to love (*caritas*). If the figurative sense is ambiguous, the passage must be compared with other passages where the figurative sense of the same word(s) is clear. If there are many possible figurative senses, and they all are consistent with faith and truth, the exegete must try to find out the sense meant by the sacred author. Even if he is not able to find it, he will point out a sense which was at least foreseen by the Holy Spirit.[51] In order to solve this kind of ambiguity, knowledge of tropes may be needed. One useful example of the application of this rhetorical knowledge to biblical hermeneutics is the set of rules suggested by Tyconius, a Donatist writer whose *Liber regularum* Augustine summarizes.

2.6 Original sin and grace

According to Augustine, the biblical account of the Fall, that is, of the first progenitors' sin (Gen. 3), has not only an allegorical[52] and prophetical (cf. *De Gen. ad litt.* 11.39.52; *De civ. Dei* 13.21) sense, but also a historical meaning. The first human couple really committed a sin, whose after effects were terribly concrete for them and their descendants. The human body, which would have kept young and healthy until its conversion into a spiritual body, was inevitably subjected to ageing, illness and death. Now men, who were given the possibility of not dying (*posse non mori*), cannot but die (*non posse non mori*).[53] The

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[49] Almost all these teachings can be replaced with biblical aids (e.g., onomastica), with the exception of dialectics, which is the 'nervous system' of the Scriptures (*De doctr. chr.* 2.39.59).

[50] The crucial argument against astrology is the different destiny of twins: cf. *De div. qu.* 83.45.2; *De doctr. chr.* 2.22.33–4; *Conf.* 7.6.10; *De Gen. ad litt.* 2.17.36; *De civ. Dei* 5.1–7.

[51] This is also true for the literal sense. One example is the meaning of 'heavens' and 'earth' in Gen. 1.1 (*Conf.* 12.14.17–32.43).

[52] It describes the interior origin of every sin: cf. *De Gen. c. Man.* 2.9.12–16.24; *De Gen. ad litt.* 11.15.19; 30.39; *De Trin.* 12.8.13–13.20; *De civ. Dei* 14.23.

[53] Cf. *De Gen. c. Man.* 2.19.29; 21.32; *De Gen. ad litt.* 6.19.30–28.39; 11.32.42; 37.50; *De pecc. mer.* 1.2.2–8.8; *De civ. Dei* 12.22; 13.1; 3; 19–20; 23; 24.6; 22.30.3; *C. Iul. imp.* 1.68; 6.25; 27; 30–1.

corruptible body burdens the soul, as it is said in Wisdom of Solomon 9.15, and the soul is in a state of ignorance and moral difficulty. As the soul disobeyed God, so the body disobeys the soul and desire disobeys reason.[54] Illness and death, *ignorantia* and *difficultas*, suffering and concupiscence, and all the troubles and woes of the present human condition, are the punishment of sin. They did not exist in Adam and Eve before sin, and they were spread over the whole human race after sin.

Augustine maintains that men inherit not only this corrupted nature, but also the state of guilt which excludes them from the communion with God, unless they are saved by God himself. In fact, if men were punished without being guilty, they would be wronged by God, which is impossible (cf., e.g., *C. Iul. imp.* 1.40). This is the doctrine of 'original sin'. Augustine claims that it has belonged to the Catholic faith from the very beginning[55] and his own faith since the time of his conversion (*C. Iul.* 6.12.39). He sets it out in full in his anti-Pelagian writings again and again. He recapitulates the heretical theories of Pelagius, Caelestius and their followers thus (*De haer.* 88): (i) man can put all God's commandments into practice even without grace; (ii) faith depends on man, since God gives his grace according to man's merits, so it does not make any sense to pray to God for the conversion of the impious and the perseverance of the faithful; (iii) the life of the just in this world is absolutely sinless; (iv) infants are born without any bond of original sin and, if they die without baptism, enter a happy eternal life, although they do not enter the Kingdom of God; (v) Adam would have died even if he had not sinned. According to Augustine, all these theories contrast with Christian faith. His arguments are based on the Scriptures and the tradition of the Church.

Against (i) Augustine says that divine law can be observed only externally without grace, and this external observance does not make man just. In fact one must behave well out of love of justice, not out of fear of punishment (see § 2.3 above). Since love of justice is a good, it can come only from God and it is charity, which is poured out into our hearts by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 5.5). Without the vivifying Spirit, the Law is a killing letter (2 Cor. 3.6 according to

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Sexual reproduction, however, is not a consequence of mortality. The only effect of sin in present sexuality is intemperate lust: cf. *De Gen. ad litt.* 9.3.5–11.19; *De civ. Dei* 14.16–26; *De nupt. et conc.* 1.5.6–7.8; 22.24; 2.13.26; 14.29; 30.52–32.54 (as a layman, Augustine had preferred a spiritual interpretation of God's order in Gen. 1.28: cf. *De Gen. c. Man.* 1.19.30; *De vera rel.* 46.88; *Retr.* 1.10.2; 13.8; 19.5).

[54] Cf., e.g., *De Gen. c. Man.* 2.20.30; *De lib. arb.* 3.18.51–20.55; *De pecc. mer.* 1.36.67; *De civ. Dei* 13.13; 14.15; 22.22.1–2; *De nupt. et conc.* 1.6.7. Augustine calls 'concupiscence' (*concupiscentia*, which corresponds to the Greek *epithumia*: cf. Rom. 6.12; 7.7; Gal. 5.17; 1 John 2.16) resistance to the control of reason, which causes inner dissension and weakness. Concupiscence is evident especially in sexual behaviour, but is not restricted to this field.

[55] Cf. *De pecc. mer.* 3.4.7–7.14; *De nupt. et conc.* 2.12.25; *C. Iul.* 1–2; *C. Iul. imp.* 2.104.

De spir. et litt.). Augustine compares the Pelagians to the Pharisees criticized by St. Paul in Rom. 10.2–3, Gal. 2.21 and Phil. 3.6–9. If we had been able to be just by ourselves, Christ would not have died for us.

(ii) Man is justified only by faith in Christ. Faith can neither arise nor develop nor remain without grace. 'To justify' (*iustificare*), Augustine argues, means 'to make someone just' (*iustum facere*) (cf., e.g., *Sermo* 292.4.6*; Sermo* Dolbeau 19.3); now, if one is made just, this means that he or she was unjust and deserved punishment before; so justification is *gratia*, because it is given free (*gratis*: cf., e.g., *En. in Ps.* 31/2.7; *Ep.* 186.2.6–3.8; *Gr. et lib. arb.* 21.43). Every good deed, and so every merit, is a consequence of grace, not its cause, since it is grace which makes man able to act well. Augustine avows that he changed his mind about the beginning of faith (*initium fidei*) according to Rom. 9.10–29. As a priest, he thought that the act of believing in the Gospel depended on man alone, although it would be impossible if the Gospel were not preached. Soon after his ordination as bishop, he realized that even the initial act of believing is a gift of God. He was enlightened on this point by 1 Cor. 4.7 (*Retr.* 1.23.2–4; *De praed. sanct.* 3.7–4.8). The difference between this opinion and the previous one concerns the relationship between man's faith and God's choice of the men to be saved (*electio*). Before, he thought that God had chosen those whose self-determined faith He had foreseen (*Prop. ep. Rom. Exp.* 52–7); then, he understood that, on the contrary, God gives faith to those whom He has already chosen, and God's choice is based solely on his inscrutable but not iniquitous will to take mercy on these men rather than on others (*Simpl.* 1.2). According to some scholars, this change of mind, which dates from 396, caused a deep fracture in the development of Augustine's thought. In any case, the bishop of Hippo upheld the theory first expounded in 396 with the utmost lucidity toward the end of his life (*De praed. sanct.*). On that occasion, he confirmed that perseverance in Christ till the end of this life is a gift of God as well (*De dono pers.*).

(iii) Augustine also rejects the Pelagian theory of *impeccantia*, that is, of the actual possibility of living in this world without the least sin. He admits that sin can always be avoided, with the help of God's grace, otherwise God's commandments would not make any sense. However, what the Scriptures say about the sin of everybody[56] leads him to believe that there is no absolutely just man. Even the greatest saints[57] committed sins. In any case, everyone is born with original sin, because everyone needs to be saved by Christ.

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[56] Augustine quotes 1 Kings 8.46; Ps. 143[142].2; Eccl. 7.20; 1 John 1.8, and above all the fifth request in the Lord's prayer ('forgive us our trespasses').

[57] With the exception of Mary, the mother of Jesus: cf. *De nat. et gr.* 36.42.

(iv) The absolute gratuitousness of God's *electio* and the universality of original sin are linked fast, in the Pelagian controversy, to infant baptism (*De pecc. mer.* 1 and 3; *De gr. et pecc. or.* 2; *Sermo* 294). In Augustine's view, the value of the ecclesiastical custom of infant baptism and the baptismal rite itself [58] confirm the presence of sin even in the new-born children; since infants cannot have personal sins, their sin cannot but be the original one. Only baptism delivers man from sin, sin prevents man from being in communion with God, no happy and eternal life is possible outside this communion, and there is no other end after death than salvation or damnation. [59] Therefore infants who die without baptism are damned. [60]

In conclusion, the outlook on human history which Augustine framed in his controversy against Pelagianism and expounded in the most exhaustive way in *De civitate Dei*, may be recapitulated in the two words 'sin' and 'grace': the sin of man, which is the cause of man's troubles and the common inheritance of everyone, and the grace of God, who rescues a few (He alone knows how many!) from the right condemnation and leads them through Christ to the blessedness of his heavenly City. An outlook at once so tragic and hopeful was both the outcome and the source of so many bitter debates in the history of western thought, but in Augustine's view it was just Christian faith made explicit: *philosophia christiana* (*C. Iul.* 4.14.72), nothing else.

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[58] Baptism is administered for the remission of sins and includes exorcism.

[59] Augustine admits the possibility of some *ignis purgatorius* after death, but only for baptized people and as an interim state (*Ench.* 18.69).

[60] Cf. *Ep.* 184/A.2; *De an. et or.* 1.9.11; 2.12.17; *C. Iul.* 5.11.44; *Ench.* 24.93.