



PIHANS • XI

THE TERMINOLOGY OF PLOTINUS
AND OF SOME GNOSTIC WRITINGS, MAINLY
THE FOURTH TREATISE OF THE JUNG CODEX

par
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XI

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IN HET NABIJE OOSTEN
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THE TERMINOLOGY OF PLOTINUS AND OF SOME GNOSTIC WRITINGS, MAINLY THE FOURTH TREATISE OF THE JUNG CODEX

I. Introduction

It is a well known fact that the Neoplatonist Plotinus (205–270) has fought Gnosticism. *Enneads* II, 9 is directed entirely against the Gnostics. The excellent study of Carl Schmidt, *Plotins Stellung zum Gnostizismus und kirchlichen Christentum, Texte und Untersuchungen N.F. V, 4* (Leipzig 1901), deals with this. It is still valuable. See also C. J. de Vogel, *Greek Philosophy* III, pp. 496, 497. According to Bouillet and Puech, Plotinus aims especially at the Valentinians¹⁾. One of the greatest objections of Plotinus against the Gnostics is their depreciation of the world. The demiurge is for them a being of inferior rank which belongs to the psychic sphere. The cosmos is under the constraint of the *heimarmene* and evil plays an essential rôle. Plotinus sets forth against this the concept that the cosmos is a well arranged whole, a *ῥλον*, from divine origin. The spirit which created the All has deposed a part of its own in it as *λόγος*²⁾. So it is not just to criticize the structure of the cosmos³⁾. There exists a harmony of opposites just as the rôle of a criminal fits into a drama⁴⁾. The Gnostics unjustly ascribe power to evil. Evil, however, is only a lower degree of the good⁵⁾. There are no more than three levels of being, viz. the First Principle, the mind and the soul⁶⁾. The Gnostics assume many more levels of being and so they let a great number of aeons intrude between man and the First Principle. They present themselves as philosophers, but what they tell about the reasonable world is mythology⁷⁾. All kinds of human scenes are laid in the spheres of heaven. Without doubt Plotinus refers here to the gnostic doctrine of personified aeons which form couples like Bythos and Sige, Ennoia and Aletheia, or to the fall of Sophia, the youngest out of the Pleroma. They also perform magic in which

¹⁾ *Sources de Plotin*, 162. The *Fourth Treatise* of the Jung Codex shows close affinities with the conceptions of Heracleon, the leader of the Italian school of Valentinianism, H. C. Puech, G. Quispel, W. C. van Unnik, *The Jung Codex*, London 1955, p. 57. It might have been especially this Western branch of Valentinianism with which Plotinus came into touch at Rome and which he fought.

²⁾ *En.* III, 2, 2.

⁴⁾ *En.* III, 2, 16.

⁶⁾ *En.* II, 9, 1; II, 9, 13.

³⁾ *En.* II, 9, 8.

⁵⁾ *En.* II, 9, 13.

⁷⁾ *En.* II, 9, 6; II, 9, 13.

they invoke the names of the highest beings and in this way abuse them⁸). They undermine ethics by their contempt of the world. Nothing terrestrial has any value for them, but only that of another world to which they strive. They reject in general that this world obeys laws and they also deny that man is under obligation to moral law⁹). It is true, indeed, that the Gnostics reject the commandments of the creator – one may think of the probation – as an imposed constraint, and that especially the Naässenes and the Ophites adore the snake which showed man the way to Gnosis by causing him to eat from the tree of knowledge. The commandment (ἐντολή) of the creator prevents man from getting knowledge of the light¹⁰). The ἐπίνοια teaches him to eat from the tree that he may receive knowledge and may think about his perfection¹¹). The jealous creator-god Jaldabaoth curses man on account of that.

It will not be this controversy between Plotinus and the Gnostics with which we shall be concerned but the question whether the conceptions of Plotinus and those of gnostic writings are comparable in any respects. Now Plotinus himself says in his opposition to the Gnostics¹²), “In general they derive their doctrine from Plato, while the alterations on which they base their own philosophy are inventions which surpass the truth”. They have in common with Plato their ideas of the immortality of the soul, the intelligible world, the first God, the necessity for the soul to flee from the body and to escape the circle of births¹³). It is the opinion of C. Schmidt that Plotinus fights the Gnostics because they did not agree with Plato. It seems more acceptable that he did so because they pretended to be genuine Platonists, although from his point of view, unjustly. Porphyry says in his biography of Plotinus¹⁴) that there were many Christians in the school of Plotinus among whom were also persons influenced by the classical philosophy, sectarians who taught that Plato did not penetrate into the deepest spiritual reality. With an eye to them, Plotinus wrote his book *Against the Gnostics*. Therefore, they were people who had knowledge of Plato but thought that they were at some points more advanced than he. They were under the influence of classical philosophy but they gave their own interpretation to it¹⁵).

“L’épithète traditionnelle de Valentin est Platonicus. C’est assez juste, me semble-t-il: il y a du platonisme chez Valentin”¹⁶).

It is on account of this influence of Platonism in Gnosticism that these two currents of thought are comparable. Thus, according to their adversary Plotinus, there is also platonic influence upon the Gnostics. In antiquity already Tertullianus spoke about the Platonist Valentinus¹⁷). Modern investigators agree with that. De Faye

⁸) *En.* II, 9, 14.

⁹) *En.* II, 9, 15.

¹⁰) *Apocr. John*, 57, 8 sqq.

¹¹) *Apocr. John*, 60, 18 sqq.

¹²) *En.* II, 9, 6.

¹³) Sagnard, 576.

¹⁴) Chapter 16.

¹⁵) H. Ch. Puech, *Sources de Plotin*, 163, 175.

¹⁶) *Op. cit.*, 179.

¹⁷) Sagnard, 575.

considers Valentinus to be a member of the same family as Plato, Philo and Plotinus in his metaphysical speculation¹⁸). Puech sees similarity between Gnosticism and Plotinus mainly in the latter's early periods. Plotinus only gradually departed from gnostic dualism and became a more monistic thinker.

"Les rapports entre Plotin et ses auditeurs gnostiques n'ont, tout d'abord et pendant un certain temps, donné lieu à aucun heurt". "Il les inclut . . . dans le cercle, la confrérie quasi religieuse des Platoniciens"¹⁹). "Le fait est . . . que l'hostilité décidée de Plotin ne s'est manifestée qu'assez tard"²⁰). "Plotin avait formulé . . . des théories qui, par leur dualisme accentué, pouvaient fort bien ressembler à celles des gnostiques . . . : conception du corps comme mauvais . . . etc." "Il serait . . . fructueux . . . de tenter de . . . comprendre la philosophie de Plotin . . . à la manière d'un système gnostique: on découvrirait de ce biais, à côté de différences essentielles . . . , des positions apparentées ou communes"²¹). "Sans doute aussi le gnosticisme lui est-il apparu comme une caricature de certains aspects de sa pensée"²²).

Sagnard²³) draws parallels between Plato's Timaeus and Valentinus, even though he shows clearly where the gnostic line deviates from Plato. It is not the mind in general which can attain the truth, the latter being exclusively for the elect pneumatics. What is with Plato metaphysical priority becomes in Gnosticism something which precedes in time, etc.²⁴).

Now Gnosticism has a very complicated structure. It has its roots in philosophy as well as in mythology, both the mythology of Greece and of the countries of the ancient Near East. Jewish thought, Christianity, the Greek mysteries and Iranian dualism contributed to it. Gnosticism cannot be loosened from the syncretism which existed about the beginning of the Christian era. With Sagnard²⁵) we discern in general two aspects, a philosophical and a mythological one. Investigators stressed now the one of them, then the other. Harnack considered Gnosticism to be "*Hellenisierung des Christentums*" and he paid attention mainly to the philosophical traits. Bousset and Reitzenstein stressed the likeness with Iranian dualism or the mythological side. In fact both are present²⁶). Conceptions like νοῦς, ἀρετή, αἰτία, ἀρχή are philosophical; words like salvation, revelation, grace, etc. find their origin in the religious sphere. Within Gnosticism one writing contains mainly abstract ideas such as logos or oneness. It has a more philosophical character. Another writing is more mythological, as it introduces semi-divine beings bearing strange names such as Barbelo, Jaldabaoth.

Hans Jonas in his book *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist* distinguishes mythological and philosophical-mystical Gnosis. These names are at the same time the titles of the volumes in which his publication should appear and of which, until now, parts I and II, 1 have been edited. Jonas takes the philosophical-mystical current in a very

¹⁸) Sagnard, 209.

¹⁹) *Sources de Plotin*, 182.

²⁰) *Op. cit.*, 183.

²¹) *Op. cit.*, 184.

²²) *Op. cit.*, 185.

²³) *P.* 576.

²⁴) Sagnard, 579.

²⁵) *P.* 112.

²⁶) Sagnard, 564.

wide sense. He also takes Plotinus to be in this current. He says²⁷⁾, "Upwards Gnosticism reaches into the late-antique philosophy, Philo, Neopythagoreanism, Neoplatonism. This concerns not only the forms of Platonism which are influenced from the East, such as Porphyry and Jamblichus, but also Plotinus himself. The latter is a source for Gnosticism not only on account of his opposition to the Gnostics but certainly also in essential parts of his own conceptions." In both currents of thought, Gnosticism and Neoplatonism²⁸⁾, he sees dualistic-transcendental metaphysics arise, even though there is a difference in their dualism. In Gnosticism the antithesis between God and a non-divine world is concerned. In Platonism this refers to the difference between the intelligible and the sensible. Jonas also points to the fact²⁹⁾ that the Gnostics have used Platonic sources. The ideas of Jonas were opposed, among others by M. Cornélis and A. Léonard³⁰⁾. It is their opinion that Jonas goes too far in his phenomenological method, when he considers two opponents of Gnosticism such as Plotinus and Origen to be Gnostics themselves.

Although Neoplatonism is first of all philosophy and Gnosticism has mainly a religious character, both of them make use of the same thought patterns. The difference between a higher and a lower world, more and less spiritual respectively, redemption by knowledge, the dangers of being tied up with matter, the simple as the better in comparison with the more complex, and other traits of that kind cause one to experience these ways of thought as belonging to the same spiritual climate. Gnosticism draws from many sources and gnostic writings sometimes show so many differences that it is even dangerous to speak of *the Gnosis*. Gnosticism, however, expanded in a world which bore the signature of Hellenism, of which Platonism was one of the components. Even if one does not consider Gnosticism to be a Hellenised form of Christianity, it is acceptable that gnostic thinkers made use of the philosophic terminology of their days.

Plotinus opposed Gnosticism very strongly, but is not that the violence which occurs often with two spiritual currents that are not far from one another? R. Harder says³¹⁾,

"Plotin bekämpft die Gnosis mit einer Leidenschaftlichkeit, die ohne Parallele ist. Und wenn so erbittert gekämpft wird, dann liegt nach aller geschichtlichen Erfahrung eine Verwandtschaft zu Grunde . . . Ich habe den Eindruck, dass es in der ersten Epoche seiner Schriftstellerei eine Reihe von Anspielungen gibt, die nicht sehr tief greifen, aber noch nicht anders bezeichnet werden können als gnostisch".

The opponents do their utmost to show the falsehood of each other's doctrine, but the outsider looks at them as offspring of the same root.

Through the Nag Hammadi find we have at our disposal a quantity of 13 codices,

²⁷⁾ Vol. I, p. 6.

²⁸⁾ Op. cit., p. 43.

²⁹⁾ Op. cit., p. 45.

³⁰⁾ *La Gnose Éternelle*, 1959, p. 12 sqq.

³¹⁾ *Sources de Plotin*, 185.

containing more than 40 gnostic writings in Coptic. Making use of these writings, particularly the 4th treatise of the Jung Codex³²), which is partially in the Jung Institute in Zürich, partially in the Coptic Museum in Cairo, we shall investigate the possibility of comparing Plotinus and Gnosticism.

II. The Four Levels

Plotinus considers reality to be classified in four levels which constitute a hierarchy of being: The First Principle, the mind, the soul and matter. Because the First Principle has a state of its own, one can also speak of a partition into three. At the top is the One and subordinated to it are the νοητά, the μαθηματικά and the αἰσθητά. The First Principle, the nous and the psyche belong to the divine being. The sphere of darkness is subordinated to it. It is illuminated by the soul. There is the sensible world with the ὕλη as its substratum. This world, however, is not considered to be a hypostasis. The problem of which Plotinus treats is how plurality originates from the absolute oneness which is at the beginning. The First Principle is at the top³³). It is itself not a being, but it produces being. Out of its abundance (ὑπερρέω) it made the nous as the second principle. This second principle looks at the first one and thus it receives its noëtic character, becomes thinking which has an object. Thinking, that which thinks and thought itself, form already a plurality. So they are not predicates of the First Principle (En. VI, 7, 41) but of the second one, the nous. The nous also pours out its powers and so the psyche comes into being. The nous must keep its regards to the One and the psyche must look at the nous. In this way even the psyche preserves its reasonable character. If it does not do so, but turns itself downwards, the αἰσθησις originates as a lower form of knowledge. Plotinus compares the three hypostases also with light. The First Principle is pure light, the nous is the light of the sun and the psyche is the moonlight which in its turn derives its light from the sun³⁴). The First Principle is absolutely simple and self-sufficient (αὐταρκής). The nous is primarily thinking. This is the natural τάξις. After the nous follows the psyche. Plotinus says with stress, "We ought not to accept more principles in the intelligible". This is directed against the Gnostics who assume a great number of personified beings in the pleroma. The ὕλη is no hypostasis, is outer darkness, is only negative, absence of being. Evil is not substantial. A moulding influence proceeds from the soul into matter. Here is a

³²) H. Ch. Puech et G. Quispel, *Le Quatrième Écrit Gnostique Du Codex Jung*, Vigiliae Christianae IX, Nr. 2, 1955, pp. 65–102. *The Jung Codex Three Studies* by H. C. Puech, G. Quispel and W. C. van Unnik, Translated and Edited by F. L. Cross, London, 1955, p. 57, "The Treatise on the Three Natures".

³³) En. V, 2, 1; C. J. de Vogel, *Greek Philosophy III*, par. 1370 a.

³⁴) En. V, 6, 4; C. J. de Vogel, *Greek Philosophy III*, par. 1370 b.

difference with Gnosticism, which considers matter to have more reality. Between the different levels there exists coherency. A λόγος proceeds from the nous unto the psyche and makes the latter spiritual, but the logos is not itself a hypostasis. It is only the operative side of the nous, turned to the outside. The mind is a radiant light for the soul (En. V, 7, 17) and when the mind limits the soul, it makes the latter reasonable, giving it a trace (ἵχνος) of what it received itself. The mind in its turn bears a trace of the First Principle. This term "trace" occurs also in the 4th treatise (73, 5), "The primeval Father, the incomprehensible, whose name cannot be mentioned, has left a trace of Himself behind in the world of the aeons in order that they may seek Him".

A similar gradation occurs also in the 4th treatise of the Jung Codex. The terms τάξις and τάγμα have been used equally for this. There is a first pneumatic order (τάξις πνευματικόν), a middle place and a subordinate order (103, 18). The latter originated from jealousy (φθόνος). Elsewhere (106, 6 sqq.) this writing mentions the pneumatic-, the psychic- and the material οὐσία. Three types of men correspond to this, the pneumatics, the psychics and the hylics (118, 15). The pneumatic race is light out of light and it is spirit (πνεῦμα). It accepts readily the Gnosis. The psychic race is similar to a light out of fire which needed Gnosis for a long time, but ultimately it reaches faith and hope. The hylic race is alien to this in every respect. Because it is in darkness – the connection between hyle and darkness was also present with Plotinus – it goes to destruction. As far as the symbolism of light is concerned, this also occurs with Plotinus. The nous receives light from the First Principle as from the sun³⁵). The soul as a second circle receives in its turn from the nous light out of light (En. IV, 3, 17). In Gnosticism the psychic can still be influenced by the pneuma in a favourable way and so it can be saved, even though the psychics do not arrive in the pleroma, but come one level lower, in the ogdoad. So the gradation pneumatic-psychic-hylic with the Gnostics corresponds with that of the noëtic, the psychic and the sensible in Neoplatonism.

It is possible to introduce a partition into two in the scheme of Plotinus. The One, the nous and the psyche are the three hypostases which belong to the intelligible world. All which is below this level belongs to another order, viz. to the αἰσθητά. Such a partition into two occurs also in Gnosticism. Until the middle of the second century the common idea was that there were two Seins-Stufen, τάξεις τῶν ὄντων. After that a discussion started whether there were still more, among others, whether there were higher levels in the deity³⁶).

"Soviel man sehen kann, ist Numenios der erste gewesen, der die Zahl der Seins-Stufen präzise auf drei festigte; daher konnte wohl eine doxographisch registrierende Darstellung in diesem Punkt eine grundsätzliche Gleichheit zwischen Plotin und Numenios feststellen: beide postulierten drei Seins-Stufen"³⁷).

³⁵) En. V, 3, 12; C. J. de Vogel, *Greek Philosophy* III, par. 1382.

³⁶) H. Dörrie, *Sources de Plotin*, 40.

³⁷) Op. cit., p. 41.

Now the older bipartition is also to be found in gnostic writings. In the 4th treatise (98, 13) a twofold *τάγμα* is mentioned, viz. the one of those to the right and the one of those to the left, equally termed the one of thought and the one of similarity. The former belongs to the noëtic sphere, the latter to the sensible universe, which is only a likeness, a shadowy image of the former. The psychics are mainly numbered with the right *τάγμα*³⁸), since they can be saved. On this point there exists a similarity to Plotinus who assigns both the nous and the psyche to the intelligible world. According to Gnosticism the hylics go to perdition. This corresponds to the conception of Neoplatonism that matter is non-existence. At this point, however, Gnosticism is more dualistic than Neoplatonism. Behind Gnosticism is the antithesis between light and darkness, which has been influenced by Judaism and Iranian conceptions.

The similarity between Plotinus and Gnosticism as outlined above has mainly a formal character. The scheme of Plotinus, τὸ ἐν, νοῦς, ψυχή, ὕλη, is metaphysical. It refers to the levels of reality. Pneumatics, psychics and hylics are, in the 4th treatise, three categories of people. The gnostic myth describes the hope for the redemption of the soul which is imprisoned in matter, namely redemption by the nous³⁹). The regular gradation according to descending degrees of being in Plotinus is crossed in Gnosticism by a sharp dualism which is made absolute in the antithesis of light and darkness in Manichaeism.

“Dieser Dualismus ist so bezeichnend für die Gnosis, wie der Monismus für den Neoplatonismus und der Monotheismus für das Christentum”⁴⁰).

The pneuma in Gnosticism has a different function than the νοῦς for Plotinus and cannot be considered apart from the Christian doctrine of grace. It stands to reason that the anthropology of that time with its partition into νοῦς, ψυχή, σῶμα is at the base of these conceptions. Plotinus has elaborated this in the direction of metaphysics and Gnosticism has combined it with a doctrine of redemption.

III. The One

Now we shall examine what Plotinus and the Gnostics say about each of the separate levels of reality. At the top there is the One. Xenophanes is the first who defines the highest being as the One. With Plotinus τὸ ἐν has become a usual designation for it. The One is the πρῶτον, the absolute first and simple (ἀπλοῦν). The deity is also for Origen ἐν, ἀπλοῦν, μονάς, ἐνάς. It is unmoved, incomprehensible to man, invisible. Only God the Father is uncreated. Thus Jonas says of Origen, including him in patristic Gnosticism⁴¹). The next level, the νοῦς, the Ideas, is not simple⁴²). Every form (εἶδος) consists of many things. “So one must

³⁸) Sagnard, 177. ³⁹) Polatzky, S.B.A. 1933, p. 81. ⁴⁰) G. Quispel, *Gnosis als Weltreligion*, p. 40.

⁴¹) Theologische Zeitschrift, Basel 1948, IV, 102, 103.

⁴²) En. VI, 9, 2; C. J. de Vogel, *Greek Philosophy* III, par. 1392 a.

go back" – according to Plotinus – "to One, viz. the true One, which is not one like the other things, which are a plurality, and which are only one through participation in the One. The intelligible world is next to the One, it is true, but it is not like the pure One" (τὸ καθαρῶς ἓν, *En.* V, 5, 4). The 4th treatise (51, 8) says, "The Father is one single, being like a number, for He is the first and He is the one who is alone". According to Albinus God is something which has no parts because there exists nothing before Him. This thought can be traced back to Plato⁴³). The 4th treatise says of the Son who is the equal of the Father, "He is called the one who is simply (ἀπλῶς) himself" (129, 9).

According to Plotinus the First Principle is unlimited (ἄπειρος). "One must conceive it also in this way, that it is unlimited, not because it is not possible to walk through it, whether in respect of size or in respect of number, but because it is impossible to encompass its Power" (*En.* VI, 9, 6). According to Gnosticism the Father is without beginning and end (4th tr. 52, 6/7). He is unfathomable (53, 4). The Coptic word (*athethôt*) can be the translation of the Greek ἄπειρος. It is said that his greatness is without limit (*ataredj*), which is another equivalent of ἄπειρος. In the *Sophia Jesu Christi* (87, 7) God is called "the unlimited and unbegotten Father". He is "without limit" (87, 14). The etymology of the word ἀπέραντος is the same as that of ἄπειρος. The same predicate of God occurs in the *Corpus Hermeticum* XI, 18 (154, 14 sqq.)⁴⁴). The gnostic *Apocryphon of John* (24, 13/14) says in the same paradoxical manner which Plotinus also likes to use, "He is neither unlimited" – here the Greek loanword ἄπειρος occurs – "nor was He limited". The author seeks a qualification which surpasses ἄπειρος.

According to Plotinus the First Principle is absolutely transcendent, ἐπέκεινα, not only in respect of the sensible world but also in respect of the intelligible one. It is easier to say what it is not than what it is. In fact it is impossible to qualify it. It has not a single predicate.

"Wenn je eine Philosophie Transzendental-Philosophie war, so war es die Plotins"⁴⁵).

Thus Plotinus comes to a negative theology. Just as in mysticism he is on the *via negativa*. Also the representatives of Middle Platonism, e.g. Albinus, proceed along this way.

"Es begegnen hier die *via negationis*, die *via analogiae* und die *via eminentiae*. Die beiden letzteren haben im Mittelplatonismus eine mehr hilfsweise Bedeutung; einzig die *via negationis* gilt ohne Voraussetzung . . . Einzig die *via negationis* stellt eine selbständige logische Operation dar: Zum Göttlichen gelangt man durch möglichst vollkommene Abstraktion: ἄφελε πάντα."⁴⁶)

In Plotinus "the One" is a limitative notion (*Grenzbegriff*) of human thinking. He says, "It is the absolute simple, the first of all things, at the other side of the

⁴³) Festugière, *La Révélation d'H.T.*, IV, 100.

⁴⁵) H. Dörrie, *Sources de Plotin*, 193.

⁴⁴) Op. cit., p. 73.

⁴⁶) Op. cit., 213.

mind" (ἐπέκεινα νοῦ) (En. V, 3, 11). "On account of that it is also ineffable (ἄρρητος); for, whatever you say about it, always you must say 'something'." "There is not a name (ὄνομα) for it" (En. V, 3, 12); "and what it is, that we do not tell" (En. V, 3, 14).

H. Dörrie says about Middle Platonism,

"Denn vor aller Erörterung stand das Wissen, dass das Göttliche ἄρρητον ist"⁴⁷⁾.

His paper *Vom Transzendenten im Mittelplatonismus* shows that Plotinus had already precursors in Middle Platonism as to his conceptions of the transcendent.

"Für den Mittelplatoniker steht am Wesen des höchsten Göttlichen das Merkmal voran, dass es diese Welt, und damit auch die Möglichkeit der Aussage transzendiert (Kelsos VI, 35). Denn es steht zunächst einmal zu allem Innerweltlichen im Gegensatz, also auch zur Benennung. So ist das Transzendente das Ungenannte"⁴⁸⁾.

Middle Platonism stresses transcendency much more than Plato himself.

"Gott gilt als das Inkommensurable, Fremde, Ausserweltliche, das völlig Andere"⁴⁹⁾.

The mystery religions, Gnosticism, Hermetic doctrine and Middle Platonism agree in this respect. Aristotle with his ideas about the transcendent νοῦς had more influence on Middle Platonism than Plato himself⁵⁰⁾. In the *Chaldaic Oracles* God is absolutely Father, hidden within Himself and on account of that unknowable. The eye of the soul only sees Him when it frees itself from every apperception. This absolutely transcendent God left the creation of the visible world entirely in the hands of a second νοῦς⁵¹⁾.

We read in the 4th treatise (54, 2 sq., 15 sq.), "There is not a single one among the names⁵²⁾ which is conceived, or which is said, or which is seen, or which one can grasp. No one of these has been attributed to Him. No mind can think Him and no word will be able to repeat Him and no eye will be able to see Him and no body will be able to contain Him on account of his untraceable greatness and his unattainable depth and his inaccessible height and his unrestricted will". He is "ineffable" (atšedje, 4th tr. 64, 20/21). In the *Corpus Hermeticum* God is invoked as ἀνεκλάγητε, ἄρρητε, σιωπῇ φωνούμενε⁵³⁾. God surpasses all predicates which could be given to Him. The *Corpus Hermeticum* uses in this connection the term ὑπεροχή⁵⁴⁾. The 4th treatise (55, 20 sqq.) says, "He is exalted above every wisdom and He is above every understanding and He is above every glory and He is above every beauty and every sweetness and every greatness and every depth and every height, for this one is unknowable in his nature". The names of the Father are innumerable (4th tr. 129, 18). He surpasses every word, He surpasses every voice,

⁴⁷⁾ Op. cit., 199.

⁴⁸⁾ Op. cit., 201.

⁴⁹⁾ Op. cit., 203.

⁵⁰⁾ Op. cit., 204.

⁵¹⁾ Festugière, *La Révélation d'H.T.*, III, 54, 55.

⁵²⁾ Cf. the predicate πολυνόμος of God in the Hermetic writings, Festugière, *La Révélation d'H.T.*, IV, 65. "D'autre part, du fait même qu'il a tous les noms, on peut aussi bien dire qu'il n'en a aucun" (p. 66).

⁵³⁾ Op. cit. IV, 76.

⁵⁴⁾ Op. cit. IV, 77.

He surpasses every mind (νοῦς) and everything and He surpasses silence (4th tr. 129, 20-24). In this way the 4th treatise expresses transcendency. It is possible that Gnosticism in this way wishes to go beyond Platonism, because in this philosophy God is unattainable for intellectual knowledge (λόγος), but the higher capacity of understanding, the νοῦς, can conceive of Him⁵⁵). The νοῦς has the meaning of

"intuition mystique"⁵⁶). "Albinos sagt vom überhimmlischen Gott, er habe keine ἀρεταί, sondern sei über diese erhaben . . . Der überhimmlische Gott ist mithin als derart transzendent verstanden, dass er alle ethische Wertung übersteigt"⁵⁷).

Albinus' thought is a good example of the idea of transcendency in Middle Platonism. For the *Gnosis* we can refer to Basilides who says about the basic principle of creation, "It is exalted above every nomenclature"⁵⁸). In Gnosticism the Father is in the final instance the ἄγνωστος θεός⁵⁹), the inconceivable (4th treatise 55, 13), ἀνεκνόητος⁶⁰). Also in the *Corpus Hermeticum* there is a γνῶσις θεοῦ,

"une connaissance, la connaissance d'un Dieu ἄγνωστος par les moyens normaux, mais γνωστός sous un nouveau monde"⁶¹).

According to the Platonist Numenius the Being is ἄλογος (without definition), ἄγνωστος and ἄτακτος (inordonné)⁶²). In giving these negative predicates to God Plotinus and Gnosticism practice the same dialectics as Karl Barth, *bien étonnés de se trouver ensemble*.

Plotinus says that the One is without form (μορφή), even without intelligible form. It has no quality and it has no quantity. It has one form (μονοειδής) or better, it is without εἶδος; it is before every form⁶³). As to the One, all powers and all forms (μορφή) are to be transcended (En. VI, 7, 32). "The One is beautiful as an unmodelled figure (ἄμορφον εἶδος), if it is a figure at all, and beautiful only in so far it is freed from every form" (En. VI, 7, 33). Gnosticism says about the Father, "He has no externality nor figure (σχῆμα)⁶⁴), of which one thinks at a perception" (4th treatise 54, 30). It calls the Son of the Father "the Shape of the Shapeless", with the Greek term, the a-morphous (66, 13). Also the *Sophia Jesu Christi* says with the Greek loanword, "He has not a human μορφή, for he who has a human μορφή is the creature of somebody else" (84, 14).

The One is also first cause, creator of everything, and it is itself uncreated. It is the All in so far as it has this potentially within itself. It is primeval principle and *causa sui*. "He is begetter of being (αἰτίας) and of that which exists. He is the principle (ἀρχή), for everything originates from him" (En. V, 5, 10)." It is cause (αἰτίας) of life, thought and being" (En. I, 6, 7). Only of the lower things can one ask how they came into being but not of the First Principle, "because it has not

⁵⁵) Op. cit. IV, 131, 132.

⁵⁶) Op. cit. IV, 139.

⁵⁷) H. Dörrie, *Sources de Plotin*, 215.

⁵⁸) H. Leisegang, *Die Gnosis* (1955), 213.

⁵⁹) Sagnard, 332. Coptic *atswónf*, 4th tr. 55, 27.

⁶⁰) Sagnard, 332.

⁶¹) Festugière, *La Révélation d'H.T.*, 59.

⁶²) Op. cit., 125.

⁶³) En. VI, 9, 3; C. J. de Vogel, *Greek Philosophy III*, par. 1392 b.

⁶⁴) Cf. Festugière, *La Révélation d'H.T.* IV, 66, οὔτε σχῆμα, C.H. 22 (183.12).

originated properly speaking" (En. VI, 8, 10). "So it appears that that One has begotten Himself. For, if the will comes from Himself and is so to speak his own work, and it is at the same time identical with his existence, then He has brought Himself into being as He is" (En. VI, 8, 13)⁶⁵. "It is out of itself the root (ῥίζα) of every sense (λόγος); all things end in it, it being, as it were, the origin (ἀρχή) and base of a huge plant" (En. VI, 8, 15). The One, is a "Father" of the intelligible (En. V, 8, 1). In the absolutely transcendent is "the fatherland from which we originate and our Father is there" (En I, 6, 8). "The Father" is a common name for the Supreme Being with the Gnostics. Also Numenius of Apamea calls the First God πατήρ or πάππος,⁶⁶ but he does not use the term τὸ ἐν. Also in Gnosticism the Father is called "the root of the All" (4th tr. 51, 3/4). "He was before anything came into being" (4th tr. 51, 7). "He is not begotten, nor is there another who has begotten Him and there is no other who has created Him" (4th tr. 51, 28 sqq.). "He is who He is and He is the one who establishes Himself" (4th tr. 52, 13). A recurring name of God is "the unbegotten" (4th tr. 52, 37), the equivalent of ἀγέννητος⁶⁷). He is "the cause of the begetting of the All" (4th tr. 55, 38), "who has brought forth Himself" (4th tr. 56, 35). He is "the Father of the All" (4th tr. 65, 11). The name "Father" for God occurs also in Middle Platonism, "He is Father, being the cause of everything"⁶⁸). The Father who is absolutely simple, can also be called "The All" because He bears the latter potentially within Himself (4th tr. 67, 11-29). Plotinus says something similar to that, "The First Principle is nothing of the existing things, nevertheless it is all of them: nothing because that which is, is later, and everything because it originates from Him" (En. VI, 7, 32). According to the Gnostics God is an "ἀρχή over which nobody reigns (ἄρχειν), for nobody exists before Him, nor does He need them" (Apocr. John 23, 6). God as the absolutely transcendent One is also called ἀρχή in the *Corpus Hermeticum*⁶⁹). "He is the one who is nothing of all these things, but He is the cause of their existence for them, for all of them and for everyone of all beings". According to a gnostic writing He is more than Father, viz. primeval father, *propator* (προπάτωρ)⁷⁰). The Father is one who came into being by Himself and who created Himself (αὐτοφυής, αὐτόκτιστος)⁷¹).

According to Plotinus the First Principle itself is not something which "is", because it precedes everything that exists. It is not possible to give it the attribute "ἔστιν" (En. VI, 8, 8)⁷²). The gnostic *Apocryphon of John* (24, 20) says in a similar way, "He is entirely nothing which exists, but He is something more excellent than that which is". Compare the predicate ἀνουσίαστος in the *Corpus Hermeticum*⁷³)

⁶⁵) C. J. de Vogel, *Greek Philosophy* III, par. 1393 b.

⁶⁶) Dodds, *Sources de Plotin*, 12.

⁶⁷) Sagnard, 331.

⁶⁸) Albinus, according to Festugière, *La Révélation d'H.T.* IV, 98.

⁶⁹) Op. cit., p. 78.

⁷⁰) Sophia Jesu Christi 90, 17.

⁷¹) Op. cit. 94, 1.

⁷²) C. J. de Vogel, *Greek Philosophy* III, par. 1392 d.

⁷³) Festugière, *La Révélation d'H.T.*, IV, 70.

which is applied to the super-cosmic God “*sans substance*” or “*sans essence*” which tallies with the term ἀνούσιος in Neoplatonism⁷⁴). H. Dörrie⁷⁵) remarks,

“Kelsos VI, 64, 5 äussert, Gott habe an nichts teil, auch am Sein nicht; hier kündigt das neuplatonische ὑπερούσιον sich an.”

God depends upon nothing but everything depends upon Him. We read in Plotinus, “Since it is a cause for the other things, it does not receive from others what it is. So the well-being is for the First Principle not something which comes to it accidentally, for it is this in itself. It also has no place (τόπος), because it needs no support of a foundation, as if it were not able to bear itself; the other things rest rather on it” (En. VI, 9, 6). The 4th treatise says, “For from the beginning nobody else is with Him nor a place (Greek loanword τόπος) on which He is, or from which He departed, or to which He will return, nor a primeval form which He uses as a model for his work . . . nor matter which lies ready for Him and from which is created that which He creates, nor does He have a copartner in his creative work” (53, 23-37).

We have found in Neoplatonism and Gnosticism the way of negative theology and the stress on the transcendency of the Supreme God. The same occurs in Hermetic writings as Festugière has clearly described. He points out the similarity to Neoplatonism. The thought that God is ἀσώματος goes back to Plato⁷⁶). According to the *Corpus Hermeticum* God has no form (οὐ μορφή). He is not visible to the eyes, but only to the spirit. God is ἄλεκτος,⁷⁷) God is incomprehensible, ἀκατάληπτος or ἄληπτος⁷⁸). “*Dieu est au dessus de toute qualification*”⁷⁹).

The conception that the First Principle is ineffable and incomprehensible has been borrowed from Plato⁸⁰). Festugière describes the negative theology of Plato⁸¹) and Platonism⁸²). According to Plato the beautiful transcends every description and all knowledge, οὐδέ τις λόγος οὐδέ τις ἐπιστήμη⁸³). Also in the Middle Platonism of the 2nd century God's absolute transcendency is a common theme. According to Albinus the First God is eternal, ineffable (ἄρρητος), complete within himself (αὐτοτελής), i.e. without needs, eternally complete (ἄειτελής)⁸⁴).

“Il n'est ni genre, ni espèce, ni différence⁸⁵). “Dans les écoles mêmes des Platoniciens du IIe siècle, l'impossibilité de comprendre et de ‘dire’ Dieu était tenue pour un dogme”⁸⁶).

Maximus of Tyrus says⁸⁷) τὸ θεῖον αὐτὸ ἀόρατον ὀφθαλμοῖς, ἄρρητον φωνῇ, ἀναφές σαρκί ἀπευθές ἀκοῇ⁸⁸). In the opinion of Numenius God is ἔρημος.

⁷⁴) Op. cit., p. 71.

⁷⁵) *Sources de Plotin*, 219.

⁷⁶) *La Révélation d'H.T.* IV, 61.

⁷⁷) Op. cit., p. 62.

⁷⁸) Op. cit., p. 72.

⁷⁹) Op. cit., p. 72.

⁸⁰) Op. cit., p. 76.

⁸¹) Op. cit., p. 79.

⁸²) Op. cit., p. 92.

⁸³) Op. cit., p. 80; Symp. 210 e 2-211 b 3.

⁸⁴) Op. cit., p. 97.

⁸⁵) Op. cit., p. 98.

⁸⁶) Op. cit., p. 109.

⁸⁷) Dübner XVII, 9.

⁸⁸) Festugière, Op. cit., p. 113.

He escapes every determination. One cannot grasp him with any finite conception.⁸⁹⁾

“Chez Numénus . . . la voie de négation paraît la seule admise pour approcher le Dieu “in-connaissable”⁹⁰⁾. “Et la via negationis se trouve chez ces auteurs (Albinus, Celsus) pour la bonne raison qu’elle est déjà chez Platon lui-même”⁹¹⁾.

IV. *The Mind*

For Plotinus the second level after τὸ ἐν is the νοῦς. As to Gnosticism, the πνεῦμα can be taken into consideration for this second level. Knowledge of the Father is possible through the pneuma. The pneuma functions in Gnosticism similarly to the nous in Platonism, it being the means to the knowledge of God. Here, however, great differences occur. In Platonism the term pneuma does not occur in a way similar to the use in Gnosticism.

“Le grec πνεῦμα paraissait trop entaché de matérialité pour remplir le même office, et nul platonicien n’eût songé un instant à l’employer dans le cas de phénomènes qui, s’ils dépassent l’entendement, n’en impliquent pas moins toute la montée intellectuelle vers le premier νοητόν. D’où vient que le même mot νοῦς sert à la fois pour désigner l’organe normal de la connaissance des νοητά et l’organe d’intuition mystique qui entre en contact avec l’ἀνόητον”⁹²⁾.

As a matter of fact one can compare the nous as second level in Plotinus and the pleroma of the aeons in Gnosticism. The pneumatics return to the pleroma. Thus far there is an analogy between the noëtic sphere in Plotinus and the pneuma in Gnosticism. After having dealt with the First Principle, Plotinus says, “Knowledge comes in the second place” (*En.* V, 3, 12). The First Principle reigns as a king over the intelligible (*ibidem*). “The first is the origin and that which comes from it enters the mind through it” (*En.* VI, 7, 15). The nous is not a function of something else, but is something independent, a hypostasis. It thinks of itself as well as of that which transcends it (*En.* VI, 7, 35)⁹³⁾. It is more divine than many other things, but less than the First Principle (*En.* VI, 7, 41)⁹⁴⁾.

In the opinion of Plotinus the nous flows from the First Principle as a light from light (*En.* V, 3, 12)⁹⁵⁾, and the 4th treatise says that the pneumatic race is a light from light (118, 29/30). It accepts the knowledge of God readily (4th treatise 118, 35/36). In Valentinianism the pleroma follows after the Father, consisting of aeons that are ranged in couples (συνυγία). The first couple is Νοῦς and Ἀλήθεια⁹⁶⁾. Also here Νοῦς comes next to the First Principle. According to the *Apocryphon of John*⁹⁷⁾ the ἐννοια of the Father was revealed first after Him, it being his thinking which was also conceived as a personified being. It is the likeness of the primeval light⁹⁸⁾

⁸⁹⁾ Op. cit., p. 131.

⁹⁰⁾ Op. cit., p. 139.

⁹¹⁾ Op. cit., p. 140.

⁹²⁾ Op. cit., p. 139.

⁹³⁾ C. J. de Vogel, *Greek Philosophy* III, par. 1389 a.

⁹⁴⁾ Op. cit., par 1391 b.

⁹⁵⁾ Op. cit., par. 1382 a.

⁹⁶⁾ Sagnard, 299.

⁹⁷⁾ 27, 6.

⁹⁸⁾ 27, 12.

and it has knowledge of the Father (νοεῖν) (27, 17). One can compare with this the way in which the Stoa allegorizes the myth of Athena, who is born from the head of Zeus, and conceives the goddess as the thinking of the supreme deity⁹⁹. In Plotinus as well as in Gnosticism, the intelligible world occurs as the second gradation after the First Principle. Also Gnosticism uses the term νοῦς when it designs the aeons of the pleroma which follow after the Father as “minds of minds” (4th tr. 70, 8/9). With these aeons we are in the noëtic sphere. With Numenius of Apamea three gods occur as different levels of mental activity. “Noeῖν is the distinctive activity of the Second God, and of the Second only”¹⁰⁰. For Origen God is eternally surrounded by spiritual substances (λογικαὶ φύσεις). These pure minds (νόες) are without body and matter; they have no number, no name, so that they form together a unity (ἐνός). Together with the hypostases of the Son and the Spirit they form the Origenistic “Pleroma”¹⁰¹.

Plotinus criticized the gnostic doctrine of the aeons, because it has a mythical character and thus allows a multitude of beings to intervene between the One and man. Plotinus himself, however, links with the nous the conception of plurality, of differentiation (ἐτερότης). The First Principle must be simple. In the sensible world we meet plurality. The latter must be prefigured in the noumenal world. There are the Ideas, the *paradeigmata*, the archetypes for the earthly. In the transcendent being that proceeds from the One, there is already a plurality, otherwise the origin of plurality in the sensible universe would be inexplicable¹⁰².

The transcendent being is a unity-plurality, a ἐν πολλά (En. V, 3, 15), a conception which already occurs in Plato. Plotinus writes (En. VI, 2, 22), “This mind is not separated from that which is before it. It proceeds from it. And, because it arises from the One as a plurality and has the nature of differentiation within itself, it becomes unity-plurality (εἰς πολλά). The one mind, however, which is the many, also produces many minds by that necessity”. Also the pleroma of Gnosticism contains “innumerable aeons” (4th tr. 59, 7/8). The aeons have an intelligible character, “they are in the thought of the Father” (4th tr. 60, 17). “They are minds (νοῦς) and they do not have the character of an image” (εἰκόν) (4th tr. 63, 6/7). The Father “makes them (the aeons) into the All, this one which He Himself is, the All, all names . . .” (4th tr. 70, 36). In the first case “the All” has been written with the article of the plural, corresponding with the term τα ὅλα or τα πάντα in Neoplatonism.

The intelligible universe of the true being receives in Plotinus the predicate πλήρης, full, “Thus it appears that Life, existing in the ‘being’ which is an all-embracing totality, a fullness and an absolute non-extensiveness, is that which we seek, eter-

⁹⁹) Cf. G. Quispel, *Eranos* XXII, 209.

¹⁰⁰) E. R. Dodds, *Sources de Plotin*, 14; cf. Festugière, *La Révélation d'H.T.*, 127.

¹⁰¹) H. Jonas, *Theologische Zeitschrift*, Basel, 1948, IV, 104.

¹⁰²) C. J. de Vogel, *Greek Philosophy*, III, par. 1374.

nity" (En. III, 7, 3). We notice that the gnostic term "pleroma" corresponds to the Greek πλήρης.

The universe of the aeons is on the one hand an unfolding of the being of the Father. On the other hand, it is also archetype of the earthly reality. The youngest aeon, Sophia, is the prototype for human seeking for God and for the knowledge of God¹⁰³). Sagnard speaks in this connection of reversed exemplarism¹⁰⁴). The aeons are called powers (δύναμις) or virtues (ἀρετή) of God (4th tr. 69, 40). "For each of the aeons is a name and each of his virtues and (each of) the powers of the Father (is a name)" (4th tr. 73, 10). The Coptic word for power (*gom*) is the equivalent of the Greek δύναμις¹⁰⁵). Plotinus says about the nous, "How everything is in it which proceeds from it! He has a number within Himself, one and many, which are wonderful powers, not faint, but, because they are pure, they are very great and full of vital strength and they are real powers that are not gradually limited (En. VI, 2, 21)¹⁰⁶). W. Theiler remarks, "Auch Plotin nennt einmal die Ideen δυνάμεις, VI, 2, 21, 8"¹⁰⁷). In the *Corpus Hermeticum* powers compose the divine being.

"Ces puissances sont considérées comme des parties ou des membres qui, réunis, constituent l'ensemble de l'Être divin"¹⁰⁸).

God, being at first the undivided light, becomes a cosmos, which consists of an innumerable quantity of δυνάμεις. Therefore, the latter form together the being of God. In the *Corpus Hermeticum* they correspond with the aeons of the pleroma in Gnosticism. Also outside the *Corpus Hermeticum* we find the conception of δυνάμεις, virtues, as hypostases in the being of God¹⁰⁹), among others in Philo¹¹⁰). In the description which Irenaeus gives of the Valentinians the aeons are called δυνάμεις¹¹¹).

The intelligible universe is the true being. In Plotinus this is not subordinate to thinking, but it is another aspect of it. "Thus each of the intelligible things is mind and being. The complete is complete mind and complete being" (En. V, 1, 4). The Ideas are ὄντα and οὐσίαι (En. V, 8, 5). "The νοητόν is οὐσία in a primary sense" (En. V, 3, 5). The 4th treatise says, "The aeons are in the mind (of the Father) as an οὐσία" (4th tr. 61, 6).

According to Plotinus the Nous is a great god, it is true, but it is a secondary god, a θεός δεύτερος (En. V, 5, 3)¹¹²). The First Deity is seated above the nous as on a pedestal and He is a Father of the gods. In this respect we can compare Plotinus with Philo and his representation of the logos as the eldest son of God. Plotinus

¹⁰³) Sagnard, 571.

¹⁰⁴) Sagnard, 257.

¹⁰⁵) Sagnard, 448.

¹⁰⁶) C. J. de Vogel, *Greek Philosophy* III, par. 1385 b.

¹⁰⁷) *Sources de Plotin*, 73.

¹⁰⁸) Festugière, *La Révélation d'H.T.* III, 152 sqq.

¹⁰⁹) Op. cit., p. 158 sqq.

¹¹⁰) Op. cit., p. 165.

¹¹¹) Sagnard, 448 sqq.

¹¹²) C. J. de Vogel, *Greek Philosophy* III, par. 1382 b.

writes, "He who contemplates the reasonable world, must ask for the creator of the nous, He who brought forth a son (παῖς) as glorious as the nous" (*En.* III, 8, 11). In Gnosticism the heavenly Christ is closely related to the nous. The invisible spirit places the nous at the side of Christ when he prays for it (*Apocr. John* 31, 8). God gives Christ the power to understand the All (νοεῖν) (*Apocr. John* 32, 18). The Son is the thinking and the perception of the Father (4th tr. 56, 37/38). He thinks (νοεῖν) himself as Son (4th tr. 58, 13). The Son of the Father is "the logos of the not-to-be-repeated and the nous of the unimaginable" (4th tr. 66, 15/16).

V. The Soul

The third level is the Soul. For points of contact between the world soul in the Stoa and Sophia in Gnosticism see G. Quispel, *Eranos* XXII, p. 208 sq.; for the world soul in Platonism and in Gnosticism, see op. cit. p. 210. Plotinus says in his fight against the gnostics that with them the souls are μέλη τῆς Σοφίας.

Sophia "est peut-être, du moins dans l'une des interprétations, proposées par Plotin, identique à l'Âme Universelle" (*En.* II, 9, 10, 20). "L'Âme Universelle est la quatrième hypostase, après le Père, l'Intellect en repos et l'Intellect Démiurge"¹¹³. "Il est donc clair que les âmes humaines, issues de l'Âme Universelle, sont consubstantielles aux Premiers Principes"¹¹⁴.

Plotinus agrees in *that* respect with the Gnostics who are combated by him, that the individual soul proceeds from the world soul. But he does not agree with them in the opinion that this divine soul belongs to man only and not to the heavens and the stars¹¹⁵. With respect to the divinity of the world there is a deep divergence between Gnosticism and Greek thinking.

The soul occupies an intermediate position between the intelligible and the sensible universe. According to Plotinus it still belongs to the divine even though it stands at the lowest edge of the spiritual world. This intermediate place of the soul in Plotinus can be compared with Origen's ideas about the three main classes of spiritual beings, viz. angels, man and demons. Man forms an intermediate class. His level is that of the soul. From the ethical point of view soul is an intermediate phase between good and evil, spirit and flesh¹¹⁶. In Plotinus the soul intermediates between the *noëta* and the *aisthëta*. It realizes the *noëton* in matter¹¹⁷. The uniting of the soul with matter is no evil nor a fall¹¹⁸. This belongs to the formative function of the soul to enlighten the darkness. The soul that belongs to the μέση τάξις, the intermediate order, has to direct itself as much as possible to the mind. "The movement towards the nous and around it is a concern of the soul. There is a logos which proceeds from the nous unto the soul and which makes the soul reasonable" (*En.* II, 9, 1). "The activities of the soul are twofold. The higher soul is mind but the

¹¹³) Festugière, *La Révélation d'H.T.* III, 60.

¹¹⁴) Ibidem.

¹¹⁵) Op. cit., 61.

¹¹⁶) H. Jonas, *Theologische Zeitschrift*, Basel, 1948, IV, 115.

¹¹⁷) C. J. de Vogel, *Greek Philosophy* III, par. 1372.

¹¹⁸) Op. cit., par. 1371.

other faculties are lower in a graduated manner. The lower soul always touches matter directly . . . Its lower part . . . is not cut off from the reasonable" (*En.* VI, 2, 22)¹¹⁹). The lower soul is the *eidolon* of the higher soul, which is related to the gnostic conception of the shadowy image of Sophia reflected in the primeval waters¹²⁰). Plotinus writes, "Thus the souls sojourn as it were in two elements as amphibians. They must live in turn sometimes above, sometimes underneath. Life there is for the souls who are able to dwell together with the mind; life here is more for the souls with an opposite disposition" (*En.* IV, 8, 4)¹²¹). The soul comes to enlightenment, not through its proper function, viz. discursive thinking, but through direct touch with the First Principle. "Thus the soul, when it is not enlightened, is not able to behold that One; but if it is enlightened, then it has what it sought for. And this is the true ultimate aim for the soul, namely, to touch that light and to behold it" (*En.* V, 3, 17)¹²²). The soul is "as it were the interpreter of that which proceeds from the intelligible sun to the earthly one just as (it is the interpreter) of what proceeds from the earthly sun to the intelligible one, viz. as far as the earthly sun reaches to the intelligible one via the soul" (*En.* IV, 3, 11).

The 4th treatise of the Jung Codex deals with the three races, pneumatics, psychics and hylics. These are three types of men, not three ways of being as they are in Neoplatonism. Nevertheless, they are mentioned in a similar way. The gnostic document says about the psychics (119, 21 sqq.), "The psychic race, because it is in the middle . . . is twofold (*hatre*) according to its destiny to the good or to the evil". Irenaeus mentions of the Gnostics¹²³), "The psychic, which they also call the right, is intermediate between the pneumatic and the material; it will go to that to which it is inclined". Therefore, the psychic race has a free will. It can choose between good and evil¹²⁴), but it is reckoned to belong to the right to which also the pneumatics appertain, just as in Plotinus the psychic occupies an intermediate place, but is counted among the hypostases of the intelligible universe opposite to matter. Plotinus estimates that man is prone to what is noble, but it depends upon his free choice as to whether or not he moves in that direction. In this respect man is *αὐτεξούσιος* (*En.* III, 2, 10). Just as in Plotinus the psyche can be influenced by the nous in a good way, so in Gnosticism the pneuma can help the psychic. Although the psychic ones cannot reach the height of the pleroma, nevertheless, an eternal rest has been prepared also for them in the eighth heaven, the porch of the highest sphere. The *Apocr. of John* says (67, 1 sqq.), "Those to whom that pneuma comes will live anyhow and they will escape evil . . . But when it has reached life,

¹¹⁹) Op. cit., par. 1372 b.

¹²⁰) G. Quispel, *Eranos* XXII, 213. It is not the soul itself which sinks into matter but it is its *eidolon*, its shadowy image, which comes into contact with corporeality. F. Cumont pointed out that this is a very old Pythagorean conception, *Lux Perpetua*, 354 and 413.

¹²¹) C. J. de Vogel, *Greek Philosophy* III, par. 1375 c.

¹²²) Op. cit., par. 1395 b.

¹²³) 6, 1; Sagnard, 177.

¹²⁴) Sagnard, 512.

this strong divine spirit, it strengthens the power – that is the psyche – and it does not aberrate into evil. With those, however, into whom the ἀντίμιμον πνεῦμα enters, the soul will be seduced by this one”. The ἀντίμιμον πνεῦμα is the ὄχημα or περιβλήμα in Neoplatonism and Hermetic doctrine. The νοῦς has the ψυχή as a vehicle and the ψυχή the πνεῦμα. This ὄχημα is also called ὑπηρέτης. The πνεῦμα reigns over that which is alive¹²⁵). According to the Neoplatonic way of thinking the subordinate principle has to orientate itself to the higher one and it is something evil when a principle is too closely bound to its “vehicle”.

VI. Matter

Now we arrive at the lowest level which according to Plotinus does not belong to being. This means that it is not real. This level of matter (ὕλη) is a μὴ ὄν, the substratum of that which is sensible. If the First Principle is called a light, then matter is the lack of every light. “The One is a centre around which is the first circle of light”, viz. the nous. The latter radiates into the wider circle of the psyche. “Outside the psyche there is not any light, but this outer circle needs the radiance from outside through lack of light of its own” (En. IV, 3, 17) ¹²⁶). It is intended that the darkness will not be without logos, but that it will also be penetrated by sense. “For the darkness, having no participation in the logos, was not permitted to it (the psyche) which immediately borders upon it (the darkness)” (En. IV, 3, 9)¹²⁷.

The soul has to influence corporeality to mould it. “Because it (the soul) lives in the logos, it gives also logos to the body, an image of the one itself possesses” (En. IV, 3, 10). The union with the body as such is no evil for the soul. But that may be the case when the soul averts itself from the mind and becomes too much attached to the body. “Thus we may justly call the ugliness of the soul a foreign addition, a turn to the body and matter” (En. I, 6, 5). This is what the soul risks now that it has been sent downward to “let the body share in being” (En. IV, 8, 2). It has to deliver itself from the desires “which fill it by a too narrow communion with the body” (En. I, 6, 5). Therefore, the soul must always orientate itself towards the mind.

The gnostic view of the relation between mind and matter is much more dualistic. There matter is an evil counter-power. “For matter is a cause of inutility”, says the 4th treatise (104, 4/5). “Error became strengthened. It elaborated its own matter (ὕλη), in emptiness, without knowing Truth”, so reads the Gospel of Truth (17, 14 sqq.). The hylics are opposed to the pneumatics and they go automatically to eternal perdition. Like the Neoplatonists the Gnostics connect matter and

¹²⁵) Festugière, *La Révélation d'H.T.*, III, 237.

¹²⁶) C. J. de Vogel, *Greek Philosophy*, III, par 1365 b.

¹²⁷) Op. cit., par. 1365 c.

darkness. "The hylic race is strange in every respect because they are in darkness" (4th tr. 119, 9/10).

There are, however, also some sayings of Plotinus that point to an evil influence of the body and to matter not being neuter stuff for the soul. Especially in his early writings Plotinus thought about matter in a dualistic way. In combating the Gnostics he gradually came to more optimistic thoughts about matter¹²⁸). There occur in Plotinus utterances which remind us of conceptions about the fall of the soul in corporeality, as they are to be found, among others, in Hermetic writings¹²⁹). Through corporeality desires and passions approach the soul as additions (προσθήκη) and the soul has to cleanse itself of them (En. IV, 7, 10)¹³⁰). A certain denial of the world and asceticism can be combined with it. "Greatness of soul is contempt of the earthly and wisdom is thinking with aversion to that which is low, and it raises the soul to that which is high" (En. I, 6, 6.) The soul ought to become ἀσώματος (*ibidem*). In ascending it should put off the garment that it has put on when descending (En. I, 6, 7). Plotinus quotes Plato who says that the journey to the spiritual world releases the soul from the fetters of corporeality (En. IV, 8, 1). When the *Apocryphon of John* speaks about the moulding of the material creature, the same metaphor is used. "Those are the fetters, that are the sepulchre of the formation of body which was put on man as a bond of matter" (55, 9). The ascetic practice of Gnosticism is well known. Although the evaluation of matter in Gnosticism is dualistic, and this is not the case in Neoplatonism, they approach one another sometimes in the conception of matter as a cause of evil.

In Middle Platonism Numenius in his judgment on matter is much more dualistic than Plotinus. Incarnation as such is an evil state. Plotinus did not agree with this dualism of Numenius¹³¹). The latter in his conception of the material universe stands more on the side of Gnosticism than on the side of Plotinus. "Numenius was very gnostic"¹³²).

VII. The Image

How do Plotinus and the Gnostics imagine the relation between different levels of reality? First of all, we meet here the theory of the εἰκόν. Lower things are a copy of archetypes from a higher universe. According to Plato the visible things are imitations (μίμημα) of the invisible universe. We read in Plotinus, "The primary is not the sensible. There is a form (εἶδος) in each thing, it is true, but that is an image (εἰκόν) of the being . . . The things yonder (the transcendent) must exist before the cosmos. They are not offprints of other things. They are aboriginal (ἀρχέτυπος), a reasonable being (νοῦ οὐσία)" (En. V, 9, 5). "All things

¹²⁸) Puech, *Sources de Plotin*, 184.

¹²⁹) Festugière, *La Révélation d'H.T.* 7. III, 65.

¹³⁰) C. J. de Vogel, *Greek Philosophy* III, par. 1377 b.

¹³¹) Dodds, *Sources de Plotin*, 21, 22.

¹³²) Dodds, *Op. cit.*, 185.

visible were in yonder transcendent world. Because there was nothing between them, by virtue of the fact that the being was in the vicinity of the low, there suddenly appeared, so to speak, in the creator an image and a similarity (ἰνδαλμα καὶ εἰκόν) of the original. Anyhow, the whole of this visible world originates from the transcendent and it is present above in a more beautiful being" (En. V, 8, 7)¹³³). The temporary is an image (εἰκόν) of an eternal model (παράδειγμα, En. III, 7, 1). In Middle Platonism παράδειγμα is a second principle of creation besides creator and matter.¹³⁴) Plotinus says in his polemics against the Gnostics that our universe is a beautiful copy and a good resemblance of the transcendent. "Coherent and clearly ordered and omnipresent is the abundance of life in it and this one refers back to an overwhelming wisdom. How could one fail to see the clear and glorious image of the spiritual gods in it? It is, however, false that our universe should be a non-resembling image. It lacks nothing which is available for a beautiful image, created by nature" (En. II, 9, 8). "This universe of ours is not purely mind and logos (reasonable form) like that yonder, but it only *participates* in mind and logos" (En. III, 2, 2.) It here concerns the idea of the μέθεξις, the participation of the sensible universe in the intelligible one.

The same wording, viz., that our universe is an image (εἰκόν), an imitation (μίμημα) of the higher world, occurs also in Gnosticism, but – and here the roads part, which is very important for the difference in appreciation of the created world between Neoplatonism and Gnosticism – the Neoplatonist will say, "Our universe is nothing more nor less than a good resemblance of the Ideas", while the Gnostic asserts, "Our universe is but a poor imitation of an extremely highly exalted and perfect heavenly model". Plotinus writes, "And so nobody is allowed to criticize our universe, nor to contend with the originator of his existence, and that already on account of the fact that the higher reality produced its image (ὁμοιον) according to the law of nature" (En. III, 2, 3).

The 4th treatise of the Jung Codex treats the so-called double τάξις, those to the right and those to the left who are one another's diametrical opposites. The former are the pneumatics who are saved; the latter are the hylics who go to perdition. Another designation is, "Those of the mind" (*napimeewe*) and "Those of the similarity" (*napitantn*, 4th tr. 91, 26/27). The second term is the Coptic equivalent of the Greek μιμεῖσθαι, εἰκάζειν, ὁμοιοῦν, precisely the terms which also Plotinus uses for the created universe. In gnostic writings it concerns two distinctive groups of men, but the gnostic terms include a depreciation of our created world. Sagnard (p. 70) says, "The Gnostics distinguish a divine perfect world, the *pleroma*, and an imperfect bad world, which is ours, made after the model of the first". According to the *Apocryphon of John* (49, 4) the earthly Adam who is a sinner,

¹³³) C. J. de Vogel, *Greek Philosophy*, III, par. 1369 a.

¹³⁴) H. Dörrie, *Sources de Plotin*, 206.

is a μίμησις – here the Greek loanword has been used – of the perfect heavenly aboriginal man. The 4th treatise says that the logos created “in shadows, images (Greek loanword εἶδωλον) and likenesses” (*tantr.* 77, 17). Here also Genesis 1 : 26 is in the background. G. Quispel has pointed to the influence of Jewish heterodoxy on the gnostic conceptions of creation¹³⁵). The depreciation of the reflection of Sophia, which is an inferior εἶδωλον when compared with the aboriginal model, seems rather to be Greek than Jewish¹³⁶). The gnostic *mythologoumenon* of the reflection of Sophia can be traced back to the Greek distinction between Psyche and her *Eidolon*¹³⁷). In *Poimandres* Anthropos falls in love with his reflection in the water and with his shadow upon the earth. A material εἶδωλον is the cause of the fall. Sin is a sort of narcissism¹³⁸).

According to the *Fourth Treatise* the creatures are in “a turning away, a division (*pōse*, μερίζειν), forgetfulness (or incapacity of knowledge) and ignorance” (77, 22-24). These “likenesses, idols, shadows and phantasies had been left by the logos and by the light” (4th tr. 78, 32-35). They are driven by “pride” and “ambition” (4th tr. 98, 9-10).

Now the antithesis between Plotinus and Gnosticism concerning this theory of the εἰκὼν is not always equally absolute. Sometimes one hears also from the Neoplatonist utterances pointing to the idea that the sensible world as a copy of the heavenly universe is only very defective. The term “idol” (εἶδωλον) which has a more depreciative sense, is used by Plotinus side by side with εἰκὼν. The body is an “idol” of the soul; “the individual soul cannot escape going to that separate body which according to will and character has become an image (idol, εἶδωλον) of it, the model (ἀρχέτυπον)” (*En.* IV, 3, 13). In the context it concerns a descension of the soul to the body and it is a happy circumstance that the soul can leave the body behind again in order to unite with the divine (*En.* IV, 3, 24). Puech says about the gnostic conceptions of the ἀντίτυπος,

“Un ἀντίτυπος est une ‘empreinte’, par rapport à un τύπος ayant valeur de παράδειγμα”¹³⁹).

The ἀντίτυποι belong to the transcendent metaphysical universe of the aeons¹⁴⁰). For Plotinus it is especially corporeality which bears the impress of an imperfect copy, “For, when one sees beauty of bodies, then it is forbidden to come too near to it; one has to be aware that they are only images (εἰκὼν), offprints (ἵχνος) and shadows (σκία), and one has to take refuge in that of which they are images” (*En.* I, 6, 8).

The soul still belongs to the divine being. In the regions underneath are only imitations (μίμημα). “Reasonable insight is primary, nature being last. Nature is a

¹³⁵) *Der gnostische Anthropos und die jüdische Tradition*, *Eranos Jahrbuch* XXII, a.o. 201.

¹³⁶) Cf. G. Quispel op. cit., 200, the *eidolon* of Sophia in the primeval water.

¹³⁷) Op. cit., 214.

¹³⁹) *Sources de Plotin*, 181.

¹³⁸) Festugière, *La Révélation d'H.T.*, III, 92.

¹⁴⁰) Op. cit., 182.

deceitful pseudo-image (ἵνδαλμα) of the higher intelligence and an utmost part of the soul. It has a remainder of logos in itself, just as the imprint in a deep layer of wax filters through at its lowest edge. At the top the image is distinct, at the bottom traces are faint" (En. IV, 4, 13)¹⁴¹. Life here, without God, is only a faint trace, an imitation (μιμούμενον) of life yonder (En. VI, 9, 9).

VIII. The Mixture

The defective earthly counterfeit is only a mixture of that which is high and that which is low, as compared to the transcendent world. Man is not purely mind, but he is a *compositum* of mind, soul and body. Plotinus says, "If there exists still something else besides the spiritual universe, which is exclusively logos, then that must be less. It cannot be purely logos, nor can it be purely matter, so it must be a mixture of both. And so it ends in a mixture of matter and rational form. It begins, however, with the soul that has the guidance of this mixture (μεμιγμένον)" (En. III, 2, 2). Only the transcendent is pure, "They are yonder in a beautiful mood. Things here are mixed (μέμικται). They are not mixed yonder" (En. V, 8, 7). "And so we may design the ugliness of the soul as a foreign admixture (μῆξις, κρᾶσις), an aptitude to the body and matter" (En. I, 6, 5). Here again it appears that corporeality and matter can be a source of evil in Neoplatonism. The First Principle is above that; it has no foreign admixture of body and soul (En. I, 6, 7).

The idea of a mixture also occurs in the *Kore Kosmou* (Hermetica). The soul, born in heaven, immortal by nature, has fallen in a mortal body. God forms the psyche as a mixture of his own breath, fire and several other substances. The conception of a mixture occurs in Plato's *Timaeus* (ἐμίσγεν)¹⁴². In *Poimandres* the fall of the soul is described as the alliance of Anthropos and Physis (ἐμίγησαν)¹⁴³.

Also in Gnosticism the term "mixed" is applied to the imperfect creature. "The first man was a formation of a mixed character and he was a mixed creature and he was a formation of those to the left and those to the right and he was a spiritual reason (pneumatic logos)" (4th tr. 106, 19). Thus man bears something of the pneumatic and something of the hylic within himself. Especially the middle group of the psychic is called "mixed" (*tôh, tahth*) (4th tr. 120, 21). The pneumatic seed is mixed with the psychic¹⁴⁴ in order to save the latter. This is a thought akin to that of Plotinus, that the soul can be drawn on high by directing itself to the nous. Living water is mixed (σύγκρασις) with troubled water, the pearl of light sinks down in the darkness of matter to save that which has fallen. This is the basis of the gnostic doctrine of salvation¹⁴⁵.

¹⁴¹) C. J. de Vogel, *Greek Philosophy*, III, par. 1376 d.

¹⁴²) 34 b 10; 35 a 3; 41 d 5. Festugière, *La Révélation d'H.T.*, III, 39-41.

¹⁴³) Op. cit., 92.

¹⁴⁴) Sagnard, 397.

¹⁴⁵) H. Jonas, *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist*, I, 104.

IX. *Partition*

Evil is also considered to exist as partition (μερισμός). For Plotinus the Supreme Being is one and indivisible. The lower we descend into that which exists, the more differentiation plays a part, which means a lower degree of being. H. Jonas says about the system of Origen,

“So entsteht die Hierarchie der Wesen. Aus der ursprünglichen Geister-Einheit wird durch Abfall Verschiedenheit . . . ; aus Schuld erst entsteht Vielheit im Sein-und in weiterer Folge; die Mannigfaltigkeit der Welt”.¹⁴⁶⁾

By an urge downward the spirits are split up (ἀπεμερίσθησαν)¹⁴⁷⁾. The reasonable is indivisible. The psychic occupies a middle position. “The soul is divisible (μεριστός), because it is in every part of that in which it is. It is indivisible, because it is entirely in that in which it is. It is something divine. This is the greatness and the power of the soul. It belongs to the natures which stand above the concrete things . . . It is divided and undivided at the same time. It remains within itself as a totality, but it is distributed to bodies through the divisibility which has corporeality in itself” (En. IV, 2, 1)¹⁴⁸⁾. When the soul permits itself to be influenced by the προσθήκαι, endeavour and desire, it is too much directed to the part, and it is consumed by it, instead of orienting itself toward the nous which links it with the One (En. IV, 7, 13). Time, with its earlier and later, with its discontinuity, is an inferior copy of eternity, of the absolute totality and continuity, as it is within the First Principle (En. III, 7, 11).

Coptic gnostic writings use in a similar context a word (pōse) that may be a translation of the Greek μερίζειν. The perfection of the Son of the Father is circumscribed as follows, “Also he was not bodily divided, nor was he divided into the names which he alone was” (4th tr. 66, 37-38). The creation by the logos was a “division” (pōse) (4th tr. 77, 21; 80, 17). Among men there are sick ones and healthy ones, evil ones and good ones. The former proceed from “passion and division” (4th tr. 116, 11/12). Those who are saved belong to “indivisibility” and “apathy” (4th tr. 116, 32-33). The Gospel of Truth (28, 32-29, 6) says about those who have lost the knowledge of God, “Thus they were in (a state of) unconsciousness concerning the Father whom they did not see. As long as this was (for them) fright and confusion, instability, inner discord and division, there were many delusions which worked through it”. In the *Epistle to Rheginos*^{148a)}, a gnostic writing

¹⁴⁶⁾ Theol. Zeitschrift, Basel, 1948, IV, 106.

¹⁴⁷⁾ Origen, *De Principiis* 97, 8; Jonas, Op. cit., 106.

¹⁴⁸⁾ C. J. de Vogel, *Greek Philosophy*, III, par. 1371 b.

^{148a)} The *Epistle to Rheginos* shows Valentinian influence, H. Ch. Puech and G. Quispel, *Vigiliae Christianae* VIII, 1954, p. 48 (*Les écrits gnostiques du codex Jung*); H. C. Puech, G. Quispel, W. C. van Unnik, *The Jung Codex*, p. 54. G. Quispel supposes that it is written by Valentinus himself, op. cit. p. 56. If it is true that the gnostic adversaries of Plotinus were Valentinians, it is the more remarkable that Valentinian writings, such as the *Fourth Treatise* and the *Epistle to Rheginos*, show a kinship of terminology with Plotinus' *Enneads*.

on the pneumatic resurrection, it reads, (ed. P. Labib, I, 49, 9-16) "Therefore do not think in part (μερικῶς), O Rheginos, neither conduct thyself according to this flesh for the sake of unity, but come away from the divisions (μερισμός) and the bonds, and already thou hast the resurrection". According to gnostic conceptions differentiation is a sin and so is the difference between man and woman. This difference will be annulled when the broken creation is restored and when the return to the Father takes place. Then the female will become male (*Gospel of Thomas* 99, 24/25; 4th tr. 132, 24).

Gnosticism and Neoplatonism have in common the consideration of unity as a higher level of being. Plurality is a transition to a lower level. It is progress to turn oneself from differentiation unto oneness.

X. The Demiurge

In connection with the relation between the intelligible and the sensible universe also the demiurge has to be mentioned. This is a god of a lower rank to which Neoplatonism as well as Gnosticism ascribes the creation of the sensible universe. According to Numenius, a representative of Middle Platonism, the First God is not active, ἀ-εργός. He is the father of the creator of the world, the demiurge¹⁴⁹. Middle Platonism goes back to Plato in its conceptions of the demiurge (*Tim.* 40, c). The following passage from Plato (*Tim.* 28, c, 3) is very often quoted during the 2nd century, τὸν μὲν οὖν ποιητὴν καὶ πατέρα τοῦδε τοῦ παντὸς εὐρεῖν τε ἔργον καὶ εὐρόντα εἰς πάντα ἀδύνατον λέγειν¹⁵⁰). For Numenius the second god is creator of the world (ποιητής) and he is νομοθέτης. He identifies him with the demiurge of Plato. He is a second νοῦς¹⁵¹). For Numenius the contemplations about the demiurge are also a theodicy,

"Le Dieu suprême, τὸ ἀγαθόν, ne peut avoir été en contact avec la matière. D'où la nécessité d'un second Dieu démiurge"¹⁵²).

In accordance with its entire conception of the world Neoplatonism considers the creator more favourably than Gnosticism does. In Greek thought the creator works according to a good model. In Gnosticism he is a being of doubtful character which originated from a fall within the intelligible universe. "That is why Plato" – Plotinus says – "lets the demiurge approve the finished work and with that he points to the beauty of the model, viz., the Idea and its glory" (*En.* V, 8, 8). According to Gnosticism, Sophia, the youngest member out of the pleroma, was excited by passion, when she separated from her partner¹⁵³). Her seeking after the Father was *hybris*. She moulds the demiurge out of the psychic element, he being

¹⁴⁹) Festugière, *La Révélation d'H.T.*, IV, 127, 128.

¹⁵⁰) *Op. cit.*, 94.

¹⁵¹) Dodds, *Sources de Plotin*, 12.

¹⁵²) Festugière, *La Révélation d'H.T.*, III, 43.

¹⁵³) *Ir. Adv. Haer.* I, 2, 2.

an imitation of the divine Father (Ir. I, 4, 2; 5, 1). He is creating without knowledge of the ideal aboriginal images (Ir. I, 5, 3). Thus he creates in imperfection the psycho-physical man (Ir. I, 5, 5), in whom, without his knowing it, the pneumatic seed is deposited (Ir. I, 5, 6).

Also in the conceptions of the demiurge, however, the antithesis between Plotinus and Gnosticism is less sharp than is often presented. Following Plato, Plotinus describes how the demiurge first makes the world soul and after that the individual souls. He cannot make the bodies of men, therefore he orders stellar souls who have to imitate him in that. In addition he makes the soul, but he shapes the souls of men in a mixing-vessel. This mixture is of the 2nd and 3rd order, less pure than the universal soul and susceptible to passions and desires (En. IV, 3, 7; 7, 10)¹⁵⁴). Also in Plotinus we find the formation of the *compositum* as a creation of a lower order. In another connection we have already met the terms "mixture" and "imitation", which have been applied here. On the other hand, we find in Gnosticism more favourable utterances about the demiurge than those which occur in the survey of Irenaeus about the Valentinians, or in that which is ascribed to Jaldabaoth as a demiurge in the *Apocryphon of John*. In Heracleon the logos causes the demiurge to create the world. Thus the world does not come into being out of the demiurge (ἀφ' οὗ) or by him (ὅφ' οὗ), but only through his intervention (δι' οὗ). In accordance with this the ἐργάτης (*refrhōb*) in the *Fourth Treatise* is the hand and the mouth of the logos or of the pneuma.^{154a}) "The logos brought him forth out of his thought according to the image of the Father of the All. That is why he has been beautifully made, in every apparition which belongs to him, because he belongs to all virtues and every glory, for he is also called father, god, worker and king . . . for the logos uses him as a hand, in order that he may create and work at that which is below, and he uses him as a mouth, in order that he may speak of that which will be prophesied" (4th tr. 100, 22-35). The demiurge is here not opposed to the Highest God, but he is encompassed in the latter's guidance of the world. In the system of Numenius of the "three divine principles", the first principle makes use of the second, and the second of the third (πρόσχησις); "the second exercises individual providence by διάνοια, discursive planning, ἐν προσχρήσει τοῦ τρίτου"¹⁵⁵). In Numenius the demiurge is on the level of the third divine principle, the second being the nous. It is possible to compare the way in which, according to the 4th treatise, the logos uses the demiurge, with the conception of the demiurge as ἐνέργεια of the νοῦς in Numenius¹⁵⁶). For Numenius and in

¹⁵⁴) C. J. de Vogel, *Greek Philosophy*, III, par. 1373 c; par. 1377 b.

^{154a}) According to G. Quispel the *Fourth Treatise* shows affinities with the conceptions of Heracleon, *Vigiliae Christianae* IX, 101; H. C. Puech, G. Quispel, W. C. van Unnik, *The Jung Codex*, 57.

¹⁵⁵) E. R. Dodds, *Sources de Plotin*, 14, 15.

¹⁵⁶) Op. cit., 19.

Gnosticism all this concerns an analogous problem, "il s'agit de décharger Dieu de la responsabilité du Mal"¹⁵⁷).

Also in the early writings of Plotinus (*En.* III, 9) the demiurge is the third divine principle. He belongs to the level of the psyche and he has discursive thinking as a characteristic (*διάνοια*)¹⁵⁸). In Gnosticism the demiurge is made by Sophia out of the psychic substance¹⁵⁹). Middle Platonism seeks for a higher cause above the demiurge.

"Man sah sich berechtigt, über den Demiurgos der Drei-Prinzipien-Lehre hinaus nach einer *causa generalis* zu suchen. Hiermit waren transzendierende Instanzen gemeint, die weit über dem innerweltlichen Demiurgos liegen"¹⁶⁰).

XI. *The Fall*

In Plotinus, as well as in Gnosticism, the thought occurs that evil originates because a lower part of creation makes itself independent from a higher principle and comes to an imitative creation. According to Plotinus the All is a ζῶον, an organism, which functions correctly when what is lower always directs itself to what is higher by taking it as an example, viz., the nous directs itself to the First Principle and the psyche to the nous, and corporeality to the psyche.

In *En.* III, 7, 11 Plotinus discusses the origin of time. In the beginning time was not there. In "being" there was nothing but rest. "Nature, however, was impudent. It wished to be its own master and to belong to itself alone. It had resolved to procure for itself more than it possessed. Thus it started to move, and so did time". In this way time made its appearance as a counterfeit of eternity. "There was, namely, a certain power, to wit the psyche, and it was not calm, but it was always aiming to transfer to something else what it had seen above". Now the soul begins to divide eternity, which is a closed totality, into parts. In this way the extensiveness in time originates, time with its earlier and later being a substitute for eternity. Something like an aboriginal fall takes place on the level of the psychic. Also in Gnosticism the demiurge belongs to the psychic sphere. Similar statements occur at the beginning of the 5th *Ennead* (*En.* V, 1, 1). "What has caused the souls to forget their Father, God? The origin of evil was their boldness (*τόλμα*), their entrance into the process of becoming, the first otherness, and also the wish to belong to themselves. They rejoiced in this self-determination (*αὐτεξούσιος*). They surrendered themselves abundantly to their self-movement. That is why they forget that they originated from above, just as children who are brought up abroad for a very long time, no longer know themselves and their father". The term *τόλμα* which is used here, also occurs in *Kore Kosmou* 24. The souls rebel against God.

¹⁵⁷) H. Ch. Puech, *Sources de Plotin*, 36, 37.

¹⁵⁸) Dodds, *Sources de Plotin*, 19.

¹⁵⁹) G. Quispel, *Gnosis als Weltreligion*, 82

¹⁶⁰) H. Dörrie, *Sources de Plotin*, 210.

"Et ces âmes, comme si elles avaient accompli un exploit, d'ores et déjà s'armaient d'une audace indiscrète (ou "d'une curiosité insolente", *περίεργον ὀπλιζοντο τόλμαν*)"¹⁶¹).

In the Hermetic writings it is the aboriginal sin of the soul in heaven that it wishes to investigate the work of the Father in an indecent way. This is a prototype of the fall of man on earth. In Gnosticism Sophia is longing to surpass the border which has been ordered to her. She wishes to receive a full knowledge of the essence of God. This gives the impression of being a transposition of human sin as audacity against God into the super-temporary universe. In the Hermetic writings it concerns also a theodicy. God is not the direct cause of sin but the latter proceeds from a false choice of the soul in heaven. Also Plato speaks of a wrong choice of the soul which chooses a body for itself after a first birth¹⁶²).

Compare, for the word *τόλμα*, also the remarks on *En. VI, 1, 1* of Festugière¹⁶³. He dates this passage in the first period of Plotinus when the latter had not yet taken a position against the Gnostics. For Plotinus the *πρώτη ἑτερότης* is a *τόλμα*¹⁶⁴. According to Origen, in the realm of the spiritual substances which are eternally around the divinity, a movement arises which is caused by their *αὐτεξούσιον*, *liberum arbitrium*. They become cool for the divine love. Their "*Ueberdruss*" (*κόρος*), "*Lässigkeit*" (*ἀμέλεια*) and *superbia* become the cause of their fall¹⁶⁵. Here we meet the same conception as in Plotinus: The origin of evil is the *αὐτεξουσία* of the psyche. As to the fall of Sophia the *Apocryphon of John* says, "Our fellow-sister, however, invented a thought out of herself, because she is an aeon. She wished to cause to appear the likeness out of herself through the thinking of the mind and the first knowledge, although the mind had not allowed it to her . . . Her work appeared, imperfect and ugly to see" (36, 16 sqq.). The demiurge, Jaldabaoth, who proceeds from her, acts in a similar way. He rises in revolt and causes himself to be called a god (43, 4). He says, "I am a jealous god, there is no one apart from me" (44, 14/15). He is called the self-sufficient (*αὐθάδης*) (46, 1). With this we are near the *αὐτεξουσία* of Plotinus. A thought which occurs often in gnostic writings is that sin consists of abandoning the First Principle and not remembering one's origin. The creatures "did not know the pleroma from which they originated and they did not know him who was the cause of their origin" (4th tr. 80, 26-29).

In Gnosticism *αὐθάδεια* is an utterance of the will and an origin of evil, which may be compared with *τὸ αὐτεξούσιον*, the *liberi arbitrii potestas*, occurring in the writings of Origen¹⁶⁶.

In Poimandres Anthropos has the sinful desire to create in his turn as well, *ἡβουλῆθη καὶ αὐτὸς δημιουργεῖν*, 10, 20¹⁶⁷).

¹⁶¹) Festugière, *La Révélation d'H.T.*, III, 83 sqq.

¹⁶²) Op. cit., 85.

¹⁶³) Op. cit., 94.

¹⁶⁴) Op. cit., 95; F. quotes *En. IV, 8, 5, 16*.

¹⁶⁵) H. Jonas, *Theologische Zeitschrift*, Basel, 1948, IV, 105.

¹⁶⁶) Op. cit., 109.

¹⁶⁷) Festugière, *La Révélation d'H.T.*, III, 87.

“Dans les spéculations gnostiques le thème ‘désir de créer’ a dû être considéré comme mauvais, il a dû figurer comme une sorte de péché originel . . . La notion d’un Démoniaque non seulement inférieur au Premier Dieu, mais encore mauvais et, comme tel, opposé au Dieu Suprême est courante dans les gnoses dualistes.”¹⁶⁸).

Plotinus says that according to the Gnostics the demiurge has created ἵνα τιμῶτο, δι’ ἀλαζονείαν καὶ τόλμαν (*En.* II, 9, 11, 21)¹⁶⁹. Thus Plotinus uses here for gnostic conceptions the term τόλμα which he himself also applies in connection with the insubordination of the souls.

XII. The Logos

The term λόγος has already been quoted more than once. This conception occurs of course everywhere in Hellenistic thought. In the Stoa the logos is a law of historical development, analogous to that one which determines the development of a germ, a λόγος σπερματικός¹⁷⁰). The logos is the expression for the order and the teleological direction of the universe¹⁷¹). For Zeno the logos is the active principle which shapes the inert matter, the latter being the passive principle. For Origen the Logos-Son is subordinate to the Father. He is a “mediator” between God and the world. Everything has been created by him. Through him knowledge of God is possible for man. This representation of the logos tallies with the Platonic world picture of those days¹⁷²). As to the logos in Philo, H. Lietzmann¹⁷³) says,

“Nicht direkt berührt die Höchste die unsaubere Materie, sondern er bedient sich der Vermittlung körperloser Kraftwesen, die Ideen genannt werden. Sie bilden in ihrer Gesamtheit eine intelligibele Welt . . . Diese Ideenwelt kann aber auch als eine Einheit begriffen werden. Sie ist der Logos Gottes, die Uridee schlechthin . . . Der Logos, der Schatten und das Abbild Gottes, sein schaffendes Organ, steht in der Mitte zwischen Gott und Welt: nicht ungeschaffen wie Gott aber auch nicht Geschöpf wie wir”.

For Philo the logos occurs on different levels, viz., as the Highest God, but also, in a lower degree, as a created god, bearer of the Ideas. As a second god he is a mediator in creation.

According to Plotinus, the logos is not a hypostasis: “There is a logos, which proceeds from the mind unto the soul, making the soul reasonable. The logos is not a new substance between the mind and the soul” (*En.* II, 9, 1)¹⁷⁴). “Just as the spoken word is related to the logos in the soul, so the soul is a logos, an utterance of the nous, the total activity of the nous, according to which it emits life from itself, in order to conduct something else to an independent existence” (*En.* V, 1, 3). The logos is the active side of the nous which is turned to the outside, the influence, exerted by the mind on a lower stratum. With this may be compared the fact that in the *Corpus Hermeticum* Nous, who is in the Hermetic writings God

¹⁶⁸) Op. cit. 88.

¹⁶⁹) Ibidem.

¹⁷⁰) Sagnard, 581.

¹⁷¹) Kittel, *Wörterbuch N.T.* IV, 83.

¹⁷²) H. Lietzmann, *Geschichte der alten Kirche* II, 318.

¹⁷³) Op. cit., I, 91 sqq.

¹⁷⁴) C. J. de Vogel, *Greek Philosophy*, III, par. 1370 c.

par excellence, has the logos as his son¹⁷⁵). Plotinus writes, "Thus the mind, by depositing a part of its own in matter, has brought the All into being, silently and without excitement. This part is the logos" – translated by Harder as *rationale Form* – "an effluence of the mind" (*En.* III, 2, 2). Here it concerns the influence of the mind on matter. In another connection Harder translates "logos" as *Weltplan*. It is the "emanation" (ἐκλαμψις) of mind and soul, thanks to which the universe is a well ordered whole in which even opposites harmoniously coöperate (*En.* III, 2, 16). Yea, the logos has made even the parts to be antagonizing and defective, and thus it has become the cause of strife. As a whole, however, the world-plan is a unity.

In Gnosticism the logos occurs as a hypostasis, it is true. As the couple, Logos-Life, it constitutes a part of the second tetrad¹⁷⁶). In the 4th treatise of the Jung Codex, however, the logos is not a separate hypostasis, but it is a function of the Father, through which He executes his creation, his world-plan and his salvation-"economy". The logos brings forth the aeons (4th tr. 60, 35). Thus the logos is the link between the Father and the next stratum of reality. A fixed salvation-planning (οἰκονομία) is the cause of its origin (4th tr. 77, 9/10). The imperfection of creation is encompassed in the planning of the logos as it was the case in Plotinus. "For the logos becomes a cause for those who originate. He added still more to them to cause embarrassment. Contemptibleness came instead of completion" (4th tr., 80, 11-15). The logos creates man, through the demiurge, with a lack of knowledge in order that he should receive knowledge that the exalted One exists (4th tr. 105, 18 sqq.). Thus, it is a well considered plan of the logos to create man without an innate knowledge of God which he could be proud of, but to create him as an imperfect one in order that he might seek for God and gradually get acquainted with him. Within this return and μετάνοια is the final aim of the logos (4th tr. 81, 20/21). "The logos did this work through those whom he had appointed in order to procure assistance for the confirmation of those who originated for his sake, thinking that he might implore the salvation-"economy" (οἰκονομία) for all those who came forth from him" (4th tr. 91, 10 sqq.). "The 'economy' of everything which is below has been committed to him" (4th tr. 95, 21). According to the *Gospel of Truth* it is the Father who conceives the logos (23, 18). Also the Jewish conception of "the Name" as a hypostasis of God is in the background, "and the Name of the Father is the Son" (38, 6)¹⁷⁷). But we also find in this document a way of thinking which is more akin to the 4th treatise. The logos proceeds into the All (23, 33). It confirms the All (24, 3). It causes the aeons to know the Father (24, 16). Thus the logos is the actualization of the Father's world plan which gives meaning to the whole creation. Sagnard gives the following definition of the logos as it occurs in Gnosticism, "*les rapports profonds d'harmonie au sein du monde*"¹⁷⁸).

¹⁷⁵) Festugière, *La Révélation d'H.T.*, III, 153.

¹⁷⁷) G. Quispel, *Vox Theologica* XXV, 49.

¹⁷⁸) Sagnard, 302 sqq.

¹⁷⁸) P. 302.

XIII. *Providence*

Here we touch the idea of providence (πρόνοια) of which Carl Schmidt has described clearly the difference between the views of Plotinus and Gnosticism¹⁷⁹. Plotinus, in his writings against the Gnostics, attacks their conception of providence (*En.* II, 9, 16). "And to deny that providence reaches into this world and to the separate things, what else is this than ungodliness? How can this be combined with their own assertions? They say, namely, that God takes care of them only". God is looking only to the elect. They are the pneumatics who will be saved and brought into the pleroma. The hylics go to perdition. It is this dualism which Plotinus rejects. As a matter of fact a dualism like this is taught in the *Gospel of Truth* (21, 25-37). "Those whose names He knew in advance, were called, at the end, like one who knows that it is he whose name has been spoken by the Father. For he whose name has not been pronounced is ignorant. Truly, how should a person be able to hear if his name has not been called? For he who remains ignorant until the end is a creature of oblivion and will be abolished with it". The idea of πρόνοια is linked with the salvation-work of the Son. "He is the God for those who are abandoned, the light for those for whom it is night, the love for those whom he loved, the πρόνοια for those for whom He is πρόνοια, the mind for those for whom He is mind, the power for those to whom He gives power, the gathering for those whom He gathers together unto Himself, the revelation for those who ask for Him . . ." (4th tr. 66, 19 sqq.). Against this Plotinus has the objection that this idea of πρόνοια is a plan of God which has been conceived before, which is accomplished afterwards in time, and which concerns the one but not the other.

Plotinus makes a distinction between two sorts of providence¹⁸⁰. There is a general providence, working indirectly through commandments and there is a direct providence, operating through contact. The former is the way in which the transcendent universal soul takes care of the universe as a whole; the latter is the care of individual bodies exerted by individual souls (*En.* IV, 8, 2). The First Principle does not make a project before which is realised afterwards. It does not operate according to premised consideration (λογισμός) (*En.* III, 2, 3). This point of view is opposed to Gnosticism and Christianity. The First Principle is a υπερόνησις, a superintelligence, a permanent vigilance which does not precede the temporary world but transcends it (*En.* VI, 8, 16)¹⁸¹. It surpasses providence and predestination (ἐπέκεινα προνοίας; ἐπέκεινα προαιρέσεως) (*En.* VI, 8, 17). "Providence in general is not a λογισμός θεοῦ, but it is according to the nous. The mind precedes it, not as though the mind should be earlier in respect of time, but in the sense that it proceeds from the mind and that, with respect to its being, the mind

¹⁷⁹) *Plotins Stellung zum Gnostizismus*, 74, 75.

¹⁸¹) *Op. cit.*, par. 1368.

¹⁸⁰) C. J. de Vogel, *Greek Philosophy* III, par. 1376.

is earlier than providence, it being the cause of the latter" (*En.* III, 2, 1). The background here is Plotinus' conception that the universe did not take its origin in time and that it also will not have an end, such as Gnosticism and Christianity believe, but that the universe is eternal. Providence means that there is an intelligible order above the sensible world in a metaphysical sense. This is a paradigm of which our universe is a copy.

According to Theiler¹⁸²⁾ the εἰμαρμένη is a consequence of the πρόνοια for Plotinus (*En.* III, 3, 5, 15, 24). Such a conception is not gnostic.

In the gnostic *Apocryphon of John* there is a passage where the idea of providence comes near to Plotinus' view. The πρόνοια is identified with ἔννοια, the first aeon which proceeds from the Father, which is still very near to Him and which is his thinking as a hypostasis. This is very similar to the standpoint of Plotinus, viz., that the πρόνοια is nothing else than the intelligible order of the mind as an archetype of the created universe. The apocryphon says (27, 5 sqq.), "His ἔννοια became operative and manifest. She trod before Him from the radiance of light, that is the power before the All, that became manifest, that is the perfect πρόνοια of the All . . . the image of the Invisible One . . . she knows (νοεῖν) Him. She is the first ἔννοια."

XIV. Emanation

The relation of the First Principle to that which proceeded from it, is also conceived as an emanation for which Plotinus uses the term περίλαμψις, irradiation around, and the gnostic texts, the word προβολή (= *emissio*). Plotinus describes the origin of the being as an egression from the One, πρόοδος, *processio*. "And the plurality of our earthly things, which have been brought forth by the One, would not exist if that which follows after the One in rank had not proceeded from Him" (*En.* IV, 8, 6). "For a tendency dwells in every being to bring forth what follows after him, and to unfold, as from seed, from an indivisible origin, to proceed to the goal of the sensible appearance. The highest level, however, remains in its own place, while it brings forth, as it were, that which is lower than itself out of an overwhelming power of which it bears the abundance in itself" (*En.* IV, 8, 6)¹⁸³⁾. The First Principle brings forth other things without lessening itself. It does not shed itself in them. It remains exalted above them. Emanation here does not mean pantheism. The term "bringing forth" is meant metaphorically. Here it concerns ontology, not the description of a process of origin one after an other in time. Creating is an eternal relation. Creation has not been intended consciously. It is not based on a determined plan of the creator, nor on a constraint put upon him from outside; but it is founded upon an inner necessity, just as fire must radiate warmth¹⁸⁴⁾.

¹⁸²⁾ *Sources de Plotin*, 85.

¹⁸⁴⁾ *Op. cit.*, par. 1365, par 1366.

¹⁸³⁾ C. J. de Vogel, *Greek Philosophy* III, par. 1365.

The First Principle is the centre of a circle from which light radiates (ἐκλαμψις). The circle of light next to it is the nous which in its turn beams forth into the following concentric circle of the psyche. The outer edge, the ὕλη, is darkness (En. IV, 3, 17; IV, 3, 9). "There is an emanation around (περίλαμψις), proceeding from the First Principle, itself remaining what it is, a beaming light like that of the sun, which proceeds from it . . . Everything which spreads a fragrance, emanates. There proceeds something from it which surrounds it. Everything which is next to it, enjoys it. Everything that is perfect brings forth something. The nous, as the second principle, is the greatest immediately after the first. The nous regards the first directly. It needs the first, not vice versa. The psyche in its turn is a function (logos) and the active power (ἐνέργεια) of the nous. The nous is a function of the First Principle. The logos of the soul is vague. It is an image of the nous" (En. V, 1, 6)¹⁸⁵. Creation depends upon the First Principle, not vice versa. There is no interdependency. The soul dances around the First Principle which it sees through the nous. "In this dance the soul sees the source of life (πηγή), and of the nous, the origin of being (ἀρχὴ ὄντος), the origin of every good, the root (ρίζα) of the soul" (En. VI, 9, 9)¹⁸⁶. Plotinus also uses the metaphor of the centre, the radii and the circumference of the circle. The circumference resembles the centre, because the radii which proceed to the circumference converge in that one point. The centre potentially contains the radii and the circumference and that is the reason why it is greater than these (En. VI, 8, 18)¹⁸⁷.

Another metaphor is that of the source and the rivers which flow out from it, and of the tree and the branches. "Imagine a source which has no other principle, and which gives itself to all rivers, without consuming itself completely in these rivers". "Or also it is something like the life of a huge tree which pervades the entire plant, the origin remaining what it was before. It does not dissipate itself all over the tree, being situated as it were in the root. This origin procured the entire life for the plant, but it remained itself absolute unity, without multiplicity" (En. III, 8, 10)¹⁸⁸.

In Gnosticism the aeons, the first circle around the origin of everything, are a προβολή, an emanation. The *Pistis Sophia* deals with "the total extension of all places of the great invisible one and of the three thrice powerful ones and the twenty four invisible ones and all their places and aeons and all their ranks, just as they are extended, which are the emanations of the great invisible one"¹⁸⁹. The 4th treatise says of the aeons which compose the pleroma of the Father, "The προβολή of the All which originated out of the being, did not come into being in the mood of a being cut off from one another and as a being set apart from the One who begot them, but their begetting resembles an extension, in which the Father extends Himself to those whom He wishes, in order that those who come

¹⁸⁵) Op. cit., par. 1366.

¹⁸⁷) Op. cit., par. 1397 b.

¹⁸⁹) Leisegang, *Die Gnosis*, 351.

¹⁸⁶) Op. cit., par. 1367.

¹⁸⁸) Op. cit., par. 1398 d.

forth from Him may belong to Him again; just as each separate aeon has been now divided into times, and times have been divided into years, and years have been divided into seasons, and seasons have been divided into months, and months into days, and days into hours, and hours into seconds" (4th tr. 73, 18-36). The coming into being of things created is here designed as a partition of the primeval source of all things, becoming more and more minute. The Coptic gnostic manuscript continues, "It is like water which flows out into seas and into bays and rivers and tributaries, just as a root is extended into trees and branches and fruits, just as a human body which is divided into things which cannot be divided further, into members of members, first members and last ones up to the smallest ones. So the aeons were poured out over the third fruit" (4th tr. 74, 6-20). Also Marcus Aurelius, a representative of the Stoa, uses this metaphor. Man is not a dead part, but a living member of the Whole. He is not a μέρος but a μέλος¹⁹⁰).

The Gnostics use the same images for the Primeval Father as Plotinus. He is the "root of the All" (4th tr. 51, 3/4). "He is like a root with a tree, branches and fruits" (4th tr. 51, 17-19). "He sowed within Himself a thought like a seed" (4th tr. 61, 8), from which the aeons originate. They are like "a blossom of a vineyard" which unfolds further (4th tr. 62, 9). The Father is "the source (πηγή) of the water of life, the light, full of purity. The fountain of the spirit flowed out from the living water of light and it equipped all aeons and all worlds in every way" (*Apocr. of John*, 26, 17 sqq.). The Son who bears the same names as the Father is called "the fountain (πηγή) who caused to flow out of himself, the root of them who have been planted" (4th tr. 66, 17, 18). The children of light are called "the fragrance of the Father" (*Gospel of Truth* 34, 1).

We meet here in Plotinus and in Gnosticism the conception of the total reality as a universal organism, a ζῶον (*En.* IV, 4, 32; IV, 4, 40).

XV. Eschatology

Just as everything originates from the One, it must also return to it again. The part must turn to the origin of the whole. The climax is the mystical enrapture in which the individual dissolves into the contemplation of the First Principle. Also this idea of the ἐπιστροφή, the change over and turning to that which is supreme, is a point of comparison between Plotinus and Gnosticism.

The pluriform being of the intelligible universe has to turn to the One, and the psyche in its turn to the nous, in order to ascend to the First Principle in this way. The soul has to abandon the additions, the passions and the desires. It has to purify itself from all these and it has to attain a higher insight which is fitting to its nature. Thus it returns to itself (*En.* IV, 7, 10)¹⁹¹). It has to reflect upon its own

¹⁹⁰) Marc. Aurel. VII, 13; VIII, 33, 34.

¹⁹¹) C. J. de Vogel, *Greek Philosophy* III, par. 1377 b.

being. Then it may take into consideration that it, as a universal soul, has created all living beings, resembling in that respect the Father who begot her. Also, in the same way our individual soul is of a greater value than everything which belongs to the body (*En.* V, 1, 2)¹⁹². "Now, because the soul is such a valuable and divine thing, be therefore convinced that you are able to come to God by such a means and ascend to Him; certainly you will not find Him far away, because that which is between is not much" (*En.* V, 1, 3)¹⁹³. Now the soul should conceive the nous which is next above it and of which it is an image. The soul reaches God via the nous. The soul is always around the First Principle, it is true, but we do not regard it, even though we should do so, as a choirman regards the conductor. "When we look upon Him, we have attained the goal, and we are allowed to rest. We encircle Him without a dissonance in a truly divine dance. And partaking in this dance the soul contemplates the fountain of life and the source of the mind, the primeval principle of being, the cause of the good, the root of the soul". "There the soul can rest, exempted from evil, because she has hastened to the place which is pure from all evil; there it thinks, there it is without passions. There for the first time is its true life. This is its origin and its destiny (*ἀρχή, τέλος*); origin because it originates from it, destiny, because the good is yonder. When it has arrived there, it becomes that which it was in essence" (*En.* VI, 9, 9)¹⁹⁴. H. Dörrie says,

"Der Platoniker bei Seneca, *Ep.* 65, 10 stellt 'das Gute' als *ἀρχή* und als *τέλος* über jenen Gott, der die Ideen denkt"¹⁹⁵.

Further we read with Plotinus, "When, however, that which is supreme comes to the soul, or better, becomes manifest, when the soul averts from everything which is around it . . . and comes to equality with it . . . and then sees it within itself – for there is nothing between them, they are no longer two, but they are together one – then it does feel the body no more . . . it does not call itself a being . . . but it comes to meet that which is present, and it contemplates that one and not itself . . . It should not like to exchange this for anything else . . ., because it knows that there is nothing better . . . and it cannot rise higher . . . At that moment it understands aright that it is this which it longed for" (*En.* VI, 7, 34)¹⁹⁶. In this connection the mysticism of Plotinus is spoken of. Nevertheless, this awareness of a direct presence of the First Principle is not an identification. There remains a difference between the First Principle and that which has been derived from it. This consciousness of the presence of the One is no longer thinking but contemplation (*θεῖα*). This contemplation is also love (*ἔρως*) for the One. "On the one hand the mind must have the faculty of thinking through which it sees what is within itself, on the other hand it must have what surpasses it, a spiritual view

¹⁹²) *Op. cit.*, par. 1381 a.

¹⁹³) *Op. cit.*, par. 1381 b.

¹⁹⁴) *Op. cit.*, par. 1400 a.

¹⁹⁵) *Sources de Plotin*, 219.

¹⁹⁶) C. J. de Vogel, *Greek Philosophy* III, par. 1400 b.

according to which only it also was able to see before and while seeing received mind later on as well. That contemplation belongs to a mind which has insight. When it gets out of its senses, drunken through a divine drink, then it becomes loving, having become an absolute unity and satiated unto sweet experiences" (En. VI, 7, 35)¹⁹⁷. "To be able to say something, discursive thinking has to catch the one after the other . . . In what way, however, will there be discursive thinking for that which is absolutely simple? No, there a reasonable touch is sufficient. When, however, one touches, he has at the moment of complete contact neither power nor opportunity to say anything, but one reflects upon it afterwards. One has to presume, however, that one has seen the First Principle at *that* moment at which the soul is suddenly filled with light, because that comes from Him, that is He Himself" (En. V, 3, 17)¹⁹⁸. The One is known through direct presence (παρουσία). The immediate contemplation is more than knowing. "The difficulty is that one cannot comprehend the One at all in the way of . . . pure thinking, but only through a presence which surpasses knowledge . . . Therefore the soul must surpass knowledge and it is not allowed to leave the unity, but one has to keep a distance from knowledge and from what is knowable, yea, from every other object of contemplation, even when it is beautiful, for all that is beautiful is later than the One . . . That is why Plato says that one cannot speak of it, nor write about it, but we do this only in order to bring someone from the conceivable to contemplation" (En. VI, 9, 4)¹⁹⁹. Contemplation is the highest happiness in which the soul attains rest (ἀνάπαυλα) (En. VI, 9, 8)²⁰⁰. According to the *Apocryphon of John* the soul reaches the rest (ἀνάπαυσις) of the aeons (68, 12). We find in the *Corpus Hermeticum* that intelligence comes to its rest (ἀνάπαυσις) when it has found that which it sought and when it has seen reality²⁰¹.

Plotinus says about transcending intelligence by contemplation, "Then he leaves behind every doctrine. As long as he is guided and sojourns in the mind, being founded in what is beautiful, he is still thinking; but now the wave of the mind carries him along as it were and at the crest of the wave he suddenly beholds the One – he does not see how – but the sight fills his eyes with light and through the light it does not allow anything else to become visible, but it is this light itself which he sees" (En. VI, 7, 36)²⁰².

According to Numenius, one of Plotinus' forerunners, the Good is beyond the grasp of common apprehension. Man sees something of it in a fugitive intuition. Just as a small fisher-boat suddenly shows itself to him between the waves, so "le Bien se présente a lui" (τὸ ἀγαθὸν ἐφιστάμενον)²⁰³; the highest knowledge is based more upon revelation than upon insight.

¹⁹⁷ Op. cit., par. 1389 a.

¹⁹⁸ Op. cit., par. 1395 b.

¹⁹⁹ Op. cit., par. 1399 a.

²⁰⁰ Op. cit., par. 1400 a.

²⁰¹ Festugière, *La Révélation d'H.T.*, IV, 207.

²⁰² C. J. de Vogel, *Greek Philosophy* III, par. 1400 c.

²⁰³ Festugière, *La Révélation d'H.T.*, IV, 128–130.

The contemplation of the One is the Supreme Good for man. He is adduced to seek it through love. When he meets it he is above reasonable knowledge. He is not able to formulate it in conceptions. He beholds it. The supreme goal is the return of the soul to its origin in this way, from multiplicity unto the absolute simple. Philo and Plotinus agree in this respect, "*Gott, der nicht erkennbare . . . wird im ekstatischen Aufschwung der Seele gesucht*"²⁰⁴).

With an eye to comparison, now follow similar thoughts from Gnosticism. The logos causes the psychics to lament their sickness, "in order that they should produce love and a search for Him who gives power, to heal them from their baseness" (4th tr. 99, 1-4). The change is that man turns away from evil and sets out to seek God. The aeons are made in such a mood that they do not possess the full knowledge of God from the beginning, in order that they should not exalt themselves against God, but seek Him. "That is why they had this alone, in order that they should seek Him, aware, it is true, *that* He is, but with the desire to find, *who* He is" (4th tr. 61, 25-28). The Son of the Father first leaves man in ignorance, but he is also "an originator of knowledge, for he has kept this knowledge unto the end in a hidden and incomprehensible wisdom, until the All is tired from seeking God, the Father whom nobody had found through his own wisdom and power" (4th tr. 126, 8-15).

The term ἐπιστροφή is used in Gnosticism of Sophia who had fallen out from the pleroma, who sets out to seek the Father by turning to the heavenly Christ. "Then another state arose within her, the turning unto Him who had made her alive" (Ir. I, 4, 1b)²⁰⁵). Sophia's conversion and search for God is a prototype of what happens in the world of man that has fallen from God. The logos enacts among the fallen ones "the return (here the Coptic uses *nouh*, the equivalent of ἐπιστροφή) which is also called *μετάνοια*" (4th tr. 81, 20). This is a "turning to the good" (4th tr. 81, 28/29). Just as it was the case with Plotinus, it is also formulated by the Gnostics, that man returns to his origin. Sometimes the wording reminds one of the Jewish conception of Adam as the universal Man²⁰⁶). Adam has left the heavenly paradise but he returns to it²⁰⁷). The Fourth Treatise says, "The perfect man has received knowledge in order that he should hastily return (*tssto*, another equivalent of ἐπιστροφή) to his absolute unity, to the place from which he comes, in order that he should return to the thinking, in gladness, of the place from which he is, to the place from which he came forth" (4th tr. 123, 4-10). This is the ἀποκατάστασις, the "restoration into the pleroma" (4th tr. 123, 2), the "return unto Him who was in the beginning" (4th tr. 123, 32/33).

Reading these lines one cannot avoid thinking of similar sayings of Origen. He also thinks of a return from multiplicity unto unity. For him the multiplication of

²⁰⁴) *Sources de Plotin*, 65.

²⁰⁵) Sagnard, 163.

²⁰⁶) G. Quispel, *Eranos* XXII, 227.

²⁰⁷) *Op. cit.*, 228.

the reasonable beings is an evil and the undoing of it is the final aim²⁰⁸). The course of the world-process is

“eine zunehmende Wiederannäherung an den Urzustand”²⁰⁹).

The end is a

“Wiederherstellung der ursprünglichen Einheit mit Gott”²¹⁰), ἀποκατάστασις εἰς τὴν ἀρχαίαν τᾶξιν”²¹¹). “Und das Dasein der Geister wird dasselbe sein wie ehemals, als sie noch nicht gesunken und abgefallen waren, so dass der Anfang dem Ende gleich ist und das Ende des Anfangs Masz”²¹²).

Origen even teaches the ἀποκατάστασις διαβόλου

“seine völlig gleichmachende Aufnahme in die neu hergestellte Geistereinheit”.

Everything which has a special character preserves the freedom to be restored to the original state, even when it has fallen into the utmost perversion²¹³).

True knowledge is given “in order that the end will become like the beginning has been” (4th tr. 127, 23/24); the ἀρχή and the τέλος coincide. Also according to Origen the world-process ends with

“die Aufhebung aller Unterschiede”.

Then

“die vollkommene Einheit des Anfangs”

has been attained.

“Das Ende ist in den Anfang zurückgekehrt”²¹⁴).

The Fourth Treatise says, “The completion is the return unto the three names of God and the Father with them” (128, 13/14), “the union with the Father in knowledge” (128, 18). Every differentiation is annulled “because the end will bring again the being of a sole one, the beginning (ἀρχή), the place where there is neither man nor woman, neither slave nor free man, neither circumcised nor uncircumcised, neither angel nor man, but the All in the All is Christ” (4th tr. 132, 21–28). This completion is a return to the pleroma, “an entering into the silent one, the place where there is no need of noise, neither that they know, nor that they think, nor that they be enlightened, but all is light” (4th tr. 124, 18–24). In the *Corpus Hermeticum* the nous returns to its divine origin. The elect become powers of God. These powers form together the divine being καὶ δυνάμεις γινόμενοι ἐν θεῷ γίνονται²¹⁵).

The consummation is a coming to the absolutely transcendent One “who surpasses every word and every voice and every thinking (νοῦς) and everything and silence” (4th tr. 129, 20–24). It is an arrival at the place of silence and rest (4th tr. 128,

²⁰⁸) H. Jonas, *Theologische Zeitschrift*, Basel, 1948, IV, 106.

²¹³) Op. cit., 111.

²⁰⁹) Op. cit., 112.

²¹¹) Op. cit., 118.

²¹⁴) Op. cit., 113.

²¹⁰) Op. cit., 116.

²¹²) Op. cit., 119.

²¹⁵) Festugière, *La Révélation d'H.T.* III, 152.

31/32). Compare with this what Festugière says about the *Corpus Hermeticum*²¹⁶), "Dieu est innommable et indicible. Mais on peut l'appeler par son nom dans le silence", σιωπῇ φωνούμενε". "X 5(115.12): Car la connaissance qu'on en prend est divin silence, inhibition de tous nos sens, ἡ γὰρ γνώσις αὐτοῦ καὶ θεία σιωπὴ ἐστὶ καὶ καταργία πασῶν τῶν αἰσθησέων".

In Hermetism the womb of rebirth is a spiritual wisdom in silence, "σοφία νοερὰ ἐν σιγῇ"²¹⁷). Also with Basilides this transcendence of *Gnosis* occurs. The highest knowledge of God surpasses every knowledge. The perfect redemption is the great ignorance, the *Agnosia*. When nobody tries to exceed the borders of nature, not even through knowledge, then the world has reached perfection²¹⁸). With this we are back again with Plotinus for whom the highest contact with the First Principle is a contemplation which surpasses knowledge (ὕπερ ἐπιστήμην) (*En.* VI, 9, 4).

XVI. Conclusion

When we survey the system of Plotinus and of the Gnostics great differences are manifest of course. Plotinus is a philosopher. He is concerned with the return to the One on the road of contemplation. In Gnosticism we meet a process of a more or less mythological character. A spiritual element has fallen from the Father and has been entangled in the material world. Receiving true knowledge is the road of salvation on which it is possible to return to its origin. The pneumatics come to their rest (ἀνάπαυσις) in the *pleroma*. Notwithstanding these differences in method, orientation and attitude, there are similarities which exceed the use of the same terms. For both Plotinus and Gnosticism it is a matter of salvation through knowledge.

Already Plato distinguished three elements in the soul, λογιστικόν, θυμοειδές and ἐπιθυμητικόν, pure knowledge, will and desire, having their centre respectively in head, breast and belly. With this correspond the three classes in his state, the rulers, the warriors and the craftsmen. In the state the thinking part of the nation, the philosophers, should be in a guiding position, because reason is the supreme part of man. For Plotinus the final destiny of man is to receive the true insight. "For human activity the aim consists of knowledge (γῶσις)" (*En.* III, 8, 7), "and their efforts are directed to knowledge". To behold the truly beautiful one must ascend and he has to leave behind perception (αἴσθησις) (*En.* I, 6, 4.) The souls have forgotten God, their Father. They must turn on their way and direct themselves to the first again. The soul has to be reminded of its high origin. It must come to knowledge (γνωστέον), this being its essence (*En.* V, 1, 1).

Also for Origen the highest aim is knowledge. H. Jonas says about the system of Origen,

"Uebergang zu höherer Ordnung ist zugleich Aufstieg in der Erkenntnis".²¹⁹)

²¹⁶) Op. cit., IV, 76.

²¹⁸) H. Leisegang, *Die Gnosis*, 238.

²¹⁷) Op. cit., IV, 201.

²¹⁹) H. Jonas, *Theologische Zeitschrift*, Basel, 1948, IV, 110.

The name itself already expresses, that also for Gnosticism, knowledge is the ultimate aim. The greatest evil is ignorance, the forgetting of the origin. As to the aeons who have forgotten the Father, "He will give them grace that they may come to know who He is, this being the knowledge of Himself" (4th tr. 61, 34-37). "They are judged worthy of knowing Him through his spirit – for He is One whose name cannot be pronounced, and He is incomprehensible – through his spirit, which is the track (ἵχνος) of the inquiry after Him. He gives them to them in order that they should think and speak of Him" (4th tr. 73, 1-8). "The knowledge of truth, however, is freedom which existed before ignorance came into being . . . it is something good and it is salvation . . . and it is an escape from the nature of slavery" (4th tr. 117, 28-35). The knowledge of God comes from God Himself. It is the destiny of his creation that they who are his come to know Him. The *Gospel of Truth* says, "The incapacity of knowledge did not arise close to the Father, although it came into existence in connection with Him. On the contrary, that which came into existence in Him was knowledge (*Gnosis*), which appeared in order that the incapacity of knowledge should be abolished and in order that the Father should be known" (18, 1-7).

From all this it appears that there is conformity in the wording of Plotinus and *Gnosis*. Conformity in terminology is also more or less conformity in the conceptions.

Of course, there is a principal difference between Plotinus and the Gnostics which becomes manifest in the former's treatise against the Gnostics.

"Hier kommt der Gegensatz gegen jeden Dualismus und jeden Pessimismus der Welterfassung scharf zum Ausdruck. Plotin ist Monist, das heisst er begreift das All als einen von einem Prinzip beherrschten Organismus; und er ist Optimist, das will sagen, dass ihm diese Welt als die beste unter allen möglichen erscheint"²²⁰).

Festugière; however, has rightly pointed out that Plotinus in his first period was much less anti-gnostic than he was in his later writings (a.o. *En.* V, 1). That is why his writings are comparable to those of Gnosticism. Only gradually did he become aware of his points of difference from Gnosticism²²¹).

Plotinus is preceded by Middle Platonism. About the middle of the second century Albinus writes his introduction to Plato. We meet a definite series of quotations from Plato in the authors of that period. Plato's influence maintained itself also during the first ages of our era. Plotinus got his teaching from the Platonist Ammonius Saccas in Alexandria. The *Corpus Hermeticum* which comes from the same town (early 3rd century), has points of contact with Platonism. Whoever wanted to be accepted had to speak the language of Platonism. The gnostic teachers Valentinus and Basilides have come into touch with Platonism, especially in Egypt, where it was studied so intensively in the circles of Hellenism. It is obvious that they used the philosophical terms of their day.

²²⁰) H. Lietzmann, *Geschichte der alten Kirche* III, 18.

²²¹) *La Révélation d'H.T.*, III, 94.

Plotinus develops further the system of Middle Platonism.

"Plotin verfügt über das Arsenal des Mittelplatonismus . . . Aber sein philosophisches $\gamma\eta\theta\omicron\varsigma$ ist neu"²²²).

In what is mentioned above there are repeated references to the conformity between Middle Platonism and Gnosticism. In connection herewith Puech says²²³),

"On trouve chez Numénios et chez les gnostiques le même enchaînement de problèmes. Plotin attaquant les gnostiques, attaque, semble-t-il, en même temps Numénios . . . Il apparaît que les gnostiques essayaient de répandre leur doctrine sous le couvert de commentaires de Platon. Il y a une sorte de chassé-croisé entre leur interprétation de Platon en fonction de leur doctrine et la transposition de leur doctrine en termes platoniciens".

Puech speaks of a

"gnose paienne"²²⁴).

In the same connection he mentions

"le quatrième traité du Codex Jung"

and

"l'influence que la gnose a pu exercer sur Numénios".

He continues,

"Je suis frappé des similitudes qu'offre l'attitude de Numénios avec celle des gnostiques"²²⁵).

The similarity of Numenius and Gnosticism is great indeed.

Plotinus as well as the Gnostics draw from the common well of Middle Platonism.

"Der Platonismus ist . . . Teil jener zur Gotterkenntnis drängenden Strömung, aus der Mysterienkulte und Gnosis, Pythagoreertum und Hermetismus genährt wurden"²²⁶).

Lietzmann writes,

"Schon bei Plutarch finden wir die meisten charakteristischen Kennzeichen dieses mittleren Platonismus (Albinos; Numenios): die gesteigerte Erhabenheit Gottes über diese Welt und ihre Körperlichkeit, und im Zusammenhang damit die Neigung zum phantasievollen Ausbau der bereits bei Plato vorhandenen Vorstellungen von dämonischen Mittelwesen, die eingehende Behandlung des Problems der göttlichen Vorsehung und der Gerechtigkeit Gottes, die Behauptung der Unsterblichkeit und Selbstverantwortlichkeit der Seele, die Lehre von ihrem Anteil am göttlichen Wesen, und gelegentlich auch Spuren eines mystischen Empfindens . . . Erst Origenes . . . setzt sich . . . ganz in den Besitz des um jene Zeit lebendigen und in steigender Mächtigkeit begriffenen Erbes"²²⁷).

In this enumeration of Lietzmann there is more than one theme that also occurs in the thought of the Gnostics. Once again the differences between Neoplatonism and Gnosis should not be neglected,

"So sehr der Platonismus zur esoterischen Wissenschaft wird: Nie war es seine Absicht, eine Geheimwissenschaft zu entwickeln oder Platons Lehre zur Offenbarung zu stempeln"²²⁸).

²²²) H. Dörrie, *Sources de Plotin*, 221.

²²³) Op. cit., 37.

²²⁴) Op. cit., 38.

²²⁵) Ibidem.

²²⁶) H. Dörrie, Op. cit., 196.

²²⁷) H. Lietzmann, *Geschichte der alten Kirche* II, 309.

²²⁸) H. Dörrie, *Sources de Plotin*, 197.

Neoplatonism is first of all philosophy. Gnosticism can be traced back to revelation. Sometimes, however, Neoplatonism approaches the idea of a revelation, especially when Plotinus speaks of the moment of the highest enlightenment. The contemplation of the First Principle is not the result of the capacity of human understanding, but it originates in a direct presence (*παρουσία*) of the One (cf. p. 35).

Gnosticism is a complex whole, a conglomeration which unites such divergent currents of thought as those of Judaism and the mystery religions. Doing so it has also made an ample use of the Platonic tradition. This can be demonstrated by comparing Neoplatonism and Gnosticism as contemporary phenomena. The one of them should not be traced back to the other. Both of them drew from the common source of Middle Platonism which also plays a rôle in the *Corpus Hermeticum*. A comparative study of a purely Platonistic thinker, such as Plotinus, and gnostic writings can make clear how far there existed an affinity between Neoplatonism and Gnosticism. Besides that there is still a remainder of material in Gnosticism which now can be more sharply delineated and which has another origin than the philosophy of Plato.

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