Linguistic Manifestations in the Trimorphic Protennoia and the Thunder: Perfect Mind
Linguistic Manifestations in the *Trimorphic Protennoia* and the *Thunder: Perfect Mind*

Analysed against the Background of Platonic and Stoic Dialectics

By

Tilde Bak Halvgaard
Contents

Preface  VII
Abbreviations  IX

1 When Silence Appears in Sounds  1
    The “Sethian” Tradition  5

2 Ancient Philosophy of Language  11
    Plato on Language  13
        The Cratylus—on Names  14
        The Platonic Method of Diairesis  17
    Stoic Dialectics  25
        The Things Which Signify (σημαίνοντα)  27
        What is Signified (σημαινόμενα)  35
    Conclusion  38

3 The Trimorphic Protennoia  41
    The Manuscript  41
    The Content of the Trimorphic Protennoia  45
        “I am”-Proclamations and Trim. Prot.’s Literary Parallels  49
    Linguistic Manifestation in the Trimorphic Protennoia  54
        ρρῷος, σῆμι and λόγος—Diversities of Translation  55
    First Part: The Discourse of Protennoia  61
    Second Part: On Fate  82
        Third Part: The Discourse of the Manifestation  89
    Conclusion  95

4 The Thunder: Perfect Mind  98
    The Manuscript  98
    The Content of the Thunder: Perfect Mind  100
        “I am”-Proclamations and Thund.’s Literary Parallels  106
        The Function of Paradox and Antithesis  110
    Linguistic Manifestation in the Thunder: Perfect Mind  112
        The First Linguistic Passage  113
        The Second Linguistic Passage  139
        The Knowledge of My Name  143
Judgment and Acquittal 146
The Third Linguistic Passage 148
Conclusion 163

Epilogue 166

Bibliography of Ancient Sources 171
Bibliography 173
Index of Ancient Sources 186
Index of Names and Subjects 190
Preface

This book is a revision of my dissertation which I defended at the University of Copenhagen in 2012. There are many people who, in one way or the other, have been part of this long process, and I wish to thank them all sincerely. First, I thank Prof. Troels Engberg-Pedersen for his hard but always excellent and constructive advice, encouragements and timely instructions. Without him this project had not been as well thought through. I also wish to thank Prof. Antti Marjanen from the University of Helsinki, who, on my visits to Helsinki, most patiently spent several days discussing details of my project. I am enormously grateful for all the effort he has put into this.

I thank the participants at the Helsinki Nag Hammadi Seminars for commenting on early drafts of my dissertation, especially Prof. Ismo Dunderberg, Ulla Tervahauta and Päivi Vähäkangas for their comments and very good company. At the same time, I send heartfelt thanks to all members of the Nordic Network of Nag Hammadi and Gnosticism (NNGN). The network was funded by NordForsk from 2004–2008, and directed by Prof. Einar Thomassen, Antti Marjanen and Nils Arne Pedersen. The annual seminars have provided an outstanding foundation for young scholars to grow and make good friends and colleagues across countries. I especially wish to thank Christian Bull, René Falkenberg, Lance Jenott, Hugo Lundhaug, and Tuomas Rasimus who have made our meetings unforgettable in many ways. I also thank Katrine Brix, Nanna Liv Olsen and Sara Møldrup Thejls for excellent Coptic sisterhood.

Moreover, I would like to thank Prof. Harold Attridge who kindly welcomed my family and me during our visit to Yale in 2009. Likewise, I thank Prof. Paul-Hubert Poirier for patiently answering the numerous questions that I had for him, when I participated in the NHGN seminar at Laval University in 2010. I am very grateful to Prof. Ingvild Sælid Gilhus and Prof. Karen L. King for their generous support and encouragements. I admire them deeply not only because of their excellent work but as role models for women in scholarship. I wish to thank Prof. John D. Turner sincerely for his seminal work on Sethian Gnosticism as well as his wife Elizabeth Sterns for their overwhelming hospitality in Lincoln. I also thank David Tibet who, many years ago, got me into Nag Hammadi Studies through his fantastic music. He remains a constant source of inspiration. I wish to express a very special thanks to Dylan Burns, who has spent hours reading and correcting my dissertation to minimize the otherwise huge amount of flaws of my very best school English. Similarly, I thank Sarah
Parkhouse for correcting the mistakes of the revised manuscript. Nevertheless, the remaining mistakes should still be ascribed to me.

The last and greatest thanks is for my husband Christian Bak Halvgaard who has patiently supported me in every possible way. I dedicate this book with gratitude and love to him and our three daughters Esther, Iris and Flora.
## Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BASP</td>
<td>Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BCNH.C</td>
<td>Bibliothèque copte de Nag Hammadi, section “Concordances”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BCNH.É</td>
<td>Bibliothèque copte de Nag Hammadi, section “Études”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BCNH.T</td>
<td>Bibliothèque copte de Nag Hammadi, section “Textes”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CNRS</td>
<td>Éditions du Centre Nationale de la Recherche Scientifique</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D.L.</td>
<td>Diogenes Laertius</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FDS</td>
<td>Die Fragmente zur Dialektik der Stoiker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HR</td>
<td>History of Religions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HTR</td>
<td>Harvard Theological Review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JSNTSup</td>
<td>Journal for the Study of the New Testament: Supplement Series</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LCL</td>
<td>Loeb Classical Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JAC</td>
<td>Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JHS</td>
<td>Journal of Hellenic Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LSJ</td>
<td>Liddell, Scott, Jones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mn</td>
<td>Mnemosyne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mus</td>
<td>Muséon: Revue d’études orientales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NHC</td>
<td>Nag Hammadi Codices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NHS</td>
<td>Nag Hammadi Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NHMS</td>
<td>Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NovT</td>
<td>Novum Testamentum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NRSV</td>
<td>New Revised Standard Version</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NTOA</td>
<td>Novum Testamentum et Orbis Antiquus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NTS</td>
<td>New Testament Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OrChr</td>
<td>Oriens christianus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phron</td>
<td>Phronesis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PTS</td>
<td>Patristische Texte und Studien</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REArm</td>
<td>Revue des études arméniennes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REg</td>
<td>Revue d’égyptologie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SBLSP</td>
<td>Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SBT</td>
<td>Studies in Biblical Theology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ScEs</td>
<td>Science et Esprit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>StOR</td>
<td>Studies in Oriental Religions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tem</td>
<td>Temenos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Full Name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teubner</td>
<td>Bibliotheca scriptorum graecorum et romanum teubneriana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TLZ</td>
<td>Theologische Literaturzeitung</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRAPA</td>
<td>Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TSAJ</td>
<td>Texte und Studien zum antiken Judentum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VC</td>
<td>Vigiliae Christianae</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 1

When Silence Appears in Sounds

Imagine a silent goddess appearing in the human world. What would be the most efficient mode of revelation for her? How would she make herself known comprehensibly enough to the human mind? Maybe she would take a physical form appealing to the visual perception of humans. In a variety of revelatory literature, it seems that descriptions of visual appearances of gods and goddesses are the ones preferred, be it as fire, the son of a carpenter, a rainbow, the sun, etc. However, in other texts we encounter descriptions of gods appealing to the human sense of hearing, typically expressed in a thundering voice from heaven, a howling or a whisper.

In two texts from the Nag Hammadi collection we meet highly elaborate examples of audible revelations: the Thunder: Perfect Mind (NHC VI,2) and the Trimorphic Protennoia (NHC XIII,1) both present their readers with descriptions of goddesses descending in auditive terms as Sound, Voice and Word. The interrelationship between these terms makes the revelations seem quite systematic, particularly when considered with regard to the designations of the goddesses as both Silence and Thought. They appear not only to be auditive revelations but also progressive manifestations of the divine Thought in terms that are associated with language-related speculations. Because, as we shall see, the descriptions of the divine silent Thought manifesting itself as sound, voice and word reflect philosophical discussions about the nature of words and names, utterances and language, as well as the relation between language and reality, which especially took place in Platonic and Stoic dialectics. Seen against this rather technical philosophical background the manifestations are not only auditive but also both phonetic and linguistic. Therefore, I suggest that we call this kind of descent a “linguistic manifestation”.

The aim of this book is to provide a nuanced understanding of the linguistic manifestations in the Trimorphic Protennoia (henceforth Trim. Prot.) and the Thunder: Perfect Mind (henceforth Thund.). This will be pursued by examining the philosophical background of the specific language-related vocabulary as it is presented in Platonic and Stoic philosophy of language.

The manifestation of the divine in linguistic terms is not an unknown feature in ancient literature. We see examples of this especially in Jewish and Christian sources, in which the Word (λόγος) or Voice of God (φωνὴ θεοῦ) is a frequent theme. Within the Nag Hammadi Codices, we also find several
examples of linguistic manifestations of divinity, as well as examples of use of language-related terminology in theological expositions.\footnote{See, for instance, the Gospel of Truth (NHC I,3 and XII,2); the Holy Book of the Great Invisible Spirit (Gospel of the Egyptians) (NHC III,2 and IV,2); the Discourse on the Eighth and the Ninth (NHC VI,6); and others.}

This study, however, is limited to dealing with Trim. Prot. and Thund., since they share more than one characteristic and these common traits separate them from other occurrences of what one might call a “theology of language”. Firstly, these two texts integrate language-related speculation into revelatory frameworks, which are shaped as monologues performed by divine female figures. Secondly, besides their linguistic manifestations, both texts articulate an aretalogical style by employing “I am”-proclamations (ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲧⲉ/ⲡⲉ) in the presentation of the female revealers. Thirdly, it seems that the figure of Epinoia plays an important role in the overall unfolding of both tractates. And fourthly, both texts are clearly inspired by Jewish Wisdom traditions concerning the Thought of the Father as the mediatrix of heaven and earth. These similarities are hard to disregard when one reads through the two texts, and they clearly offer an invitation of a comparative analysis. Finally, the texts are even connected codicologically, insofar as codex XIII, which contains Trim. Prot., had already in Antiquity been tucked inside the covers of codex VI in which Thund. is found.

Because of these various connections, I shall present a new approach for researching the two Nag Hammadi texts, which takes into consideration the similarities between them as well as their mutual expression of a “theology of language”.

With regard to Thund., a great extent of the research to date has been on the subject of explaining the nature and function of the many paradoxical self-proclamations of the female revealer. The paradoxes are mainly interpreted either as an expression of the transcendence of the female revealer or as a way of describing her universality. The paradoxes are generally understood in such a way that the female revealer is able either to contain within herself all these differences, and thus to simultaneously transcend them, or to contain them and thus be everything that the world represents. These interpretations of Thund.’s paradoxes are quite persuasive and have been accepted as the consensus among Nag Hammadi scholars. However, I find that Thund. itself concentrates significantly on language-related questions and employs concepts which belong to a somewhat technical, linguistic discussion in Greek philosophical sources that goes back to Plato and the Stoics. The use of these
concepts in *Thund*. not only shows that the author was interested in language-philosophical questions, but also that the author managed to integrate already existing thoughts on language into the text and made them the key to understanding one of its main concerns: the relation between language and reality.

With regard to *Trim. Prot.*, the research to date has mainly concentrated on its relation to the Gospel of John and the *Apocryphon of John* (*NHC* II,1; III,1; IV,1 and BG 8502, 2), and with good reason, since the former offers a clear parallel to the “I am”-proclamations and to the manifestation of God as Logos/Word. The latter provides a parallel to the structure of *Trim. Prot.*, in that the so-called Pronoia hymn found in the long recension of the *Apocryphon of John* presents a tripartite descent of the divine Thought, Pronoia. Moreover, this text also uses the aretological style, using “I am”-proclamations in the presentation of the revealer. However, the Pronoia hymn does not offer any parallel to the linguistic manifestation of Protennoia. The use of linguistic terminology in *Trim. Prot.* is thoroughgoing and apparently of fundamental importance. Aside from two articles by Paul-Hubert Poirier (2009) and Philippe Luisier (2006), this topic has not been treated in any detail. Therefore, in this study, it will be given careful attention, which is needed in order to grasp the extent of its significance for the overall interpretation of *Trim. Prot.*

Due to the relatively limited research into *Trim. Prot.* and *Thund.*, I shall discuss the relevant scholarship throughout the chapters of the book; nonetheless, at this point I should mention a few scholars upon whose work I rely greatly. Firstly, the work of Paul-Hubert Poirier is inevitable, since he has provided editions with thorough commentaries of both texts. The commentary on *Thund*. remains the only commentary to date, and the one on *Trim. Prot.* is the newest and most exhaustive of the three that are available. With regard to *Trim. Prot.*, I am inspired by the insights of John D. Turner, who has drawn attention to the parallel between the linguistic manifestation of Protennoia

---


4 The other two are Yvonne Janssens, “Le Codex XI de Nag Hammadi,” *Mus* 87 (1974): 341–413 and Yvonne Janssens, *La Prôtennoia trimorphe* (*NH XIII*,1) (BCNH.T 4; Québec: Université Laval, 1974) (of these two publications by Janssens, the first one is similar to but also expanded in the second one), and Gesine Schenke, *Die Dreigestaltige Protennoia* (*Nag-Hammadi-Codex XIII*) (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1984).
and the Stoic material as it is presented by Diogenes Laertius. Furthermore, articles by Anne McGuire and Bentley Layton will play a key role in the analysis of Thund.

As the two Nag Hammadi texts will be analysed against the background of central issues in ancient philosophy of language, the first of the three main chapters deals with ancient philosophy of language. Beginning with the Platonic dialogue Cratylus, which provides the earliest instance of a language-related speculation, we shall see how Socrates, despite his naturalistic approach to the question of the correctness of names, also acknowledges that names do not necessarily capture the true essence of the thing they name. In order to grasp the true essence of a thing, one must look to the thing itself. The insufficiency of names was a problem which was solved by a method of definition by division, that is, the method of diairesis, known from passages in the Phaedrus and the Sophist. Several important features of this method will eventually become decisive for a full understanding of Thund. Next, I shall examine the major issues of Stoic dialectics. Through a reading of a central passage in Diogenes Laertius, it will become apparent how the different levels of a verbal expression go from inarticulate sound/voice (φωνή) through articulate but unintelligible speech (λέξις) and ending in the fully articulate and intelligible word/sentence (λόγος). Against this background, the two Nag Hammadi texts will be analysed.

Chapters three and four provide a thoroughgoing analysis of selected passages from Trim. Prot. and Thund. The passages are chosen due to their linguistic focus. I will argue that the specific progressive sequence of linguistic manifestations found in these texts is comparable to the Stoic sequence of a verbal expression, but that the authors, in addition, have turned the semantic levels of this sequence “upside-down”. Whereas in the Stoic theory it is the end point of the process, namely, Word/Discourse (λόγος), that has the highest value; whereas in the two Nag Hammadi treatises it is the beginning of the process (in fact, Silence) that has highest value. It is important to emphasize that I do not suggest a Stoic reading of these texts, but rather that we acknowledge the Stoic theory as an underlying, dialectic matrix in them. In addition to this,

I shall suggest a motivation for the linguistic nature of Protennoia’s descent in Trim. Prot.

In chapter four, we shall see how the author of Thund. expands his or her use of language philosophical vocabulary to draw also on Platonic language-related topics, such as the notion of the name and that of diairesis. This is the outset for a new proposal on how to understand the function of paradox in Thund. I shall argue that the opposite categories are not only to be understood as paradoxes, but also as diairetic descriptions of the female revealer.

First, however, we must take a brief look at the “Sethian” tradition in order to clarify where the present study is situated in the complex landscape of Gnostic studies.

The “Sethian” Tradition

As one of the two primary texts of this study, Trim. Prot., has been categorized as belonging to the “Sethian” tradition, it is necessary to briefly touch upon the scholarly discussions of the very term “Sethian”/“Sethianism”. Nag Hammadi research has seen two main positions here: one represented by Hans-Martin Schenke, who argues for the use of the term, and the other, represented by Frederik Wisse, who is against it. In between is a golden mean on which the present study is premised.

It is clear from the sources at our disposal that no distinct group of people in Antiquity called themselves “Sethians”. Even though we do find a reference to “the Sethians” in the so-called Berliner Koptische Buch (P20915), the term “Sethian” seems to derive from the heresiological writings since the first
witness to the term is found in Hippolytus’ *Refutatio*. The term was brought back to life by modern scholarship at least since the discovery of the Nag Hammadi codices. However, Irenaeus, who was the first to describe a system similar to the one we find in the “Sethian” revelation *par excellence*, the *Apocryphon of John*, used the term “Barbelo-Gnostic” as a designation for this kind of thinking. So it seems that even in Antiquity the opponents of (the users of) texts like the *Apocryphon of John* and *Trim. Prot.* did not agree on any one designation for them. This suggests either that there was no distinct group of “Sethians” or as John Turner writes:

... these church fathers were unaware of their precise identity. It may be that they merely derived these designations—as a modern reader might do—from the contents of their writings.

In the 1974 article of Schenke “Das sethianische System nach Nag-Hammadi-Handschriften”, which was followed by “The Phenomenon of Gnostic Sethianism” (1981), it was suggested that a group of fourteen texts from the Nag Hammadi Library had so many themes and mythologoumena in common that they should be grouped together. These are: three copies of the *Apocryphon of John* (NHC II,1; III,1; IV,1), the *Hypostasis of the Archons* (II,4), two copies of the *Gospel of the Egyptians* (II,2; IV,2), the *Apocalypse of Adam* (V,5), the *Three Steles of Seth* (VII,5), *Zostrianos* (VIII,1), *Melchizedek* (IX,1), the *Thought of Norea* (IX,2), *Marsanes* (X), *Allogenes* (XI,3) and *Trim. Prot.* (XIII,1). To this group Schenke added the version of the *Apocryphon of John* from the Berlin Gnostic Codex 8502, 2, as well as the parallel in Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 1.29, the

---


11 Irenaeus. *Adv. haer.* 1.29 (Norbert Brox, ed. *Adversus Haereses 1*. Fontes Christiani. Freiburg: Herder, 1993). It is, however, debated whether Irenaeus himself actually used the term or it is a later addition.


---
Untitled Treatise of Codex Brucianus, and the descriptions of the “Gnostics”, “Sethians” and “Archontics” of Epiphanius, Panarion. Schenke called this group of texts “Sethian” and thus revived the term.

The rationale behind the grouping of the fourteen Nag Hammadi texts, plus a few others, lies in their sharing seven distinct themes: (1) the self-designation of the “we” in the texts as the “seed of Seth” or the like, and (2) the reference to Seth as a divine saviour figure. (3) The heavenly father of Seth: Adamas/Pigeradamas; (4) the notion of the Four Lights/Aeons of Autogenes: Harmozel, Oroiael, Daveithai and Eleleth; (5) the divine triad consisting of the Father/the Invisible Spirit, the Mother/Barbelo and the Son/Autogenes. (6) We also encounter the demiurge, the ruler of the Underworld: Yaldabaoth, as well as (7) the notion of a certain Weltzeitalterlehre. Apart from these seven themes Schenke notes, (8) that some of the Sethian texts were secondarily Christianized.

John Turner counts fourteen features which characterize the Sethian text corpus. Besides the eight just mentioned he points to: the triadic division of Barbelo; a special prayer; a specific deployment of negative theology; a specific philosophical terminology; a triad or tetrad of “ministers” of the Four Lights: Gamaliel, Gabriel, Samblo and Abrasax. Finally, he adds the baptismal rite of the Five Seals. Although Turner is completely aware of the uncertainty that the term “Sethian” was used as a self-designation by a specific social group, he firmly upholds the term by writing a “Hypothetical History of Gnostic Sethianism”. Turner’s history falls into six phases of development by interaction with Christianity and Platonism, all explaining the diversity among the Sethian texts. His proposal is very helpful in showing connections between texts and traditions which are otherwise difficult to decode, but it still remains

---

13 Cf. Epiphanius. Pan. sect. 11,26 and 111,39 and 40 (Williams, Panarion). Turner, Sethian Gnosticism and the Platonic Tradition, 61 adds the report of the “Sethoitae” by Pseudo-Tertullian Adversus omnes haereses 2. In 1986, Bentley Layton suggested that also the Thunder: Perfect Mind is affiliated to the Sethian tradition. His proposal is discussed in the chapter on Thund..

14 The following enumeration is based on the description of the Sethian characteristics in Hans-Martin Schenke “Das sethianische System nach Nag-Hammadi-Handschriften,” in Studia Coptica (ed. Peter Nagel; Berliner Byzantinistische Arbeiten 45; Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1974), 166–171.

15 The self-designations in the texts vary between “the unshakable race”, “great race” and others, cf. Turner, Sethian Gnosticism and the Platonic Tradition, 58.

16 In some texts the name of the demiurge is spelled Jaltabaoth, as we see in Trim. Prot.

17 Turner, Sethian Gnosticism and the Platonic Tradition, 63–64.

18 Ibid.: 255–301.
a hypothesis (cf. the very title of that section of his book). There are indeed great diversities among the texts, both because not all of the “Sethian” themes outlined above are found in every one of the texts, and also because of different employment of similar mythologoumena. Turner’s hypothetical history has been found insufficiently persuasive. Nevertheless, this history provides us with an understanding of a development of texts during a period of two hundred years; texts that are united by many themes but also differ especially in relation to the influence from contemporary philosophy.

However, does it make sense to take over a seemingly heresiological term, which is actually only one among many, and use it as a collective designation for such a varied group of texts? Not necessarily, which is also why the category of “Sethianism” has not gone unchallenged. Frederik Wisse presented a counterstrike already in 1972 to the classification of the Nag Hammadi Library as a “Sethian” library by Jean Doresse. He questioned the very use of the term “Sethian” in both ancient and modern literature and adduced a number of arguments in the article from 1981 “Stalking Those Elusive Sethians”, a tough critique of Schenke’s “Sethian” system. Wisse argues polemically that: “His [Schenke’s] “Sethian” books are the best proof that there never was a “Sethian” theological system”. Moreover, the themes isolated by Schenke were just “free-floating” theologoumena and mythologoumena used by “individuals with a similar attitude towards this world, otherworldly vision and ascetic lifestyle”. Thus, he pleads against the assumption that there was a sectarian group of “Sethians” behind these texts.

---


More recently, Karen King has convincingly shown that the term “Sethianism”, like the category “Gnosticism”, should be used with the utmost transparency:

Although categorization is an important hermeneutical tool, it is necessary to articulate clearly the purposes of such classification, and above all to note the provisional status of all categorization.24

Nevertheless, she also sees “Sethianism” as a “useful subcategory of the Nag Hammadi materials”.25 King hereby positions herself on a golden mean that leans towards Schenke’s position, a mean which Michael Williams also supports, although from a slightly different perspective. In his investigation of the social reality behind the self-designation “the immovable race”, he finds problems both in Wisse’s rejection of any sort of “Sethian” community and also in Schenke’s identification of the “Sethian” texts as the product of a single social group.26

In 2009, Tuomas Rasimus published his book Paradise Reconsidered in Gnostic Mythmaking. In this, he redefines and renames Schenke’s category of “Sethianism” to the somewhat broader term: “Classic Gnostic”. The texts which were identified by Schenke as “Sethian” correspond to Rasimus’ “Sethite” and “Barbeloite” sources, to which he adds “Ophite” sources. Thus, three types of mythology constitute Rasimus’ “Classic Gnostic” tradition. He admits that this category is artificial, but also claims that it is “a convenient reference tool for a typological constructed category.”27 He manages to arrange this rather diverse group of texts in a figure, thereby visualizing the points that all these texts have in common.28 I find this new category and model both convenient and quite convincing, in that it maps out both the differences and the similarities between its subcategories. In this way we are given a clear idea of the interrelationship between the “Ophite”, “Sethite”, and “Barbeloite” mythologies.29

24 King, *What is Gnosticism?*, 165.
25 Ibid.: 156.
Throughout this study, I shall employ the “Classic Gnostic” category as well as its subcategories without quotation marks. I use them as hermeneutical tools to categorize thematically related texts without claiming that they were produced and read by one sociologically definable group. With Rasimus, I classify *Trim. Prot.* within the Barbeloite tradition and I will also suggest that *Thund.* has close affinities with both the Ophite and Barbeloite traditions. It follows from this that I retain the use of the term Gnostic to be able to describe central epistemological features in a relatively large group of Early Christian texts. I will try to avoid the category Gnosticism since it contributes to a simplistic approach to the understanding of Early Christianity, which is characterized by a reduction of different mindsets and modes of expression as belonging to either “orthodoxy” or “heresy”. However, the topic of this book does not require further engagement in this ongoing debate, so I shall leave it here and turn to linguistic manifestations instead.
CHAPTER 2

Ancient Philosophy of Language

The linguistic manifestations of the goddesses in *Trim. Prot.* and *Thund.* are based upon a vocabulary that has roots in a philosophical discourse situated centuries before the composition of the Nag Hammadi codices.1 The specific vocabulary concentrates around discussions on the usefulness of language in general and the function of the single parts of language in particular. In Plato, we find that one of the most absorbing questions is on the nature of names: how does a name relate to the thing it names? Are they naturally attached to one another or is the relationship between them based upon pure convention? These questions which are discussed in the *Cratylus* reflect the fundamental interest in the relation between language and reality which is shared by Plato and the Stoics, although approached from different angles. This interest, I believe, is also found at the core of *Trim. Prot.* and especially *Thund.*

This chapter deals with ancient philosophy of language as it is expressed in Platonic and Stoic dialectics. It will provide a basis for the analysis of *Trim. Prot.* and *Thund.* in the proceeding chapters, where it will be shown how these texts are fruitfully understood against the rather technical language philosophical discussions.

Scholarship often compares Gnostic literature with Platonism, although Platonic *dialectics* is rarely involved. Meanwhile, as opposed to the use of Platonism in general, scholars have only seldom used Stoicism in the analysis of Gnostic texts. To my knowledge I am only preceded by P. Perkins, with her article from 1980,2 T. Onuki, who published the monograph *Gnosis und Stoa* in 1989,3 and more recently by the 2010 volume *Stoicism in Early Christianity*, edited by T. Rasimus, T. Engberg-Pedersen and I. Dunderberg.4

---

1 For a discussion of the dating of the Nag Hammadi manuscripts, see chapters three and four.
3 Takashi Onuki, *Gnosis und Stoa* (NTOA 9; Göttingen: Universitätsverlag Göttingen/ Freiburg: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1989). Onuki argues that the *Apocryphon of John* is very much aware of, but polemicizes against, Stoic philosophy especially with regard to cosmology, astronomy, and providence and fate.
4 Tuomas Rasimus, Troels Engberg-Pedersen and Ismo Dunderberg, eds., *Stoicism in Early Christianity* (Peabody Mass.: Hendrickson, 2010). This volume presents 13 stimulating articles, which deal with Stoicism in relation to Early Christianity. What is of special interest for the
To begin with, it is important to stress two points: (1) that there was no concept of philosophy of language in antiquity, so the term is employed here as a matter of convenience; and (2) that it is by no means my intention to provide either a Platonic or a Stoic “reading” of Trim. Prot. and Thund. These texts are part of a literary milieu that was not only influenced by Greek philosophy, but which is also deeply involved in the biblical tradition, both Jewish and Christian. Thus it is impossible to reduce the source of inspiration of the texts to one single tradition. What is possible though, is to show how the authors of the two Nag Hammadi texts employ a vocabulary which derives from ancient philosophy of language. It is not the intention of this study to prove that these authors had direct access either to the Platonic dialogues or to Stoic sources, but to show how our two Nag Hammadi texts may be fruitfully analysed against the background of the dialectics of these two philosophical traditions. From wherever the Nag Hammadi authors have learned about the technical language-related vocabulary, they have found it useful in their descriptions of divine manifestations.

As will become apparent throughout the analysis of Trim. Prot. and Thund., the philosophy of language has not been used on a “one-to-one” scale in these texts, but rather to express wholly different issues. Nevertheless, the theories of language are certainly present in the two Nag Hammadi texts, although mostly as an underlying matrix that gives voice to subjects which the ancient writers of the two Nag Hammadi texts might have found difficult to express otherwise. My aim is to show how these writers have used the theories of language (in whatever form they might have known them) as what one might call literary tools.

To meet this purpose it is necessary to clarify how the ancient theories of language were originally framed. As it is not the subject matter of this study, I shall not present a thoroughgoing survey of ancient philosophy of language. That would require an entire study of its own. Instead, with regard to Platonism

---


present study are the last four articles in the volume, which deal with Classic Gnostic and Valentinian sources. The idea of introducing Stoicism in the study of the New Testament, Paul in particular, was already established by Troels Engberg-Pedersen in his book Paul and the Stoics (Louisville Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000).
I wish to focus on two topics in the Platonic dialogues: (1) the correctness of names; and (2) the method of *diairesis*.

With regard to the Stoic material I shall discuss two distinct parts of their dialectic: περὶ φωνῆς (on voice) and περὶ λεκτοῦ (on *lekton*), although the former necessitates slightly more detail than the latter since it is crucial to the proceeding analysis of *Trim. Prot.* and *Thund*. Furthermore, the relation between the *Cratylus* and Stoic dialectics will be touched upon briefly.

Let us begin with Plato and then move chronologically to the Stoics.

**Plato on Language**

To begin with, it is necessary to emphasize that there is and was no such thing as a "Platonic Theory of Language". Although Plato let the characters in his dialogues reflect on what we call "language" today, no fixed theory of language exists from Plato's hand. Nonetheless, as just mentioned, two language-related topics which figure in a few Platonic dialogues are of special interest to the present study: (1) the discussion of the correctness of names, which is attested in the *Cratylus*; and (2) the method of definition by division (*diairesis*/*διάιρεσις*), which is found in several dialogues, primarily the *Phaedrus*, the *Sophist* and the *Statesman*.

We shall begin with the *Cratylus* and draw an outline of Socrates' position on the correctness of names within this dialogue.⁶

---

The Cratylus—on Names
Among the sources at our disposition, Plato’s *Cratylus* is one of the first texts from antiquity that deals with language-theoretical questions. It marks the beginning of a long tradition of language-related speculations within the field of philosophy, a tradition which is echoed in the religious literature of later times. As pointed out already, Plato did not operate with a concept of “language” as such. The topic was rather the ability of speech (λόγος), that is, the actual act of saying something. In the same manner, Plato did not use the concept of “words” either but rather of “names” as designators for things and concepts.7

The *Cratylus* is a dialogue on the correctness of the “names” of which our speech consists. At the beginning of the dialogue Socrates is invited to clarify the discussion between his pupil Hermogenes and Cratylus, another philosopher. The discussion between them deals with the question of whether the name of an item is a “natural” (φυσική) one or whether it has been given by pure convention (νόμος).

Throughout the discussion, at first between Socrates and Hermogenes (first part: 383a–391b; second part: 391b–420e; third part: 421a–427d) and next between Socrates and Cratylus (427d–440e),8 it becomes clear that the position of Socrates lies between that of Hermogenes and Cratylus.9

To begin with, Hermogenes complains about Cratylus’ conclusion that “Hermogenes” is not his real name though everyone uses it. Underlying this.

---

8 I follow the division of the different parts of the dialogue made in Lund Jørgensen and Gorm Tørtzen, “Kratylos,” in *Platon 1*. (ed. Mejer and Gorm Torzen), 243. This division is supported by Van den Berg, *Proclus’ Commentary on the Cratylus in Context*, 2–8. The outline by Sedley, *Plato’s Cratylus*, 3–5 differs slightly from this, in that he connects what I have marked as the second and third parts. But by and large, he agrees with the above division of the text.
9 Borsche, “Platon,” 142. As Borsche points out in his note 7, the issue whether Socrates takes one or the other position or simply speaks ironically in relation to both has been much debated in modern academic as well as in ancient literature.
Ancient Philosophy of Language

claim of Cratylus’ is the theory that the name of a given thing or in this case a person is naturally attached to the person it names. By contrast, Hermogenes is of the opinion that names are given to items by convention, that is, they are human inventions. The name of an item is its real name, but if at some point this name is changed to another one, the new name is as correct as the old one (384d). But Hermogenes is indignant at being teased by Cratylus and asks Socrates to join the conversation on the correctness of names.

Socrates actually agrees with Cratylus that a name is naturally connected to the thing it names. This standpoint is founded on the theory of forms. Socrates makes Hermogenes agree that things have an independent nature (form/ἰδέα), so actions must also have an independent nature. In some actions, tools must play a natural role, thus there must be natural criteria for the production of these tools. Naming is an act, and in this act the name plays the role of a tool. From this it follows that natural criteria also exist for the construction of names (especially 386e–390a).

This leads Socrates into those parts of the dialogue (391b–420e and 421a–427d) which, according to Sedley, have been neglected by many scholars because of its “far-fetched etymologies”. They are so bad that they actually constitute an embarrassment.

Towards the end of the section on etymology, Socrates explains how correct names are made. The different sounds of the letters in themselves bear the basic meanings. For instance, Socrates explains how the letter ρ is a tool to express change since pronouncing ρ makes the tongue vibrate. Therefore it is contained in names for change and movement such as ῥεῖν, ῥοῇ, τρόμῳ, etc. If the sounds, as letters, are correctly put together, they form the perfect image of the essence of the given item (426c–427d).

In the last part of the dialogue, Cratylus is included in the conversation. Even though Socrates continues to believe that a name is naturally connected to its item, he does not think that all names are perfect images of things. There can be both good and bad name-givers, and correspondingly good and bad names, and it is possible to say something false by applying a false name to a

---


11 Sedley, “The Etymologies in Plato’s Cratylus,” 140. Sedley’s point of departure is, however, the assumption that Plato takes the etymologies seriously. This, he emphasizes, is to be understood in such a way that the etymologies “are exegetically correct”—that is, that they correctly analyse the hidden meanings of the words. This is not to be confused with “philosophical correctness”, which shows that “the meanings which they attribute to words convey the truth about their nominata”.

given thing or person (429a–431e). With this Cratylus disagrees, since he thinks that names are the only certain path to knowledge about reality. But Socrates continues to show Cratylus that a name can be combined with sounds/letters which do not resemble the thing itself. For instance, lambda, which is associated with softness and smoothness, actually occurs in a name for hardness: σκληρότης (434c). In this way Socrates makes Cratylus admit that some names are inferior, but may still be used according to convention (434d–435a).

The passages that follow are important because what is in fact the issue for Socrates now becomes clear. The discussion has developed into dealing with the question whether by knowing the names of things we automatically also know the things themselves. With the preceding discussion in mind Socrates naturally thinks that, since not all names are good and precise images of the things they name, we cannot rely on names in our search for knowledge about the things themselves, that is, the essence of the things, namely, reality (τὴν οὐσίαν):12

Socrates: “How realities are to be learned or discovered is perhaps too great a question for you or me to determine; but it is worthwhile to have reached even this conclusion, that they are to be learned and sought for, not from names but much better through themselves than through names.”

He explains the insufficiency of names by referring to the situation of the name-givers of ancient times, which he described already in 411b–c: they became “dizzy” in their hurry to look around at things, which therefore seemed as if in a “heraclitean” flux. Thus, they gave names from the assumption that everything is in flux (439c).

The dialogue ends with Socrates telling Cratylus about a recurring dream that shows that the only things truly knowable are the unchanging forms in contrast to imprecise names (439c–440e). In this way, Socrates ends up not agreeing with either Hermogenes or Cratylus. On the one hand, he disagrees with Hermogenes’ theory of convention, explaining that names are naturally connected to the things they name. On the other hand, he also disagrees with Cratylus in that he finds that the name-givers of ancient times were unable to provide things with perfect names. Consequently, the only thing we can do in order to be able to grasp reality is to look at the things themselves and not rely on their names, which might be wrong images of them.

---

12 435d–439b, 439b. Translation borrowed from the Loeb Classical Library (Plato, the Cratylus [H. North Fowler, LCL]).
From this it appears the *Cratylus* is not primarily about etymologies but rather, on a much more general level, about the relation of language to reality.\(^{13}\) As we shall see later, something quite similar is at stake in *Thund*.

Another topic of Platonic dialectics, which will prove to be of central importance especially for the interpretation of *Thund*, is the notion of *diairesis*.

**The Platonic Method of Diairesis**
The method of *diairesis* (διαίρεσις) is a method of definition by division. It is attested mainly in the *Phaedrus*, where it is presented for the first time,\(^{14}\) and in the *Sophist* and the *Statesman*, where examples of its usage are given.\(^{15}\) Even though it is a specific method of definition, the term *diairesis* is employed to cover many kinds of divisions within the field of dialectics. For instance, the term both covers divisions between concepts or words and between the smaller parts of language: syllables or letters. Thus the term is not restricted to a single type of division. However, it seems that every sort of division has its roots within a more comprehensive method of *diairesis*.

In his article from 1973, J. M. E. Moravcsik states that the method of *diairesis* should be interpreted as a development of Plato’s theory of forms. He bases his argument on the assumption that *diairesis* is primarily formulated and employed in the later dialogues. It may thus be seen as a new way of drawing ontological distinctions.\(^{16}\) This is an interesting point since it tells us what a *diairesis* is all about: finding a way to speak about what really *is*, that is, finding the right definitions for things and concepts of reality (i.e., forms), as well as mapping out the relationships among the forms.\(^{17}\)

In what follows, we shall consider certain details with regard to the notion of *diairesis* as it is described in the *Phaedrus* and the *Sophist*, respectively.

---

\(^{13}\) Sedley, “The Etymologies in Plato’s Cratylus”: This is also supported by Keller, “An Interpretation of Plato’s Cratylus”.

\(^{14}\) It has been suggested by Paul Shorey, *The Unity of Plato’s Thought* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1960), 51 that the method was already employed in the *Gorgias*, alluded to in the *Republic*, and found in the *Symposium*, the *Cratylus*, the *Phaedo* and the *Thaetetus*. This remains questionable according to both Philip, “Platonic Diairesis,” 337, n. 2 and Moravcsik, “Plato’s Method of Division,” 158–159.

\(^{15}\) Moravcsik, “Plato’s Method of Division,” 158.

\(^{16}\) *Loc. cit.*

The Phaedrus
What is a *diairesis*? To answer this question, we shall examine how the method is first described in the *Phaedrus*. The main passages for the account of the *diairesis* are 265d–266c.

The beginning of this passage (265d) is an explanation by Socrates of the principle of perceiving and bringing together, that is, what later in the dialogue is called the method of *collection* (*συναγωγή*). It deserves a short comment, as it is usually mentioned in relation to the method of *diairesis*, or at least as a similar method of definition. According to this particular passage in the *Phaedrus*, *collection* is about “perceiving and bringing together in one idea the scattered particulars, that one may make clear by definition the particular thing he wishes to explain”.

In 265e Socrates goes on to explain the principle of division, the *diairesis*:

That of dividing again and again by classes, where the natural joints are . . .

and furthermore in 266b:

Now I myself, Phaedrus, am a lover of these processes of division and bringing together, as aids to speech and thought; and if I think any other man is able to see things that can naturally be collected into one and divided into many, him I follow after and “walk in his footsteps as if he were a god”. And whether the name I give to those who can do this is right or wrong, God knows, but I have called them hitherto dialecticians.

In the latter of these two short passages at least one major purpose of the methods of *collection* and *division* becomes clear: they are “aids to speech and thought”. That is, through either the collection of the scattered particulars or the division of the one into many, the definition of the subject in question is given. The former gathers together the particulars which have something in common in that they somehow share a common nature. This allows one to see the essence of the gathered group of things. The latter divides a given kind/form (*εἴδος*) into two classes. In this way these methods help thought and

---

19 265d. The translations of the selected passages from Plato which follow are borrowed from the Loeb Classical Library (Plato, the *Sophist* and the *Phaedrus* [H. North Fowler, LCL]).
speech to understand and communicate the precise essence of the subject matter. Their practitioners are called dialecticians.

According to J. A. Philip, the relation between collection and diairesis is not entirely clear. In an article from 1966, he asks whether the method of collection is to be understood as preceding the diairesis, i.e., as an operation that is required before the diairesis of the summum genus can begin. Philip does not think this is the case, since “the role of collection in the choice of summum genus is not exemplified...” Collection is rather a survey of the extension of the different classes which are implicated in the diairesis. Although in Phaedrus 266b the method of collection seems to be just as important to Socrates as the diairesis, the method of diairesis comes more into focus in the following dialogues. Thus I find it very possible to understand the collection as a survey of classes within the process of the diairesis. It follows, then, that collection is not as well defined as the diairesis.

I.M. Crombie sheds some light on this question in his book from 1971. He also understands collection as a part of diairesis but in a much more specific way than Philip. Crombie writes:

Division or diairesis is intimately connected with collection, not only because Plato insists that collections without divisions are dangerous, but also because he requires divisions to be done “at a joint”. But to discern where the joints come is to collect the two sub-kinds between which they come.

In this way the collection is seen as the part of division where the dichotomies are identified. But whereas Philip focuses on the great collection of sub-kinds gathered in the process of diairesis, Crombie focuses on the single step in making the division between only one dichotomy. However, by and large they agree with each other.

To elucidate how the method of diairesis is practised, we now turn to the Sophist in which examples of its usage are found.

21 The summum genus being the point of departure of the diairesis, which will be divided into species.
22 Philip, “Platonic Diairesis,” 341.
23 Ibid.: 342. Although Philip provides an attempt to grasp the function of a collection as a sort of survey which may take place during the process of the diairesis, he concludes that “…the phase of collection is perhaps insufficiently clarified…”
24 Crombie, An Examination, 371.
The Sophist
The main issue at stake in the Sophist is the definition of the sophist, as compared to the philosopher and a statesman. The investigation is set off by the entrance of the Eleatic stranger to the scene as a guest of Theodoros, who has joined Socrates and Theaetetus in conversation. The method which is used for the definition of the sophist is that of division—*diairesis*. Through seven attempts at a definition, the sophist is characterized as one who, through false utterances, creates illusions and false imitations. The question is then how false utterances are possible in the first place since they deal with “non-being”, and to utter anything about “non-being” is to say nothing. Thus the dialogue takes a turn in dealing with being versus non-being.

Before looking at the discussions embodied in the definitions, we shall concentrate on the method being used: *diairesis*. Since Plato does not systematically formulate the directions for the use of the specific method, we shall follow the description that has been pieced together by modern scholars from the Platonic dialogues which make use of *diairesis*.

The process of *diairesis* may be summarized as follows: The definition of a given subject is made through a series of divisions that divide the various subcategories of the subject into opposites/dichotomies; and, step by step, leave one of these opposites behind in order to arrive at the point where no further division can be made. The division begins with the concept chosen by the dialectician. This concept is the *genus*. The *genus* is then divided into *subgenera* until the final stage of the division, where the undividable concept, the *infima species*, is reached.27 The division is primarily made between dichotomies, although Plato emphasizes that they must be made according to the natural “joints” or “members” of nature, as we saw in the Phaedrus (265e).28

---

25 The seven attempts at a definition of the sophist are usually identified as follows: 1. (221c–223b), 2. (223b–224d), 3.+4. (224d–e), 5. (224e–226a), 6. (226a–231c) and 7. (236c–d and 264d–268d), see Pedersen, “Sofisten,” in Platon I. (ed. Mejer and Gorm Torzen), 458–467. The dialogue in its entirety is usually divided into three main parts: first part (216a–237b), second part I (237b–259d), second part II (259d–264b) and third part (264b–268d), according to Pedersen, “Sofisten,” in Platon I. (ed. Mejer and Gorm Torzen), 458–466. Rosen, Plato’s Sophist, divides a bit differently although also into three main parts (or acts as he calls them), see Rosen, Plato’s Sophist, vii–viii.


27 Based on Philip, “Platonic Diairesis,” 337; 342–343; Friis Johansen, A History of Ancient Philosophy, 238.

28 For a detailed discussion of this division according to the natural joints which, from time to time, makes the division between dichotomies impossible, see Moravcsik, “The Anatomy of Plato’s Divisions,” 330.
A good example of *diairesis* is given at 235b–c, where the philosopher is compared to a hunter chasing his prey:

It is decided then, that we will as quickly as possible divide the image-making art and go down into it, and if the sophist stands his ground against us at first, we will seize him by the orders of reason, our king, then deliver him up to the king and display his capture. But if he tries to take cover in any of the various sections of the imitative art, we must follow him, always dividing the section into which he has retreated, until he is caught. For assuredly neither he nor any other creature will ever boast of having escaped from pursuers who are able to follow up the pursuit in detail and everywhere in this methodological way.

Another characteristic of the method of *diairesis* is that in the division of a *genus* into *subgenera*, the emphasis is laid on the right-hand member of each division. This is already mentioned in the *Phaedrus* (266a) in direct connection with the dialogue’s description of the method which was presented above. The focus on the right-hand members seems to eliminate the left-hand members, in order to reach down to the final *infima species/definiendum*. However, it is not to be understood in such a way that the final undividable concept—the *infima species*—is the only real concept. If so, the whole hierarchy of divisions would be thrown away. An important issue is, namely, that a *diairesis* is to be considered a “unity of the many” or as Friis Johansen puts it:

The prototype of relations of ideas is hierarchical, i.e. the *diairesis* system, which clearly is considered a Platonic whole/part structure. According to the Stranger it is the task of the dialectician to discover one whole consisting of many parts, in such a manner that genus comprises subgenera and species (the total extension of the system), while one species through higher level ideas is united in a whole yet still distinguishable from other species of the same level (253 D).

When the definition is made, the dialectician will have the exact definition of the “name”, that is, the particular word that he started out to define. He will have “achieved a definition of the function or thing (ἔργον) to which that name refers”. This recalls the *Cratylus*, in which the very act of naming was fundamentally questioned since it would be impossible to grasp the essence of a

---

thing or a deed in a name invented by a dizzy forefather. Are we to comprehend the method of *diairesis* as a continuation of the critique of naming that began in the *Cratylus*, in such a way that the *diairesis* gives the dialectician or the philosopher the precise definition, and thus the precise essence which lies behind the particular name? I think the answer must be positive. If we *must* make use of names (language), it is certainly important to know the exact meaning of these names and thereby also the reality which should undoubtedly be reflected in them.

According to Moravcsik, naming is actually an important but neglected aspect of the *diairesis*. Moravcsik does not focus on the name whose essence the dialectician would choose to define. Rather, he points to the process of division in which many elements in the various dichotomies are named. What are named are primarily the kinds (*genera*) which are divided from the original form (name). The kinds are therefore also forms, although “of a less generic nature”. The final undividable concept which is reached at the end is not to be regarded only as the sum of the names enumerated along the descent of the *diairesis*. It is more than that. It is a whole consisting of parts, a unity of the many as I stated above. This point is emphasized by Moravcsik and Friis Johansen and is found again at the end of the *Sophist* itself (268c), where the Eleatic Stranger settles on the definition of a sophist:

> Shall we then bind up his name as we did before, winding it up from the end to the beginning?

This means that every name which is listed during the *diairesis* is to be included in the final name—the final *logos*. Does this mean that the name comprises both sides of the various dichotomies or only the right-hand members of the division? The question is not answered by Plato, although it seems as if the right-hand members are preferred. On the other hand, it is not an inflexible rule either, as some divisions in the *Sophist* begin from the left-hand members.

In an article from 1983, S. Minardi throws some light on this question by emphasizing that *diairesis* also elaborates the differences between concepts. He agrees that the outcome of a division is a definition of an object through its name, which implies a wide range of different concepts. These are all

---

34 Philip, “Platonic Diairesis,” 348. He mentions the *Sophist* 223c as an example.
somehow included in the subject in question. But Minardi also insists that *diairesis* is associated with remembrance. He writes:

> We can rightly consider that divisions do not rest upon a calculus, but upon reminiscence; in fact the only meaning of *anamnesis*—other than any metaphorical sense—is that knowledge is remembrance (clarification, recalling), of something we know, with which we have a close relation.\(^{35}\)

Thus, the act of proceeding through a *diairesis* is, according to Minardi, a process of remembrance. Remembering all the differences of the object in question is, at the same time, recognizing these differences. Thus, “recalling a concept means recalling all its differences, its variety, without thinking that it can be homogeneous and single as its name can be.”\(^{36}\) “Knowledge means knowledge of differences”, Minardi continues, referring to the *Theaetetus* 208d–210a. This is certainly an aspect of the *diairesis* which is not emphasized elsewhere. Nevertheless, it is a central aspect which is of great importance especially to the analysis of the *Thunder: Perfect Mind*. Moreover, Minardi points to the question dealt with in the *Cratylus* that was discussed above, namely that of the relation between a thing and its name. He recognizes the critique of naming which is found in the *Cratylus* and sees the method of *diairesis* as Plato’s answer to the problem:

> A name is now regarded as a source of deceptions that we must fight. *Diairesis* is the method Plato proposes to fight this linguistic bewitchment.\(^{37}\)

Minardi here confirms the present understanding of Plato’s critique of naming in the *Cratylus*, that is, that a name does not necessarily reflect the actual essence of the thing it names, and hence that our way of speaking about things—reality—is insufficient. Secondly, Minardi regards the method of *diairesis* as a solution to this problem. The method comprises all aspects of the name/subject in question and discloses the differences between the various concepts contained in the single name. All this comes to the fore as the dialectician or the performer of the *diairesis* remembers and knows about these differences. So, although the method of *diairesis* uses names and concepts that


\(^{36}\) *Loc. cit.*

\(^{37}\) *Ibid.*: 419.
are human-made, it uncovers the complexity of the single name, which in this way is made known. Knowing the complexity and diversity comprised within the name, one will also know the essence and reality behind it. In the *Sophist* this discussion is carried out within the context of a reflection on the nature of being versus non-being. It has come about through a conversation concerning the identity of the sophist, who is eventually characterized as one who through false utterances creates illusions and false imitations. Since he creates something, this something must exist, but how may illusions exist when they are false and thus without being (i.e. non-being)?\(^38\) The *Sophist* finds a solution in the interweaving of being and non-being, the latter existing as something which is “different from being” and not as being absolute nothing (in Parmenides’ sense). Being may thus consist of both change and rest.\(^39\) Thus a unity of the many participates in being but is not identical with it. The method of *diairesis* is used to make known the differences between forms which are being defined only in relation to one another. Therefore it becomes possible to claim that non-being *is*, because it exists in relation to, and especially as different from, being.\(^40\) Following this line of thought it is furthermore concluded that with regard to language it is possible to say something false, that is, to say something which is different from what is actually the case.\(^41\)

Whereas Plato and Aristotle\(^42\) contributed significantly to the philosophical reflection on language, they did not provide a systematic description of the structure and form of language. In this the Stoics are considered pioneers.\(^43\) They developed and revised several aspects of the language related theories

---

38 The problem takes its starting point in Parmenides’ view of non-being as non-existing and thus inexplicable (237b).
41 My description of the complicated discussion which takes place in the *Sophist* by no means explicates the many details of the argument exhaustively. Only central issues, which are of special interest for the analysis of the two Nag Hammadi texts, are treated here. For a treatment which does the entire dialogue justice, see for instance Rosen, *Plato’s Sophist*.

42 Aristotle exerted great influence on Stoic dialectics and was a major exponent of language related speculation. In spite of the significance of Aristotle, the focus of the present study on *Thund.* and *Trim. Prot.* does not require a thorough discussion of his reflection on language. For an analysis of the Aristotelian notion of *diairesis* see Arthur von Fragstein, *Die Diairesis bei Aristoteles* (Amsterdam: Verlag Adolf M. Hakkert, 1967).

first formulated in the Platonic dialogues. Their insights became seminal for further linguistic studies.44

**Stoic Dialectics**

The Stoics acknowledged Aristotle’s threefold division of philosophy into logic, physics and ethics. This chapter deals with dialectics—a major part of logic. It is well known that the different elements of Stoic thought are inextricably linked together, and this is also true in the case of dialectics which involves the study of both ethics and physics. Some scholars claim that holding dialectics under logic is “pedantic and misleading”, as it should be regarded as metaphysics instead.46 It is not this chapter’s aim to resolve the question of definition with regard to dialectics and its relationship with other parts of Stoic philosophy;47 and so I shall consider dialectics a part of the field of logic, as the Stoics themselves did.48

---


47 In the present chapter, I will employ the terms “Stoic” and “Stoicism” for the sake of convenience, despite the many diversities which undoubtedly exist within the long Stoic tradition.

48 Long, “Language and Thought in Stoicism,” 75. Even though Long finds it pedantic to count dialectics to logic, he recognizes that the Stoics did so themselves.
The aim of this section is to draw attention to and explicate the linguistic insights of the Stoics especially with regard to the examination of the different levels of intelligibility within an utterance. As will become apparent later, these insights will play a key role in the analysis of the two Nag Hammadi texts in question. Furthermore, we shall touch upon the most difficult term associated with Stoic dialectics: the *lekton* (λεκτόν). We shall leave aside rhetoric, which, nevertheless, is understood to be a parallel to dialectics under the field of logic.49

The subject of Stoic dialectic is, as Long has formulated: “words, things, and the relations which hold between them”.50 As is too often the case with various aspects of Stoic thought, we do not have any primary sources about Stoic dialectics. The main account is given by Diogenes Laertius (primarily VII, 55–57, but also remarks scattered throughout VII, 41–82). Diogenes tells us that the Stoics divided their dialectic into two main categories:51 on σημαίνοντα (“things which signify”) and σημαινόμενα (“things which are signified”), the former being concerned with language as sound, writing, verbal expressions, etymology, formal grammar, metrics, poems and music, as well as parts of both speech and rhetoric.52 Thus, the “things which signify” are the parts of the Stoic linguistic theory which is concerned with the corporeal subjects. Meanwhile, the “things which are signified” are understood as incorporeal: regarding what is said, that is, the meaning of what is being said, in other words the *lekton*. Furthermore, the σημαινόμενα covers simple and complex propositions, modalities, syllogisms and fallacies.53

Even though dialectic is subdivided into two individual topics, they are strongly related by the overall concern of logic: *logos* (λόγος). Since *logos* here means both speech and reason,54 the interrelation between the two

---


52 Lloyd 1971: 58, who explains that the inclusion of certain parts of speech and rhetoric into the Stoic theory is due to the fact that the Stoics considered language as based on natural signs as opposed to conventional signs. Rhetoric is thus not entirely excluded from dialectics, as is also seen by Hülser, “Expression and Content in Stoic Linguistic Theory,” 288.


54 Sandbach, *The Stoics*, 95.
Ancient Philosophy of Language

subdivisions of dialectics is apparent. What matters are, first and foremost, language and its relation to reason and reality. How are speech and thought related? Furthermore, how is this speech, i.e. language, related to our world/reality? The answers to these questions are given in both sections of Stoic dialectics. In what follows, we shall investigate the two parts of Stoic dialectics individually focusing on a few central themes which will become useful for the interpretation of the two Nag Hammadi texts.

The Things Which Signify (σημαίνοντα)

What is of special interest to the present study is the Stoic theory of a verbal expression. In what follows, we shall examine a few central passages from Diogenes Laertius concerning the Stoic τέχνη περὶ φωνῆς, i.e. the Stoic theory of voice. The τέχνη implies a thorough analysis of the different components of speech and their relation to each other. These are sound/voice (φωνή), speech (λέξις) and sentence/logos (λόγος). Incidentally, the three concepts were the invention of Aristotle (although they are already implicit in Plato) but taken up and developed by the Stoics and other Hellenistic Schools. But it was the Stoic theory of language that became “trendsetting”.55 As will become clear through the reading of the passages from Diogenes, the Stoic τέχνη περὶ φωνῆς was worked out in the form of a diairesis. It is, in other words, a definition of φωνή by division.

The Stoic understanding of voice, speech and sentence/logos is reported by Diogenes Laertius: VII 55–57:56

(55) Τῆς δὲ διαλεκτικῆς θεωρίας συμφώνως δοκεῖ τοῖς πλείστοις ἀπὸ τοῦ περὶ φωνῆς ἐνάρχεσθαι τόπου. Ἐστι δὲ φωνὴ ἀήρ πεπληγμένος, ἢ τὸ ἴδιον αἰσθητὸν ἀκοῆς, ὡς φησὶ Διογένης ἐν τῇ Περὶ φωνῆς τέχνῃ. Ζῴου μέν ἐστι φωνὴ ἀήρ ὑπὸ ὁρμῆς πεπληγμένος, ἀνθρώπου δέ ἐστιν ἐναρθρός καὶ ἀπὸ διανοίας ἐκπεμπομένη, ὡς ὁ Διογένης φησίν, ἢτις ἀπὸ δεκατεσσάρων ἐτῶν

55 Ax, Laut, Stimme und Sprache, 138–139, 141. The analysis of the Stoic τέχνη περὶ φωνῆς, which follows, builds largely upon the detailed presentation by Ax in his seminal work from 1986. Besides the chapter on Stoic dialectics (pp. 138–211), he analyses thoroughly the notion of “voice” in both Roman and Greek traditions.

56 The Greek text derives from the critical edition of Diogenes Laertius: Diogenis Laetii. Vitae Philosophorum, Vol. 1. Libri 1–x (ed. Miroslav Marcovich, Teubner; Studgardiae: B. G. Teubneri, 1999). As emphasized by Ax, Laut, Stimme und Sprache, 141, the Stoic texts are very fragmentarily transmitted to us, and in the case of Diogenes Laertius, it is a secondary transmission from the doxographer Diocles. For this reason, Ax has reservations regarding the exactitude of the Stoic theory. Cf. Ax, Laut, Stimme und Sprache, 152.
τελειοῦται. Καὶ σῶμα δ’ ἐστιν ἡ φωνή κατὰ τοὺς Στωϊκούς, ὡς φησιν Ἀρχέδημος
te ἐν τῇ Περὶ φωνῆς καὶ Διογένης καὶ Ἀντίπατρος καὶ Χρύσιππος ἐν τῇ δευτέρᾳ
tῶν Φυσικῶν. (56) Πᾶν γὰρ τὸ ποιοῦν σῶμά ἐστι, ποιεῖ δὲ ἡ φωνὴ προσιούσα
tοῖς ἀκούσωσιν ἀπὸ τῶν φωνοῦντων.

Λέξις δὲ ἐστιν κατὰ τοὺς Στωϊκούς, ὡς φησι ὁ Διογένης, φωνὴ ἐγγράμματος,
ὁν Ἡμέρα [ἐστί]. Λόγος δὲ ἐστί φωνὴ σημαντικὴ ἀπὸ διανοίας ἐκπεμπομένη,
<ὁν Ἡμέρα ἐστί>. Διάλεκτος δὲ ἐστί Γεράς κεχαραγμένη ἑθικῆς τε καὶ
Ἑλληνικῆς, ἦ λέξις ποταπή, τούτους ποιά κατὰ διάλεκτον, ὁν κατὰ μὲν τὴν
Ἀτθίδα Θάλαττα, κατὰ δὲ τὴν Ἰάδα Ἡμέρη.

Τῆς δὲ λέξεως στοιχεία ἐστὶ τὰ εἰκοστέσσαρα γράμματα. Τριχῶς δὲ λέγεται
tὸ γράμμα, <τὸ τε στοιχεῖον> ὁ τε χαρακτὴρ τοῦ στοιχείου καὶ τὸ ὄνομα, ὁν Ἀλφα. (57) Φωνήσες δὲ ἐστί τοὺς στοιχείοις ἐπτά, α, ε, η, ι, ο, υ, ἄφωνα δὲ
ἐξ, β, γ, δ, κ, π, τ. Διαφέρει δὲ φωνὴ καὶ λέξις, ὅτι φωνὴ μὲν ὁ ἦχός ἐστι,
λέξις δὲ τὸ ἐναρθρὸν μόνον. Λέξις δὲ λόγου διαφέρει, ὅτι λόγος <μὲν> ἀεὶ
σημαντικὸς ἐστι, λέξις δὲ καὶ ἀσήμαντος γίνεται, ὡς ὁ Βλίτυρι [λόγος δὲ
οὐδαμῶς]. Διαφέρει δὲ καὶ τὸ λέγειν τοῦ προφέρεσθαι, προφέρονται μὲν γὰρ αἱ
φωναὶ, λέγεται δὲ τὰ πράγματα, ἥ δὲ καὶ λεκτὰ τυγχάνει.

Translation:57

(55) Of the dialectic theory, most agree to begin with the topic of voice. Now voice is air that has been struck or the object that is perceptible especially to the hearing, as Diogenes the Babylonian says in the treatise On Voice. While the voice of an animal is air that has been struck by impulse, (the voice of a) human being is (air that is) articulate and (is) issued from thought, as Diogenes says, which comes to maturity in the fourteenth year. Furthermore, voice according to the Stoics is a body, as says Archedemos in his On Voice, and Diogenes, and Antipatros, and Chrysippos in the second book of his Physics. (56) For all that is effective is a body; and the voice is effective as proceeding from those who give voice to those who hear (it).

Speech (lexis) is according to the Stoics, as Diogenes says, a writable voice, such as “day”. A sentence (logos) is an intelligible voice, issuing from thought <such as, “it is day”>. Dialect is a speech (lexis) that has been “stamped” with a character of its own, both in the manner of

57 The translation is my own.
foreigners and of Greeks, or a speech from a particular region, that is, with a special form in accordance with its dialect, such as the Attic “thalatta” (sea), and the Ionic “hēmerē” (day).

The elements of speech (lexis) are the twenty-four letters. “Letter” is said to have three meanings: <the (phonetic value of the)\textsuperscript{58} element>, the graphic form of the element, and the name, such as “Alpha”.\textsuperscript{(57)} Of the elements there are seven vowels: a, e, ē, i, o, y, ō; and six mutes: b, g, d, k, p, t. Voice differs from speech (lexis) in that a sound too is voice, but speech (lexis) is only what is articulate. Speech (lexis) differs from sentence (logos), in that a sentence (logos) is always intelligible, whereas speech (lexis) may be unintelligible, i.e. “blityri”, [which a sentence (logos) never is]. Furthermore, saying differs from pronouncing. For voices are pronounced, but things are said, which are also the lekta.

Thus reported by Diogenes Laertius how the Stoics distinguish between the different constituents of a verbal expression.

In the field of dialectic, one may begin from an examination of φωνή. In this specific linguistic context, φωνή means a voice that is so far without any meaning and articulation. Therefore, it is merely a sound. This is reflected in the German translation by K. Hülser, who translates φωνή by “Stimme” but also adds in parenthesis “den Laut, das sprachliche Zeichen”.\textsuperscript{59} Similarly, it is emphasized by W. Ax, that “φωνή . . . ist für Diogenes primär die Stimme in ihrer physiologischen proprie-Bedeutung.”\textsuperscript{60} This means that the interest lies with the physicality of the voice as is shown by the immediate description of it as “ἀὴρ πεπληγμένος”, that is, air which is being struck. This has to do with the Stoic understanding of voice as a material entity, a body (σῶμα δ’ ἐστίν ἡ φωνή). It is material since it has an effect on the ear by being hearable: Πᾶν γὰρ τὸ ποιοῦν σῶμα ἐστι, ποιεῖ δὲ ἡ φωνὴ προσιοῦσα τοῖς ἀκούουσιν ἀπὸ τῶν φωνοῦντων (“For all that is effective is a body; and the voice is effective as proceeding from

\textsuperscript{58} What I put here in parentheses is an addition which appears in the edition of Hülser (\textit{FDS}). The editions of Marcovich and Hülser do not correspond completely to each other.

\textsuperscript{59} \textit{FDS}: 522–523.

\textsuperscript{60} Ax, \textit{Laut, Stimme und Sprache}, 190. Moreover, on pp. 166–190 Ax analyses thoroughly the meaning of φωνή in Diogenes. One of the main questions is whether to Diogenes φωνή means “voice” or “tone”/“ring”, i.e. pure sound. The conclusion is (very roughly) that φωνή as “voice” is “eine Spezies des übergeordneten Schall-genus” (190). On the other hand, Ax still leaves some doubt with regard to the definition recalling the definition of φωνή in relation to that of λέξις, where φωνή is described as an ἠχός, i.e. as pure sound. See analysis below.
those who give voice to those who hear (it).” Already at the beginning, it was stated that a voice is what is attainable specifically to the hearing (ἵ το ἴδιον αἰσθητὸν ἀκοῆς).

That the interest of the Stoics lies with the human capacity to speak is expressed by the differentiation between animal and human voice. Whereas animal voice is described as “ὑπὸ ὁρμῆς πεπληγμένος” (being struck by impulse), human voice is “ἐναρθρὸς καὶ ἀπὸ διανοίας ἐκπεμπομένη”, that is, articulate and issued from thought. Thus the first diairesis of φωνή is the one between human voice and animal sound/voice. Worth noting here is, that in relation to animal sound/voice, the human voice is articulate, whereas in relation to λέξις, which is the next level of the verbal expression, the φωνή is inarticulate. This will become clear in a moment.

The next distinction within the sequence of a verbal expression is between that of φωνή and λέξις. As is also pointed out by Ax, a λέξις may be of two kinds: ἐγγράμματος and ἐναρθρος.61 Firstly, λέξις is understood as a written voice (φωνὴ ἐγγράμματος), which means a voice/sound that is possible to write since it is articulate. The single elements (στοιχεῖα) of the voice/sound come together in a λέξις, which makes it writable. Hülser’s translation of λέξις by “Phonemreihe” makes the interrelatedness of φωνή and λέξις even clearer, since the “Phonemreihe” elucidates the nature of λέξις as a compound of the different στοιχεῖα. Secondly, if we look slightly ahead in the text, the difference between φωνὴ and λέξις is explained further: Διαφέρει δὲ φωνὴ καὶ λέξις, ὅτι φωνὴ μὲν καὶ ὁ ἦχός ἐστι, λέξις δὲ τὸ ἔναρθρον μόνον (“Voice differs from speech (lexis) in that a sound too is voice, but speech (lexis) is only what is articulate”). Here the articulateness (ἔναρθρον) of a λέξις is emphasized as opposed to φωνὴ when it is a mere sound (ἤχος). The diairesis lies here, in fact, between the articulated voice (λέξις) and the unarticulated sound (ἤχος) which is also a voice.

The third distinction is that between λέξις and λόγος. Already in paragraph 56 it was asserted that: Λόγος δέ ἐστι φωνὴ σημαντικὴ ἀπὸ διανοίας ἐκπεμπομένη (“A sentence (logos) is a signifying/intelligible voice, issued from thought”). So what differentiates λόγος from both φωνὴ and λέξις is that it is an intelligible voice (φωνὴ σημαντικὴ). In paragraph 57, it is further pinned down: “Speech (lexis) differs from sentence (logos), in that a sentence (logos) is always intelligible, whereas speech (lexis) may be unintelligible, i.e. “blityri”, [which a sentence (logos) never is]”. A sentence (λόγος) is always intelligible whereas speech (λέξις) can be, but is not necessarily intelligible.62 An example of unintelligible speech is “βλίτυρι”. This is clearly a possible composition of elements

61 Ibid.: 192.
which is both pronounceable and writable, but it is at the same time completely without meaning.\footnote{For a thorough investigation of the “Sprachphänomen” βλίτυρι, see Ax, \emph{Laut, Stimme und Sprache}, 195–199.}

In short: a human voice (φωνή) is uttered from thought (διανοία). As opposed to animal sound/voice, the human voice is articulate. However, considered in relation to the different divisions of φωνή in a verbal expression the first step in this expression is what one might call an ἦχος-φωνή (a “sound-voice”), since it is inarticulate as opposed to λέξις. Speech (λέξις) is different from voice in that it is articulated. It is, however, not necessarily intelligible speech. A sentence (λόγος) constitutes the highest semantic level of a verbal expression as it is both articulate and intelligible. The sequence of a verbal expression could be visualized as follows:

διανοία—φωνή—λέξις—λόγος

thought—voice—speech—sentence

The \emph{diairetic} definition is presented systematically and fairly technically, and one gets the impression that this type of definition is rather “dry”, pointing only towards its goal: the intelligible \emph{logos}. In this linguistic context, λόγος has the meaning of “sentence”, although it implies the more general sense of λόγος, namely “reason”, hence the location of dialectics under logic.

On the other hand, it is important to remember that the person who executes the \emph{diairesis} is not only focused on its goal, forgetting about the earlier steps towards the \emph{infima species/definiendum}. The first steps and divisions remain part of the unity. In this specific example of the division of φωνή, it makes perfect sense to understand \emph{diairesis} as a “unity of the many”. The voice is of course a part of the speech and thus both voice and speech are parts of the sentence, since without voice it could not be uttered and without speech it could not be articulated. The sentence, however, as the final goal is fully intelligible and pervaded by logos = reason. It is clear that the Stoic sequence of a verbal expression is directed towards the logos as the highest semantic level, but both voice and speech form part of this sequence.

Through the Stoic \emph{diairesis} of voice, the relation between thought and language is explained. It is now clear that, according to the Stoics, “Λόγος δὲ ἐστι φωνὴ σημαντικὴ ἀπὸ διανοίας ἐκπεμπομένη”. That a sentence is an intelligible voice which comes from thought is, in our modern ears, a banality. It is, nonetheless, important to remember that it was, in fact, the Stoics who formulated this in a systematic way, “blazing a path” for further linguistic studies.
The idea that voice is uttered from thought is furthermore closely related to the famous Stoic notion of λόγος ἐνδιάθετος and λόγος προφορικός. The notion that thought is inner discourse and discourse is articulated thought is found already in Plato’s *Sophist* (263e).

Then, thought and speech are the same, only the former, which is a voiceless inner dialogue of the soul with itself, has been given the special name of thought.

This shows not only that the Stoics agreed with Plato on this specific matter, but also that at this relatively early stage in the history of ancient philosophy of language, thought and speech were seen as inseparable. This again illustrates that the *logos* was the most exalted tool of the human mind.

The question is now how intelligible speech relates to reality. This implies the reflection upon the problem of the relation between a sound or a name, on the one hand, and the thing that this name refers to, that is, the “referent”, on the other. How can we be sure that our language is consistent with what we speak about—our reality? The question recalls the problems which were dealt with in the *Cratylus*, and, as has been shown by A. A. Long, the Stoics were in fact deeply influenced by the etymologies made in that dialogue. The questions posed in relation to Stoic etymology lead naturally to a discussion of the meaning of what is said, which is dealt with in the second part of Stoic dialectics: the σημαίνόμενα (“what is signified”).

Now we shall turn to the basic issues with regard to Stoic etymology, especially in relation to the different positions presented in the *Cratylus*. As etymology is concerned with the σημαίνοντα, we shall dwell upon this part of dialectics for a bit longer. After that, we shall proceed to the σημαίνόμενα, focusing on the *lekton*.

---

65 Ax, *Laut, Stimme und Sprache*, 203 also notes this.
66 Raoul Mortley, *From Word to Silence. 1: The Rise and Fall of Logos* (Theophaneia, Beiträge zur Religions- und Kirchengeschichte des Altertums 3; Bonn: Peter Hanstein Verlag, 1986), 116, who explains how later in history (for instance in Philo) thought and speech were separated.
67 Long, “Stoic Linguistics, Plato’s *Cratylus*, and Augustine’s *De dialectica*”. See discussion below.
Stoic Etymology and the *Cratylus*

The Stoics were interested in the same questions which were dealt with in the *Cratylus*, namely that of the relationship between a thing and its name. They were positive about the assumption that a name has a natural connection to the thing it names, contrary to the views held by Aristotle and Hermogenes in the *Cratylus*, to the effect that names were given to things by pure convention. To illustrate the Stoic position, A. A. Long points to a short passage from Origen’s *Contra Celsum* about “the primary sounds (τῶν πρώτων φωνῶν) imitating the things of which they are the names, and hence they [that is, the Stoics] adduced [them as] elements of etymology.” This passage comprises two elements which Long enumerates as points of similarity between Stoicism and the *Cratylus*: (1) etymology and (2) primary sounds. The passage shows how the two are linked together, in that the primary sound, as a sort of onomato-poia, resembles the essence of the thing it imitates and names, thus making up the basis for the etymology of that name. The interest in primary sounds and etymology falls under the question of the origin of language. According to J. Allen, the Stoics found that the words formed at the beginning of human history were superior to those of their own day. They contained a “primitive wisdom.”

In his article, Long shows not only how Stoic etymology in some instances is identical to the etymologies put forth by Socrates in the *Cratylus*, but he also argues that parts of the Stoic “linguistic theory can be interpreted as a revisionary reading of the *Cratylus*.” Unlike Plato, according to Long, the Stoics did not see the letters and syllables of names as containing the true nature of things, for instance, that the letters ιότα, ρό, etc. should signify “motion.”

---

68 Ibid.: 133. Origen: *Contra Celsum* 1.24 (SVF 2.146).
69 Cels. 1.24/SVF 2.146/FDS 643. Long 2005: 36–37, although it seems as if Long has rendered the Greek text incorrectly by transcribing τῶν πρώτων φωνῶν as “τὸν πρῶτον ονοματόν”. It cannot be the intention to confuse “sound” with “name”, since the idea is that the name is made out of primary sounds.
72 For instance “the name Zeus and its inflection Dia by reference to zēn, ‘to live,’ and dia meaning ‘because of’; the name Zeus signifies ‘the cause of life’”. Long, “Stoic Linguistics, Plato’s *Cratylus*, and Augustine’s *De dialectica*.” 36.
73 Long, “Stoic Linguistics, Plato’s *Cratylus*, and Augustine’s *De dialectica*.” 37. He acknowledges that his theory is hypothetical, but he retains the dominant role of the *Cratylus*.
74 Ibid.: 40. Cf. the *Cratylus* 424b.
Contrary to this, Long thinks that the Stoics held that “certain words (not individual letters or syllables) affect our hearing in ways that manifest precise similarity between sound and referent.” These words are “sound-words” (like clangor, one of Augustine’s examples of a sound-word, in this case made by a trumpet) which affect us sensuously.75 Another example is the word for honey, mel, which sounds like the sweetness of the thing it signifies. To the Stoics, the meaning of a word was not contained or explained only by its sound; “The word’s sound is appropriate to but not fully constitutive of its significance.”76 Long argues that even though the Stoics did adopt the theory of significant letters from the Cratylus, they offered a somewhat “looser but a less problematic explanation of the connection between primary word-sounds and significance.”77 This is to be understood in the way that the Stoics allowed proximity and opposition in addition to similarity in word formation. That a word could contain a letter which basically signified the opposite of what the whole word would signify was a problem for the Socratic view in the Cratylus, as for instance in the case of the word σκληρότης (see above).

The conclusion to the Cratylus is, as we saw, something of a compromise or middle way between “radical conventionalism” (represented by Hermogenes) and “naturalism” (represented by Cratylus), where the latter is to be understood as the sort of naturalism which Long calls “phonetic naturalism”. This he defines as “names whose constituent letters and syllables represent the properties of the thing named.”78 Socrates supports the naturalistic view that a name reflects the essence of the thing it names, although not necessarily down to every single letter or syllable. This view is what Long designates as “formal naturalism”, a naturalism which focuses on the form of the thing which is named. The phonology is subordinate. According to Long, this form of naturalism is strong in that “meaning transcends its phonetic representation: the same meaning or form can be expressed in different languages…”79 The question is, then, how this relates to the Stoic linguistic theory in addition to adopting a naturalistic approach to the relationship between a name and its referent. Long suggests that the Stoics have reacted to the theories adduced in the Cratylus by formulating a theory which concerned the issues which had

---

75 Ibid.: 41. Long refers to Augustine De dialectica 6.
76 Ibid.: 47.
77 Ibid.: 42.
78 Ibid.: 43.
79 Ibid.: 44.
not been answered by Plato, namely the account of meaning.\textsuperscript{80} What are our words a sign for? What do they signify? They signify what the Stoics called a \textit{lekton}, to which we shall now turn, thus leaving the \textit{Cratylus} for a while.

\textbf{What is Signified (σημαινόμενα)}

Περί λεκτόν

The \textit{λεκτόν} (\textit{lekton}) is the second part of Stoic dialectics. It is usually characterized either as the “meaning of an utterance”\textsuperscript{81} or as “what is said”\textsuperscript{82} It is, furthermore, considered \textit{incorporeal}, which in a Stoic context means that it actually does not exist. The two parts of Stoic dialectics are closely linked together since they both participate in human rational discourse, implying knowledge and language. Whereas the topic of \textit{σημαινόντα} deals with the physical/corporeal aspect of language, that of \textit{σημαινόμενα} deals with the incorporeal aspect of language: the meaning or what is being said, in other words “what is signified”. To get a clearer sense of the relation between the two parts, I offer a short passage from Sextus Empiricus, \textit{Against the Professors} (\textit{SVF} 2.166):\textsuperscript{83}

\begin{verbatim}
(1) ἦν δὲ καὶ ἄλλη τις παρὰ τούτοις διάστασις, καθ’ ἥν οἱ μὲν περὶ τῷ σημαινόμενῳ τὸ ἀληθὲς τε καὶ ψεῦδος ὑπεστήσαντο, οἱ δὲ περὶ τῇ φωνῇ, οἱ δὲ περὶ τῇ κινήσει τῆς διανοίας. (2) καὶ δὴ τῆς μὲν πρώτης δόξης προεστήκασιν οἱ ἀπὸ τῆς Στοᾶς τρία φάμενοι συζύγησιν, τό τε σημαινόμενον καὶ τὸ σημαῖνον καὶ τὸ τυγχάνον, ὃν σημαίνω μὲν εἶναι τὴν φωνήν, οἷον τὴν Δίων, σημαινόμενον δὲ αὐτὸ τὸ πράγμα τὸ υπ’ αὐτῆς δηλούμενον καὶ οὐ ἡμεῖς μὲν ἀντιλαμβάνομεθα τῇ ἡμετέρᾳ παρυφισταμένῃ διανοίᾳ, οἱ δὲ βάρβαροι οὐκ ἐπαίουσι καίπερ τῆς φωνῆς ἀκούοντες, τυγχάνον δὲ τὸ ἐκτὸς ὑποκείμενον, ὃσπερ αὐτὸς ὁ Δίων. (3) τούτων δὲ δύο μὲν εἶναι σώματα, καθάπερ τὴν φωνήν καὶ τὸ τυγχάνον, ἐν δὲ ἀσώματον, ὃσπερ τὸ σημαινόμενον πράγμα, καὶ λεκτόν, ὃπερ ἀληθές τε γίνεται ἢ ψεῦδος.
\end{verbatim}

\textsuperscript{80} \textit{Loc. cit.}

\textsuperscript{81} Cf. Sandbach, \textit{The Stoics}, 96.

\textsuperscript{82} Cf. Long, “Language and Thought in Stoicism,” see discussion below.

There was another disagreement among them, according to which, what is true and false was placed by some under “what is signified”, by others under “on voice”, and yet others under “what moves the thought”.

(2) The first opinion was defended by the Stoics, who said that three things are linked together: “the signified”, and “the signifier”, and “the external object”. The signifier is a voice (an utterance), such as “Dion”; the signified is the state of affairs itself which is revealed by it (the voice) and which we grasp as it subsists co-ordinately with our thought, and which the Barbarians do not understand although they hear the voice; the external object is the external reality, e.g. Dion himself.

(3) Of these, (they say that) two are bodies (corporeal), namely the voice (the utterance) and the external object; and one is incorporeal, namely the signified state of affairs, and also: lekton, which is what may become true or false.

According to Sextus Empiricus, the Stoics differentiated between the three components which constitute the process of “A . . . talking about P to B, and B’s ability to indicate that he understands A to be talking about P”. The Stoic theory is presented in the context of a discussion of different views about truth. It is stated that the Stoics held the view that truth (and falsehood) is predicated of “what is signified”. Then, the three components τὸ σημαινόμενον, τὸ σημαίνον, and τὸ τυγχάνον are enumerated and explained. That which signifies, τὸ σημαίνον, is the pure utterance by A’s voice. It is the articulate and intelligible sound which affects the hearing faculty of B. The famous example given by Sextus is “Dion”, which the reader is expected to imagine A uttering. What signifies is, of course, a body. That which is signified, τὸ σημαινόμενον, is described as being the “specific state of affairs” (τὸ πρᾶγμα), namely P. It is indicated by what A signifies and B grasps it as it subsists co-ordinately with (παρυφιστάμενον) his thought. Moreover, it is said, as I have also pointed out above, that the signified is incorporeal. It is not a body but a lekton, and it is a lekton that can be either true or false. The object of reference, τὸ τυγχάνον, is “Dion” himself, the actual physical object that is being talked about. He is a body as well.

Now, the lekton is what is signified, that is, the specific state of affairs. This means that it should be regarded either as “what is meant” or “what is said”. Long argues for a translation of λεκτόν as “what is said” instead of “what is
meant”, since the former underlines the grammatical and logical functions of the lekton.\(^{86}\) That “what is said” may be either true or false as is stated towards the end of the passage from Sextus. However, the name “Dion” cannot be settled to be true or false and thus cannot be a lekton,\(^{87}\) unless it is implied that the statement is “this man is Dion”.\(^{88}\) Then it is possible to decide whether it is true or false, if the man in question is, in fact, Dion. A lekton is, in other words, what is said by A and which can be understood by B to be either true or false with regard to how B experiences reality.

Even though, in A. A. Long’s own words, “the bibliography on lekta is now extensive”,\(^{89}\) he himself provides us with a clear definition of the lekton:

The lekton is the meaning or fact or truth or falsehood that we express or understand by means of spoken or written language. Stoic lekta are neither words nor things nor thoughts in the sense of particular mental states: they are semantic and logical structures, thinkable and expressible, but objective in their availability to anyone to think and express and understand in any language.\(^{90}\)

Recalling Diogenes Laertius (VII, 55–57), the lekton is mentioned at the end in relation to the description of the difference between saying something (τὸ λέγειν) and just pronouncing (προφέρεσθαι): “Furthermore, saying differs from pronouncing. For voices are pronounced, but things are said, which are also the lekta.” Whereas “pronouncing” is described as something which only concerns the voice, “speaking” concerns the state of affairs, which are lekta. This last sentence from the Diogenes passage shows how the two parts of Stoic dialectics are connected, in that the lekton is clearly tied to the logos. In a pure utterance, the φωνή is certainly present and perhaps also in a λέξις, but an utterance is not a fully intelligible sentence until the λόγος is present. The fully intelligible sentence is furthermore a sign of something, namely the sign of “what is said” or “what is meant” by the sentence; and that is the lekton, the thing signified.

Having discussed the nature of the Stoic lekton, we shall briefly consider the suggestion put forth by A. A. Long in his 2005 article suggesting that the Stoics reacted to the theories adduced in the Cratylus and that the Stoic linguistic

---

86 Ibid.: 77.
87 See also Long and Sedley, The Hellenistic Philosophers vol. II, 197.
90 Ibid.: 46.
theory could “be interpreted as a revisionary reading of the Cratylus.”91 It is indeed plausible to assume that the Stoics have read and developed several ideas from the Cratylus. Their interest in etymology as well as primary sounds clearly reflects a central issue in the Platonic dialogue, with which the Stoics shared the naturalistic approach to the art of naming. It is also reasonable to analyse the Stoic notion of the λέξτον as an innovative and sophisticated theory of meaning, possibly stimulated by the absence of a similar theory in Plato. As such, the Stoics developed the specific formal naturalism advanced by the Platonic Socrates.

One major difference between the Platonic and Stoic linguistic theories, which must not be disregarded, is the skepticism towards language implied in the conclusion of Socrates in the Cratylus. Even though Socrates advocates a formal naturalism, he ends up emphasizing the importance of looking at the thing itself in order to grasp its true essence, instead of relying on its name, which might be misleading. These are only the first steps towards a much more developed skepticism towards, and abandonment of language found in Middle and Neoplatonism.92

This skepticism towards language is not found in Stoicism. This may be due to their monistic worldview. To a Stoic the true essence of things is to be found in this material world (to the extent that they would in fact speak of “the true essence of things”).

Conclusion

Even though Plato did not formulate a systematic linguistic theory, his thoughts became fundamental for further linguistic studies. The earliest instance of language-related speculation, to our knowledge, is the Platonic dialogue of Cratylus in which Socrates leads a discussion of the correctness of names. Names are what we today would call “words”. The question of the correctness of names is essential because it raises the problem of the relation between language and reality. This is seen in the naturalistic position of Socrates towards naming. Although he advocates a naturalistic understanding of the relation between a name and its referent, he also acknowledges that names do not always capture the true essence of the things they name. Sometimes, they are even misleading. Instead, Socrates wants us to look at the thing itself in order

92 See, for instance, Mortley, From Word to Silence. 1, 124–125.
Ancient Philosophy of Language

To grasp its true essence. In the *Cratylus* we see the first skepticism towards the ability of our language to reflect reality correctly.

A tool used by the philosopher and the dialectician in order to grasp the true essence and precise definition of a concept through its name is the method of definition by division (*diairesis*), exemplified above by passages from the *Phaedrus* and the *Sophist*. The problem of the limited utility of language posed in the *Cratylus* is partly solved by the method of *diairesis*, since it establishes a much more complex, and yet precise, picture of the thing in question. *Diairesis* is thus not only about definitions, but indeed also about language, which connects the method closely to the question about the correctness of names.

Two important issues with regard to the method of *diairesis* which were emphasized above are (1) that the process of descending through a *diairesis* is a process of remembrance, and (2) that the result of a *diairesis* is to be understood as a “unity of the many”. Firstly, Minardi has argued convincingly that proceeding through a *diairesis* is the process of remembrance (*anamnēsis*). Remembering all the differences of the object in question is at the same time recognizing these differences. “Knowledge means knowledge of differences”, as he stresses. This also implies an ability to speak about “non-being”, namely as opposite to, and in relation to, “being”. Secondly, the process of remembering the differences of the specific object is associated with the important aspect of a *diairesis*, namely, that the final undividable concept is a unity of the preceding plurality of concepts. The same unifying aspect of the *diairetic* process is also characteristic of the Stoic division of voice. The division of voice/sound (φωνή) into speech (λέξις) and sentence/logos (λόγος) shows well how all levels of the division are included in the final logos.

The examination of Stoic dialectics was divided into two parts: (1) on “that which signifies”/on voice and (2) on “what is signified”/on lekton. This division follows Diogenes Laertius’ account of the Stoic theory. “That which signifies” is the part of dialectics that deals with the corporeal aspects of language, that is, language as sound, writing, verbal expressions, etc. Through a close reading of the passage from Diogenes Laertius vi, 55–57, it became apparent how the different levels of a verbal expression go from inarticulate voice (φωνή) over articulate but unintelligible speech (λέξις) to the fully articulate and intelligible sentence/logos (λόγος). Moreover, we saw how the Stoic focus was directed at the logos as the primary goal, a point that is also reflected in the notion of a sentence/discourse (logos) as an intelligible voice which comes from thought. However, as just mentioned, logos is still a unity of the different levels of a verbal expression.

Before the discussion on “what is signified”, I dealt briefly with the relation between Stoic dialectics and the *Cratylus*. I argued, with Long, that the Stoics
developed the approach put forth by Socrates in the *Cratylus*, which can be designated as a *formal naturalism* focusing on the form of a thing named. The Stoics too were naturalists, in that they understood “primary sounds” as imitating the things they named, although to them a word’s sound was not fully constitutive of its significance. In other words, it is not entirely possible to detect the meaning of a thing by its name or sound, but the sound might affect us sensuously.

What the Stoics contributed was the sophisticated theory of meaning: “what is signified”. For the question was: what does language, or simply words, signify? This, of course, is the *lekton*, which I have discussed in the last section of this chapter. The section on “what is signified” is considered to be about the *incorporeal* aspect of language in Stoic dialectics. The *lekton* is understood as “what is said/meant” by an utterance, that is, what A means by saying something to B about P. Even though this theory might have been developed in response to a lack of a similar theory by Plato, I emphasize here that the Stoics did not regard language as insufficient to describe the true nature of things, as Plato did. The Stoics were cosmological monists and did not expect worldly things to have an idea behind them. For this reason, the reality of the Stoics was within this world, and thus also describable with the language of this world.

In the chapters that follow we shall see how the authors of *Trim. Prot.* and *Thund.*, who wrote their treatises centuries later than the first language-related speculations took place in Greek philosophy, were able to integrate the insights of Plato and the Stoics into their descriptions of divine manifestation. The theories of language were not adopted by the Nag Hammadi writers on a “one-to-one”-scale but rather were reformulated and reshaped to fit the new contexts. The theories were now being used as literary tools to describe the linguistic manifestations of divine female principles. Throughout the analysis of *Trim. Prot.* and *Thund.*, we shall see how several of the topics that were described in this chapter play a central role in the overall interpretation and understanding of the two Nag Hammadi texts. In particular, the Stoic theory of a verbal expression will play a decisive part. As will become apparent, this theory constitutes the frame of the descent of both Protennoia and the female revealer of *Thund*. Meanwhile, the Platonic theories of naming and division (*diairesis*) are especially crucial to the interpretation of *Thund*. 
CHAPTER 3

The Trimorphic Protennoia

The Trimorphic Protennoia in three parts
A sacred scripture Father-written with perfect knowledge

(NHC XIII,1, 50*:22–24)

Beginning with the end; we find the title of the Trimorphic Protennoia (Trim. Prot.) at the end of the entire oeuvre. This is the usual manner for the Nag Hammadi scriptures to be rounded off: the title enclosing the contents of the text. The title of Trim. Prot. recalls the threefold structure of the text and authorizes it with sanctity and divine perfect knowledge.

The threefoldness is not only reflected in the structure of the text, but is a theme throughout which is expressed in several features, for instance the threefold descent of Protennoia; the father, mother and son “trinity” of permanences; the description of Protennoia as three masculinities, three powers, three names and three quadrangles (!). One such triad, with which we will be occupied in this chapter, is the phonetic triad of sound, voice and word. As we shall see, these three terms indicate Protennoia’s different levels of descent as well as the specific auditive mode manifestation. Thus, we shall examine the linguistic manifestation of the First Thought (πρωτ-ennentia).

Through an analysis with special focus on selected passages, we shall investigate Trim. Prot. against the background of the preceding examination of the Stoic philosophy of language. The Stoic understanding of a verbal expression may be seen as an underlying matrix of the linguistic descent of Protennoia; but as will become apparent, Trim. Prot. exemplifies a somewhat opposite understanding of the semantic content of logos than the one expressed in the Stoic theory. Thus, we shall see how in Trim. Prot. the Stoic theory must be understood “upside-down”.

First, however, we shall consider a few formal questions concerning the manuscript and the structure of the text.

The Manuscript

The only extant copy of the Trimorphic Protennoia is in codex XIII; in which it is also the only text that remains in its entirety. It runs from pages 35*–50* in the codex and is followed by the first ten lines of another text which we already
know from codex II,5: the Treatise without Title or On the Origin of the World. Codex XIII was not a separate leather-bound codex when it was found at Nag Hammadi in 1945, but the eight folios (or leaves) which survive were tucked inside the front cover of codex VI, as may be seen on a photograph of the centre of the quire published in the facsimile edition from 1972.1 The photograph was taken by Jean Doresse in 1949 and published in 1961 in Revue d’Égyptologie where the extra folios cannot be seen due to a cutting of the photo.2 According to James M. Robinson it seems likely that the surviving folios were placed inside codex VI in late antiquity, due to the condition of the papyrus. For instance, on page 35*, which is the first page of the remaining folios of codex XIII, there is a lacuna which is framed by a discoloured area. The discoloration was not, as first assumed, caused by fire3 but was brought about by the leather cover of codex VI. A fragment got stuck to the leather and, when the examination of the material began in 1971, it was identified as belonging to page 35* of codex XIII.4 Unfortunately, the tops of all eight of the folios are deteriorated and so the pagination is not visible. However, the handwriting of codex XIII resembles the one we find in codex II, which is the only codex in the Nag Hammadi Library which is not paginated from the scribe’s hand. Taking into account that codex II contains On the Origin of the World (which also follows Trim. Prot. in codex XIII), and that the size and the number of lines per page of the two codices are more or less the same,5 scholars have assumed that the two codices are by the same scribal hand and that codex XIII originally did not have any pagination.6

---

3 This belongs to the more “mythological” part of the story of the discovery, which tells that the peasants who found the jars used the missing part of codex XIII to cook their tea, cf. Martin Krause and Pahor Labib, Gnostische und Hermetische Schriften aus Codex II und VI (Abhandlungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts Kairo, Koptische Reihe, Band 2; Gluckstadt: J. J. Austin, 1971), 14.
5 Codex II averages 35.3 and codex XIII averages 35.5 lines per page, cf. Poirier, La Pensée Première à la triple forme, 3.
6 For a discussion of the scribal hand of codex II, see Søren Giversen, Apocryphon Johannis. The Coptic Text of the Apocryphon Johannis in the Nag Hammadi Library Codex II with Translation, Introduction and Commentary (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1963), 35. About the pagination, see for instance Poirier, La Pensée Première à la triple forme, 2; John D. Turner, “Introduction to
The pagination of codex XIII is therefore hypothetical, indicated by the use of the asterisk*.

On the basis of the full version of *On the Origin of the World* from codex II, the number of folios that follow Trim. Prot. has been calculated to 15, corresponding to 30 pages. Thus there must have been a tractate (or tractates) preceding Trim. Prot. which occupied pages 1*–34* of the codex. The whole of codex XIII then hypothetically had eighty pages or forty folios, a codex consisting of twenty papyrus sheets.7

In his commentary from 2006,8 Paul-Hubert Poirier revives the 1974 proposal of Yvonne Janssens9 that the tractate which is assumed to precede Trim. Prot. could possibly have been yet another copy of the long recension of the *Apocryphon of John*. The suggestion is “matériellement possible”10 and thematically plausible, since Trim. Prot., as Poirier argues, depends on the long recension of the *Apocryphon of John*, not only with regard to the “Pronoia-hymn” but also to other features, for instance the use of “ⲉⲧⲉ ⲡⲁⲓ̈ ⲡⲉ” (“that is”). Poirier states: “La PrôTri aura dès lors été placée à la suite de l’ApocrJn comme une illustration ou un développement hymnique ou arétalogique de celui-ci.”11 The two texts are indeed very similar in many respects and they are, to some degree, interdependent. On the other hand, I remain sceptical about what this assertion might add to our understanding of the two texts besides further establishing their close relationship.12

According to Robinson, who argues that the placement of Trim. Prot. inside the front cover of codex VI can be dated to antiquity, the reason for this placement remains obscure. He does not think that it is due to its affinities with the other tractates of the codex, but rather that external matters, such as the length of the tractates, had been determinative for its inclusion in a codex. He does not doubt that there exists “more subtle relationships” between the tractates within the codices, but expects this to become more apparent as the Nag Hammadi library is explored in more detail.13

---

11   Loc. cit.
12   The similarities between them will be discussed below.
13   Robinson, “Inside the Front Cover of Codex VI,” 82.
Thirty-four years of study later, in 2006, Michael A. Williams and Lance Jenott published an article, “Inside the covers of codex VI” (recalling the title of Robinson’s piece). It is an investigation of the composition of codex VI, in which they compare the tractates to one another in order to discover if the scribe had a specific intention by bringing them together in one codex. Codex VI contains very different kinds of texts, Christian, Hermetic and philosophical, and is therefore an interesting and difficult compilation to analyse as a whole. In addition to a small extract from Plato’s Republic (VI,5) and three Hermetic tractates, the Discourse on the Eighth and the Ninth (VI,6), the Prayer of Thanksgiving (VI,7) and the Asclepius (VI,8), one finds three Christian texts: the Acts of Peter and the Twelve Apostles (VI,1), the Authoritative Teaching (VI,3) and the Concept of Our Great Power (VI,7). Last, but not least, is a text which is dealt with in the present study: the Thunder: Perfect Mind (VI,2), which is not clearly either a Christian or a Hermetic text.14 In their article, Williams and Jenott argue that the scribe had specific intentions when composing codex VI. They argue for a thematic continuity within this seemingly heterogeneous group of texts, based partly on the analysis of the physical appearance of the codex and partly on the thematic content of the texts. Concerning the latter, Williams and Jenott find that the unifying principle which runs through the entire codex, may be identified as a thoroughgoing reference to the Great Power and the Logos as “a mediator or a mode of appearance of the transcendent being”.15 Moreover, they point to the text’s focus on writings or books as the media of revelation. Although I find these themes rather general and think that they might be said to cover many texts in the Nag Hammadi collection, it remains true that these common themes are present in the texts of codex VI.

The remains of codex XIII were found together with this collection. The question is, then, whether Trim. Prot. fits into the supposed thematic continuity of codex VI. According to Williams and Jenott, the placement of Trim. Prot. inside the front covers of codex VI supports and confirms their thesis about the design and thematic continuity of the codex. The final revelation of Protennoia as the Word who “puts on” Jesus constitutes an appropriate introduction to the first text in codex VI, where Jesus meets his disciples in disguise. Moreover, they claim, Trim. Prot. also deals with the “Great Daimon” through

14 See chapter on Thund. for further identification of the text.
which the Revealer works, which we also see in VI,8.16 I am not sure that these very general themes are sufficient to argue for a rationale behind the placement of Trim. Prot. in codex VI. However, Williams and Jenott also point, with N. Denzey,17 to the parallels between Thund. and Trim. Prot. with particular regard to the “I am”-proclamations as the conclusive argument for the inclusion to make sense.18 The “I am”-proclamations are, in my opinion, indeed an obvious parallel between Thund. and Trim. Prot., but the most striking feature remains, as we shall see, that these “I am”-proclamations are combined with a linguistic vocabulary that resembles one deriving from Stoic dialectics.

It is certainly difficult to determine whether the many similar traits in Trim. Prot. and Thund. were the reason for the insertion of Trim. Prot. into codex VI and we shall probably never know for sure. However, the placement of both texts in codex VI is certainly interesting in the light of the similarities between them, and they are indeed reason enough to compare them, as is done in the present study.

The Content of the Trimorphic Protennoia

Trim. Prot. is a revelation monologue performed by the First Thought of the Father: Protennoia (προτεννοια). It is one of the most poetic tractates in the Nag Hammadi collection due to its characteristic and extensive use of “I am”-sayings (ἀνωκ τε) and first-person narrative. Only the Thunder: Perfect Mind and the “Pronoia-hymn” in the long recension of the Apocryphon of John (NHC II,1 and IV,1) resemble Trim. Prot. on this point.19 The monologue is an account of Protennoia’s three descents to the Underworld (ἀμητε). She descends as Sound (γροογ), Voice (σμη), and Word (λογος), respectively, with the aim of saving those who belong to her—“the Sons of Light”—from the bonds of Demons, so that they may enter the place that they originated from (41*:4–20). She also descends to illumine those who dwell in darkness (46*:32). From time to time, the monologue switches to third-person singular and first-person plural narrative. Thus, the tractate mixes the aretalogical revelation with narrative, a fact that has made Poirier call it “un texte hybride”.20

16 Ibid.: 1048–1050.
18 Williams and Jenott, “Inside the Covers of Codex VI,” 1050–1051.
19 Passages in the “I am”-style do occur sporadically in other Nag Hammadi texts, for instance, Treatise without Title (On the Origin of the World) (NHC II,5 and XIII,2) (114:6–15), which is a parallel text to one found in Thund.. See chapter on Thund. for the analysis of the specific passage.
20 Cf. Poirier, La Pensée Première à la triple forme, 14.
The blend makes the tractate even more peculiar in form than, for instance, *Thund.*, which is much tighter and more monotonous in style. In the end *Trim. Prot.* may be identified as a “revelation discourse” as is done by J.-M. Sevrin and confirmed by Poirier.\(^{21}\) This genre characterization fits the tractate very well.

The text falls into three parts, each with its own subtitle:

1. **The Discourse of Protennoia** (35*:1–42*:3)
2. **On Fate** (42*:4–46*:4)
3. **The Discourse of the Manifestation** (46*:5–50*:21)

The remaining three lines (50*:22–24) are the title of the text:

“The Trimorphic Protennoia in three parts. A sacred scripture Father-written with perfect knowledge”.

The main structure of the text is naturally determined by the three separate parts, but an analysis of the structure of each part may be approached from different criteria, both formal (by the shift of persons) and thematic. The structure, which I outline here, follows the tripartite structure of the text and takes both criteria into account.

The Discourse of Protennoia (35*:1–42*:3)
The Discourse of Protennoia is the first and longest part of *Trim. Prot.* It is opened by the self-proclamation: “It is I, the Protennoia” ([ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲧⲡⲣⲱ[ⲧⲉⲛⲛⲟⲓⲁ]). Thus begins the manifestation of the First Thought of the Father.

First and third-person narratives and “I am”-proclamations. First and third-person narratives about the Sound as three permanences: Father, Mother and Son. It is perceptible as Voice and has a Word within it.

“I am”-proclamations by Protennoia. She is Barbelo, the Mother, the Light as well as Meirothea.

Third-person narrative about the Son who glorifies and establishes his Aeons and is glorified by them.

Third-person narrative concerning the great Demon Yaltabaoth and the Epinoia of the Light. Yaltabaoth creates the lower aeons by his own power.

First and third-person narratives and “I am”-proclamations. First person narrative about the first descent of Protennoia as Sound and the soteriological aim of this. Third-person narrative about the disturbance of the Abyss and the creation of man.

First-person narrative and “I am”-proclamations about the descent of Protennoia into Chaos to tell the Sons of Light about the mystery which is to save them from the chains of the Demons of the Underworld and let them enter into the place where they were at first.

Title of the first part.

On Fate (42*:4–46*:4)
The second part of Trim. Prot. opens, like the first part, with a small passage of “I am”-proclamations.

“I am”-proclamations by Protennoia as Sound. She is the Syzygetic One since she is both Thought, Sound and Voice and the Mother of Sound.

First-person narrative about the second descent of Protennoia, now in the likeness of a female. She tells the Sons of Light of the coming aeon and of this particular aeon, which is run by time, i.e. Fate.

Third-person and first-person (pl.) narratives about the Authorities and their reaction to the descent of Protennoia. They do not understand the Sound and the Voice.

Second-person admonitions. Call to the listeners: “the Sons of Thought” are to listen to the Voice.
45*:2–12  “I am”-proclamations by Protennoia as the Andro-gynous One. She brings a Voice of the Sound to the ears of “those who know her”.

45*:12–46*:3  First and second-person narratives.
45*:12–20  Second-person narrative. Invitation to “those who know her” to enter into the exalted, perfect light and become glorious through baptism.
45*:21–46*:3  First-person narrative about the form-giving Protennoia and her ascent to her Light.
46*:4  Title of the second part.

The Discourse of the Manifestation (46*:5–50*:21)
The third and last part fills out the five remaining pages of Trim. Prot. and opens, as do the other two parts, with a passage of “I am”-proclamations.

46*:5–15  “I am”-proclamations by Protennoia as Word.
46*:16–33  Third-person narrative about the Silence, the Word’s relation to and place within this Silence.
46*:33–47*:lacuna  Second-person admonitions to listen.
47*:29–48*:35  First-person narrative about the Word leading “someone” through the baptism of the Five Seals.
48*:35–49*:26  First-person narrative and “I am”-proclamations about the Word and his many manifestations.
49*:26–50*:12  First and third-person narratives. Description of the Five Seals.
50*:12–16  First-person narrative about Protennoia as the Word incarnated in Jesus.
50*:16–20  Epilogue. First-person narrative about the ascent of Protennoia into the holy Light in the Silence together with her “seed”.
50*:21  Title of the third part.
50*:22  Title of the tractate.
50*:23–24  “Colophon”.

The structure of Trim. Prot. presented here has only minor variations to Poirier’s.22 As is apparent, the structure of the text does not follow the three

22 Poirier, La Pensée Première à la triple forme, 15–22.
descents of Protennoia. Instead, the text switches back and forth between “I am”-proclamations and narrative passages, whilst, continually referring to the descents.\textsuperscript{23} Moreover, the descents are not clearly divided between Protennoia’s three aspects as Sound, Voice and Word. It is obvious that the structure of \textit{Trim. Prot.} does not follow a logical scheme, which would have been convenient for the analysis of the text. On the other hand, \textit{Trim. Prot.} is not a piece of systematic theology and we, as modern readers, cannot expect consistency in the manner in which its theology is presented.

Now we move on to one of the most distinctive features of \textit{Trim. Prot.}: the “I am”-proclamations, including a consideration of its literary parallels.

\textit{“I am”-Proclamations and Trim. Prot.’s Literary Parallels}

Protennoia’s revelation discourse is characterized by the numerous “I am”-proclamations (ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲡⲉ/ⲧⲉ) of the goddess. This distinctive literary feature is known from a relatively limited amount of sources from \textit{Trim. Prot.}’s nearest textual environment, that is, Jewish, Christian and Egyptian sources. Of these, the most obvious parallels are the self-proclamations of the Jewish Wisdom figure חכמה/σοφία/Sophia as she appears in Proverbs 8 and \textit{Sirach} 24. Not only does the Jewish Sophia present herself in “I am”-proclamations, she also constitutes a parallel to Protennoia’s relationship to the Father/the Invisible Spirit as his First Thought as well as to her descent into the world in order to save man from the “wrong” powers.

A comparison with Proverbs 8 is useful at this point. First with regard to the pre-existence of the divine wisdom/first thought: “The Lord created me at the beginning of his work, the first of his acts of long ago. Ages ago I was set up, at the first, before the beginning of the earth” (8:22–23); and further on in 8:27ff. concerning the participation in the creation of the cosmos: “When he established the heavens, I was there . . . when he marked out the foundations of the earth, then I was besides him, like a master worker, and I was daily his delight, rejoicing before him always, rejoicing in his inhabited world and delighting in the human race” (8:27–31).\textsuperscript{24} Dame Wisdom continues her speech in 8:32 about the necessity for her audience to listen to her message as well as to follow her path and finding her: “And now my children, listen to me: happy are those who keep my ways. Hear instruction and be wise, and do not neglect it. Happy is the one who listens to me, watching daily at my gates, waiting beside


\textsuperscript{24} Translation is borrowed from NRSV.
my doors. For whoever finds me finds life and obtains favour from the Lord; but those who miss me injure themselves; all who hate me love death” (8:32–36).25

In his extensive monograph, Turner has shown how the Hellenistic Jewish Wisdom speculation is one of the “building blocks of Sethian doctrine”.26 In an exemplary manner, he provides an outline of the Jewish Sophia traditions in the Classic Gnostic material. Already in 1970, G. W. MacRae published his seminal article on this particular issue in which he enumerates the parallels between the Jewish and the Gnostic Sophia. MacRae notices the Gnostic distinction between the higher and the lower Sophia-like figures;27 however, Turner explains the different roles of the female deities very clearly:

In the hands of the Sethian Gnostics, the biblical functions of Sophia as creator, nourisher, and enlightener of the world were distributed among a hierarchy of feminine principles: a divine mother called Barbelo, the First Thought of the supreme deity, the Invisible Spirit; and a lower Sophia responsible for both the creation of the physical world and the incarnation of portions of the supreme Mother’s divine essence into human bodies.28

It is furthermore the general opinion that the Jewish sapiential tradition also had an impact on the formation of the Johannine Logos-Christ,29 hence the ongoing obligation to compare Trim. Prot. with the Johannine Prologue.30 It is,

25 Loc. cit.
28 Turner, Sethian Gnosticism and the Platonic Tradition, 223.
in fact, reasonable to draw parallels between these two texts not only because the “I am”-proclamations are present in both texts, but also with regard to their structure and content. Not wanting to begin this detailed discussion at this particular point, it is necessary to stress one issue that is of special importance to the present study, namely, the linguistic focus, which plays an essential role in both the Johannine prologue as well as in the descents of Protennoia. The identification of Christ as the Word (λόγος) is a clear parallel to the third descent of Protennoia, in which she similarly proclaims to be the Word (ⲗⲟⲅⲟⲥ). The numerous parallels between the two texts are listed by Poirier together with several other Jewish and Christian parallels.\footnote{Poirier, La Pensée Première à la triple forme, 83–105.} Some of the themes that recur in both texts are the themes of light (Jn 1:5, 9 and Trim. Prot. 37*:7–8, 13–14, 46*:32–33), emission (Jn 1:6 and Trim. Prot. 46*:31–32) and life (Jn 1:4 and Trim. Prot. 35*:12–13). Although there are many similarities between the Johannine Logos and Protennoia-Logos, there are also major differences, which have been somewhat underestimated in previous scholarship.

Firstly, the Johannine Logos is only Word, whereas the author of Trim. Prot. expands the linguistic idea, so that Protennoia is Sound, Voice and Word. According to Poirier, the author was thus “led to engage in a polemical reading of the prologue. This had the effect of devaluing the Johannine, and purely Christian, Logos and of elevating the Gnostic Logos”.\footnote{Poirier, “The Trimorphic Protennoia (NHC XIII,1) and the Johannine Prologue: A Reconsideration,” in The Legacy of John. Second-Century Reception of the Fourth Gospel (ed. Tuomas Rasimus; NovTSup 132; Leiden: Brill, 2010), 93–103.} Furthermore, he states that “the Trimorphic Protennoia polemically reinterprets the Johannine prologue through use of allusions intended to convince the reader that the Logos-Protennoia is superior to the incarnated Logos of the Fourth Gospel.”\footnote{Ibid.: 102.} Although Poirier does not elaborate, he seems to assume that the linguistic triad of Protennoia should somehow demonstrate a polemicizing against the Logos Christology of the Gospel of John. This could very well be the case, since this kind of reinterpretation of Scripture is known from other Classic Gnostic sources. An example of this would be the Gospel of Judas which takes part of the New Testament passion narrative and reinterprets it in such a way that the teaching of the disciples is exposed as false and the narrative as such is employed to frame an instruction in Classic Gnostic cosmology. However, the Gospel of Judas still operates within a Christian framework using well-known
stories to work out a subtle exegesis. Moreover, within the Nag Hammadi collection itself, we find several examples of biblical interpretation, which may, or may not, be read as polemicizing against canonical scriptures; For instance, the *Hypostasis of the Archons* (NHC II,4) which is a “rewriting” of Genesis 1–6.

The same may be said about *Trim. Prot*. In all probability, the authors of these texts belonged to Christian communities which read and interpreted the canonical gospels. It seems unlikely that they would have integrated so much canonical material in their respective writings if they were not themselves committed to the core of the Christian salvation story—the coming, the crucifixion and the resurrection of Christ. This, however, does not change the fact that they tell the stories differently. In the case of *Trim. Prot.*, it could be read as an *elaboration* of the Logos Christology of the Gospel of John. This is connected to the second major difference between the Johannine Logos and Protennoia-Logos that I shall discuss in what follows.

It is important that we pay attention to the diverting depictions of the two *logoi*, especially with regard to their cosmic locations. The Johannine Logos is identified as Word at the beginning when it is residing with God (ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος) (Jn 1:1). Protennoia, by contrast, is silent as she exists as the Thought of the Invisible One; thus she is not yet audible. Only as she descends into the sensible world does she turn into entities that can be heard: Sound, Voice and Word (Logos). Understood in this way, *Trim. Prot.* retains the manifestation of the divine Word but it elaborates on the Gospel of John by adding several linguistic terms. These terms, I argue, derive from Stoic dialectics. The Gospel of John not only contains a parallel to the Logos but also to the Voice (φωνή). In the same manner as in *Trim. Prot.*, the author of John lets the Voice precede the Logos, although not as a previous mode of manifestation but in the form of John the Baptist: ἐγὼ φωνὴ βοῶντος ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ. εὑθύνατε τὴν ὁδὸν κυρίου (Jn 1:23). With John the Baptist as the Voice preceding the Word we have at least part of the same sequence that is present in *Trim. Prot.* Furthermore, the Voice is present in several other ways in John. One important instance is the way in which the Spirit (πνεῦμα) is described in


35 For an analysis of the relation between Genesis and the *Hypostasis of the Archons*, see Ingvild S. Gilhus, *The Nature of the Archons. A Study of the Soteriology of a Gnostic Treatise from Nag Hammadi (CG II,4)* (StOR 12; Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1985), esp. 21–36. There are numerous examples of this kind of “Rewritten Scripture” in the Nag Hammadi collection, for instance: the *Apocryphon of John* (NHC II,1; III,1; IV,1 and BG,2) and the *Gospel of Truth* (NHC I,3 and XII,2).
3:8. One can hear its voice (τὴν φωνὴν αὐτοῦ) but not know where it comes from and where it goes. Elsewhere, φωνή is connected directly to the son of God, in that he is able to awaken the dead by his voice alone (5:25 and 11:43). We also encounter a more classic example in John, namely the voice from heaven (12:28) as the voice of the father speaking to his son. These examples show that the author of John has also been occupied with linguistic terminology in his/her descriptions of divine manifestations. Whether the author, directly or indirectly, was inspired by the Stoic theory of a verbal expression remains an open question. However, the fact that the terminology is clearly present in John, and that there are numerous other parallels between the two texts, could indicate that John was a contributing factor to the linguistic focus in Trim. Prot.36

Before turning to the analysis of the text, we shall touch upon a few other parallels to Trim. Prot.

A parallel to the “I am”-proclamations is found in the Isis aretalogies. They are usually considered in relation to Thund., since they provide a clear parallel to that text’s monotonous style. However, at just the point where they do not seem to fit with Thund.—the nature of the self-proclamations—they do fit with Trim. Prot. instead. In Thund., the self-proclamations are, for the greater part, formulated as paradoxes or antitheses, whereas in both the Isis aretalogies and in Trim. Prot. the self-proclamations only consist of positive designations of the goddesses. We shall explore this topic further in the next chapter.

Within the Nag Hammadi collection, two parallels to the “I am”-proclamations are found. These are, as already mentioned, Thund. and the Pronoia-hymn from the long recension of the Apocryphon of John. Whereas the similarities with Thund. have already been discussed and are under ongoing scrutiny, the relation to the Pronoia-hymn deserves our brief attention here.

The close relationship between the Pronoia-hymn and Trim. Prot. led to Poirier’s argument that Trim. Prot. was a development of Apocryphon of John: “La PrôTri aura dès lors été place à la suite de l’Apocrœn comme une illustration ou un développement hymnique ou arétologique de celui-ci.”37 As Poirier recalls, the interdependence between the two texts was already seen by the Berliner Arbeitskreis in 1973,38 and noted again by Janssens the year after.39

36 I thank Tuomas Rasimus for making me aware of this particular point.
37 Poirier, La Pensée Première à la triple forme, 12.
Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, both Janssens and Poirier suggested a material relationship between the two texts in that the tractate which preceded *Trim. Prot.* in codex XIII could have been the long recension of the *Apocryphon of John.*40 The two texts also overlap thematically and in terms of vocabulary. The tripartite structure of the Pronoia-hymn which marks the three descents of Pronoia into the world corresponds to the tripartite structure of *Trim. Prot.* in its whole and also to the triads with which Protennoia identifies herself: Sound-Voice-Word and Father-Mother-Son. Poirier shows this relationship very clearly and to him there is no doubt that the author of *Trim. Prot.* elaborates on the Pronoia-hymn.41 For Janssens it was the mention of several mythological characters that caused her to begin the translation of *Trim. Prot.* which eventually became the *editio princeps* of the text:

\[\ldots \text{la } Προτέννοια n'était-elle pas la } Πρόνοια \text{ ou Pensée Première de l’Ap Jo? le nom de Barbélo était d’ailleurs présent de part et d’autre, de même que la } Παρθένος, \text{ le } Πνεῦμα, \text{ l’}Επίνοια, \text{l’androgyne; mais aussi Ialdabaôth-Saclas et ses archontes }\ldots \text{et j’en passe!}^{42}\]

The parallels mentioned by Janssens are, in fact, what relates *Trim. Prot.* to the Sethite or especially the Barbeloite tradition, which were discussed in the previous chapter. *Trim. Prot.* is certainly associated with what Rasimus calls the Classic Gnostic tradition containing the Sethite, Ophite and Barbeloite material.

I agree with Poirier and others that *Trim. Prot.* is strongly connected to the Pronoia-hymn of the long recension of *Ap. John* and that it relies on the tripartite descent structure combined with traditional mytholegoumena from the Barbeloite tradition. However, *Trim. Prot.* is unique in this collection of texts because of its use of language-related terms. The tripartite descent of Pronoia has in *Trim. Prot.* become the tripartite *linguistic* descent of Protennoia.

**Linguistic Manifestation in the Trimorphic Protennoia**

The most striking element in *Trim. Prot.* must be the triadic linguistic manifestation of Protennoia in Sound (所有情节), Voice (ἐννοία) and Word (λόγος). These

---

41 Poirier, *La Pensée Première à la triple forme,* 68–81, where he deals with the topic in detail.
terms are our point of departure in the analysis that follows. In the history of research, this theme has not been left unexplored but nor has it been treated in great detail. To date, only two studies of any length have been published on the linguistic terms in Trim. Prot.. These are Paul-Hubert Poirier’s article from 2009 “La triade son—voix—parole/discours dans la Prôtennoia Trimorphe (NH XIII,1) et ses sources” and Philippe Luisier’s article from 2006, “De Philon d’Alexandrie à la Prôtennoia Trimorphe”. They will be discussed throughout.

ϜϦΟΟΥ, ΣϦΗ and ΛΟΓΟϹ—Diversities of Translation

Before we begin the analysis, it is important to draw attention to a disagreement about the translation of the Coptic words ϜϦΟΟΥ, ΣϦΗ and ΛΟΓΟϹ, which unfortunately causes some confusion. Most of the commentaries and translations of Trim. Prot. follow the suggestion made by S. Emmel in an unpublished article from 1978 (Sound, Voice and Word in NHC XIII,1*: Some Philological Considerations, Claremont Graduate School).43 Emmel translates the triad ϜϦΟΟΥ, ΣϦΗ and ΛΟΓΟϹ as sound, voice and word. In his extensive commentary with a French translation of Trim. Prot., Poirier chooses to translate the triad as son, voix and parole/discours.44 John D. Turner, on the other hand, who has provided the only English edition of the text to date, translates as voice, speech and word, respectively.45 All the translations are possible renderings of the Coptic terms, but the difficulties arise when one considers the hypothetical Greek terms behind the Coptic. Assuming that the Nag Hammadi texts were originally composed in Greek, this issue is of some interest in itself. Furthermore, when the linguistic triad is considered against the background of a specific Stoic counterpart, it becomes all the more important to discern the Greek Vorlage from this cluster of linguistic terms.

It is only the first two terms of the triad that cause problems with regard to translation, since the last term is given in its Greco-Coptic form ΛΟΓΟϹ (logos). As for ϜϦΟΟΥ and ΣϦΗ the difficulties lie in the fact that the terms are often

---

used interchangeably meaning either sound or voice. However, Emmel’s article sheds some light on the issue. In Turner’s words:

As S. Emmel has pointed out (“Sound, Voice and Word”), careful study of the first two terms ὀὖόγον (masc. “Voice”), σῆ (fem. articulate sound, “Speech”) and λόγος (masc. “Word”) in the Sahidic NT suggests that ὀữuγον refers to sound in general whether articulate or not, while σῆ generally refers to articulate sound or speech .

Even though Turner cites Emmel’s study, which speaks for a translation of the triad by “sound-voice-word”, he still sees Emmel’s article as presenting the possibility of translating “voice-speech-word”. Poirier specifies the reading of Emmel:

... ὀữuγον écrit-il, est utilisé en référence à des sons non humains (ήχεῖν, ἧχος et φθόγγος en 1 Co 14, 7) ou à des sons humains non spécifiques ou inarticulés (ἀκοή, ἀλαλάζειν, ἀναφωνέω et φθόγγος en Rm 10, 18 [=Ps 18 LXX, 5]). [...] σῆ, d’autre côté, est utilisé en référence à des sons humains articulés (ἀκούειν en Ac 15, 12, ἀφωνος, ἄνωτίζεσθαι, κενοφωνία et κραυγή en Mt 25, 6 et Lc 1, 42).

From this quotation, it is clear that the distinction is made between non-human or inarticulate human sounds on the one hand and articulate human sounds on the other. As we shall see below, this corresponds well to the Stoic sequence of a verbal expression.

Turner and Poirier both suggest that the Coptic ὀữuγον may be a translation of the Greek φθόγγος and that σῆ may be a translation of φωνή. One would therefore expect that they actually agreed on translating the triad as “sound-voice-word” based on the supposed Greek equivalent “φθόγγος, φωνή, λόγος”. However, that is not the case, for even the Greek terms have different

---


meanings. Thus, φθόγγος may mean sound, voice, speech, utterance or saying. However, the most common sense seems to be sound.\textsuperscript{51} The meaning of φωνή differs between sound, voice, tone, sound of voice, speech and utterance.\textsuperscript{52} Therefore, Turner’s translation “voice-speech-word” is perfectly possible.

Furthermore, confusing as it may be, the present study argues that yet another Greek triad might lie behind the Coptic one. The triad I wish to bring into focus is the one which the Stoics, according to Diogenes Laertius, formulated in order to give a precise description of what goes into in a verbal expression. The Stoic sequence that corresponds to the hearable part of Protennoia’s manifestation appears as follows: φωνή—λέξις—λόγος, which according to Ax may be rendered Laut—Stimme—Sprache.\textsuperscript{53} Here, we have the understanding of φωνή as sound. Part of the difficulty of translating φωνή and σῆ is that these terms are so broad and they are used to mean both sound and voice. In Stoic theory φωνή is, in fact, the heading of the entire account: τέχνη περὶ φωνῆς. This means that the sequence of a verbal expression is formed as a diairesis, a division, of φωνή which again signifies that the terms included in the sequence are all actually different aspects of φωνή. Understood in this manner, the first step in the Stoic sequence is φωνή perceived as inarticulate sound (ἦχος), the second is λέξις identified as an articulate voice (φωνή) which is writable but not necessarily intelligible. The third is the perfectly intelligible and articulate λόγος which is the last division of φωνή, and thus still part of it.

Since there are several possibilities for translation of the Coptic terms in the light of the supposed Greek Vorlage, just as there are several possibilities of translation of the Greek terms, I suggest that our focus should be turned towards two things with regard to the triad of Trim. Prot. and its Greek equivalent and English translation: 1) It is of great importance that we are dealing with a cluster of terms; and 2) that this cluster expresses a particular movement, from inarticulate, to articulate but unintelligible, to articulate and intelligible. Thus, the linguistic triad of Trim. Prot. may be understood as follows: ψροό is the inarticulate sound, which first comes forth. σῆ is the articulate sound, which is heard as a voice; in other words, σῆ is a φωνή with the specific meaning of human, articulate sound. In the Stoic sequence, this level corresponds to that of λέξις. At last λόγος comes forth as the articulate, intelligible, rational discourse.

\textsuperscript{51} LSJ: 1929.

\textsuperscript{52} Ibid.: 1967–1968. Here, it should be noted that at some point the articulateness of φωνή is emphasized.

\textsuperscript{53} See the previous chapter on Ancient Philosophy of Language.
Employing the common renderings of the Greek terms included in the Stoic triad, Turner’s translation of the triad of *Trim. Prot.* as “voice-speech-word” corresponds, in fact, somewhat better than that of every other translator to the way the Stoic sequence is presented. Furthermore, Turner was the first to make the comparison between the Stoic material and *Trim. Prot.*’s linguistic descent.\(^{54}\) However, I am not sure whether his translation is on the basis of a comparison with the Stoic material. In any case, his comparison of the two triads is to the point. Moreover, they are even more closely connected, in that both the Stoic verbal expression and the linguistic manifestation of Protennoia are issued from within Thought (Διανοία/ⲙⲉⲉⲩⲉ or ἐπινοία/ⲡⲣⲱⲧⲛⲟⲓⲁ).\(^{55}\) Inspired by Poirier, who has helpfully sketched out the sequence of manifestation in *Trim. Prot.*,\(^{56}\) I render it as follows:

\[
\text{καρωκ— الهيئة— ροογ— σΗ— λογος} \\
\text{Silence—Thought—Sound—Voice—Word/Discourse}
\]

This sequence differs slightly from the one adduced by Poirier, which does not include Silence but, on the other hand, includes perception and knowledge in parentheses. I have added Silence to the sequence because it is an important element in the overall understanding of the linguistic manifestation of Protennoia. Even though Turner’s rendering of the sequence corresponds well to the Stoic one, I find it helpful to preserve the first perceptible step in the sequence to a mere sound.

Now, the Stoic sequence is not the only existing one that might form a background for the hearable triad “ροογ—σΗ—λογος”. In his article from 2009, Poirier considers in greater detail the background for this Coptic triad. He mentions the use of the terms in Plato, Aristotle, Plutarch, Lucretius, Plotinus and Augustine.\(^{57}\) As we saw earlier, the terms in question were invented by Aristotle, although they are already implicit in Plato. However, it was the Stoics, who developed the use of the terms and it was their dialectical theories that became “trendsetting”.\(^{58}\) Thus, it is likely that it was the Stoic theory

---

\(^{54}\) Turner, *Sethian Gnosticism and the Platonic Tradition*, 83 and 153.

\(^{55}\) The differences between these concepts are discussed in more detail in the chapter on Thund.

\(^{56}\) Poirier, *La Pensée Première à la triple forme*, 106: الهيئة—(λογος/σΗ)—ροογ—σΗ— λογος.

\(^{57}\) Poirier, “La triade son—voix—parole/discours dans la Prôtènnoia Trimorphe (NH XIII,1) et ses sources,” 114–117.

\(^{58}\) See chapter on philosophy under “The Things which Signify”.

that was adopted by later thinkers, like Philo, Plotinus and Augustine. On the basis of Poirier’s examination of the material from Augustine’s *De doctrina christiana* there is no doubt that in his account of the Wisdom’s manifestation in the world a similar metaphorical use of the linguistic terms is involved. The sequence used by Augustine is presented as follows: *cogitatio—verbum—sonus—vox—locutio*. It is dealt with in more detail in the following chapter on *Thund.*, and hence it suffices for now to regard it as a parallel to the adoption of the Stoic material in *Trim. Prot.*

Yet another parallel to the linguistic manifestation of Protennoia is found in some fragments of Heracleon’s commentary on the Gospel of John, attested by Origen. The commentary on John 1:23 runs: "The Word is the Saviour, the Voice is the one in the desert, the one thought out by John, the Sound is every prophetic order"). This is treated briefly by Poirier, who argues that even though Heracleon and *Trim. Prot.* adopt the same material in the same metaphorical manner:

... celui-ci est appliqué de part et d’autre à des contexts différents. Dans le cas de la PrôTrî, ce context est philosophique et non prophétologique ou christologique.

Thus, Poirier argues against P. Luisier who in his article from 2006 suggested reading *Trim. Prot.* in light of the Heracleon fragment. Through an analysis of the Greek background to the Coptic triad, Luisier had suggested that the Greek equivalent would have looked like this: ἦχος—φωνή—λόγος. This differs from the Greek triads reconstructed by Poirier and Turner, in that it takes ρ Rousseau to be a translation of ἦχος rather than φθόγγος. Luisier bases his argument

---


on the Heracleon fragment, in which the same sequence may be detected. He acknowledges that the linguistic triad is of Stoic origin and detects it in a wide range of ancient sources from Dionysius Thrax, Cicero and Plotinus over Poimandres, the Hymn of the Pearl, and last but not least, Thund. Recognizing the prevalence of the triad, Luisier describes it as forming “une triade somme toute banale”. Moreover, he finds that the specifically salvific use of the terms in both Heracleon and in Trim. Prot. is an adoption of the allegorical use of the terms, as found in Philo’s work. According to Luisier, Philo employs the triad to show how the prophet is not just a simple instrument through whom God speaks for “certes il émet des sons, mais à travers sa voix, c’est en fait la parole de Dieu qui s’exprime”. Thus, Luisier understands the Heracleon fragment as an expression of a similar conception of the function of a prophet:

Jean-Baptiste, quant à lui, est la voix qui retentit dans le désert, ainsi qu’il le dit lui-même en citant Is 40,3: ἐγὼ φωνὴ βοῶντος ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ (Jn 1,23). Finalement, avec Jésus, c’est la parole, le Logos même de Dieu qui se manifeste.

Luisier argues that a similar interpretation of Christian salvation history is involved in Trim. Prot., formed through the tripartite grammatical theme combined with references to baptism. The latter links the Nag Hammadi text even closer to Heracleon’s commentary on John, and thus Luisier suggests a prophetic context for Trim. Prot.. This, furthermore, implies that the three different acts of salvific manifestations had different performers: from John the Baptist towards Christ the Logos. But in Trim. Prot. it is Protennoia who descends all three times although in different forms or aspects. This point has also been noted by Poirier who says: “… ce traité demeure étranger à la prophé-

---

64 Ibid.: 538–542 and 553–555. With regard to Thund., he only mentions the passage in 14:12–13, whereas I argue in the next chapter that the linguistic focus is found all over the text.
65 Ibid.: 540.
66 Ibid.: 549.
67 Loc. cit.
68 Ibid.: 553–555.
69 This corresponds to the suggestion put forth by Denzey, “What did the Montanists read?” in which she argues for an understanding of Trim. Prot. and Thund. as prophetic literature in line with Montanist material.
The Trimorphic Protennoia

Moreover, as will become apparent through the analysis, *Trim. Prot.* reinterprets the Stoic material in such a way that the levels of intelligibility within the sequence of a verbal expression are redefined. However, there is no doubt that the Heracleon fragment is an obvious parallel to the linguistic manifestation in *Trim. Prot.*, in that both use the linguistic material in a salvific context. On the other hand, they use it very differently.

We will keep in mind this short investigation of the background for the linguistic triad ὑρῷο, ὅμη and λόγος when analysing *Trim. Prot.*'s specific use of the terms.

*First Part: The Discourse of Protennoia*

The first part of the monologue of Protennoia begins with a passage of “I am”-proclamations (35*:1–36*:27), as do every other major part of the text. In the entire text, this first monologue is the longest passage of “I am”-proclamations. It forms an introduction to the revelation by letting the reader know who Protennoia is in relation to every level of the world, that is, both the divine All (πάντα) and the human/sensible Cosmos (κόσμος) or Tartaros (ταρταρός). Protennoia is defined as first and foremost the Thought (ἀνοκτῶθαι) (35*:1). She describes her relation to the divine as a co-existence with the Invisible One, which is the Father, and with the All. She is herself the Invisible One within the All (35*:24), but also the Thought of the Invisible One (35*:8–9) as well as the All itself (35*:31). Further on, she is primarily described as the Thought of the Father (for instance, 36*:17), but here in the introduction it is emphasized that Protennoia is exceedingly interwoven with the Father and the All. She is, so to speak, as inseparable from the Father as a thought is from our minds. This portrayal recalls the character of the Jewish Wisdom who describes her pre-existence and co-existence with God in “I am”-proclamations especially in Proverbs 8.

Protennoia’s relation to the visible world is expressed in terms that make one think of pantheism: “… since I move in every creature” (ἐγὼ ΚΩΜΗ ΓΡΑΙΩΝ ΚΩΝΟΝΤ ΜΗ) (35*:11–12). This recalls the way in which the *Wisdom of Solomon* describes Wisdom as pervading and penetrating all things (7:24). However, “pantheism” might not be the most adequate term for Protennoia’s participation in the world because that would somehow imply that she is present within every aspect of the world and perhaps even responsible for its creation, which is not the case in *Trim. Prot.* Rather, the text clearly belongs to the Barbeloite tradition that sees the world as created by the demiurge-like Yaldabaoth. Protennoia’s

---

70 Poirier, *La Pensée Première à la triple forme*, 110.
involvement with the world takes place through an aspect (or in Turner’s words an “avatar”)\textsuperscript{71} of her, which is the Epinoia (ἐπινοία). That is described as a movement which exists at every living level of the world (although animals, plants and stones do not seem to be included), from the highest Powers and invisible Lights over the Archons, Angels and Demons to the souls in Tartaros as well as the material souls. She is the one who awakens those who sleep and makes them see. Throughout Trim. Prot. there are four appearances of Epinoia: the first one is here in 35*:13 and the three others are all on page 39*:19, 30, 32. In this first instance, she plays a “life-giving” role in that Protennoia proclaims: “It is I who am the life of my Epinoia” (ἉΝΩ ΠΛΗΡΗ ἩΧΑΓΕΠΙΝΟΙΑ).\textsuperscript{72} This recalls the Apocryphon of John\textsuperscript{73} in which Epinoia is the aspect of Pronoia/Barbelo that is sent down to help awake Adam. She is called ζΩΗ (life), since “she assists the whole creature” (ἐκφραστικὴ ἙΚΤΙΚΗ ΤΗΡΗ) (20:19–20). That is also what is at stake in Trim. Prot. when Epinoia is described as a movement in every part of the visible world. Her presence makes the creation alive and thus it is able to move. The life-giving aspect of Epinoia is also emphasized in the Hypostasis of the Archons (NHC II,4),\textsuperscript{74} in which an Ophite reinterpretation of Genesis is found. In the creation account of Adam, it is Eve who awakens him from the sleep that the Powers had set upon him when they created Eve. Eve is, meanwhile, endowed with the divine female principle, which is similar to Epinoia. When Adam wakes up, he praises Eve: “You have given me life. You will be called the mother of the living” (.createComponent(HTML) μὴν υἱὸν ἤξει ἩΠΑΝΩΝ ΞΕΝΟΝΤΥΕ ΞΕ ΤΗΛΑΥΤΗ ΝΕΣΤΟΥ) (89:14–15). In fact, he praises the female spiritual principle inside Eve with verses that are almost identical with a certain passage in Thund.\textsuperscript{75} Furthermore, in the Apocryphon of John, Epinoia is the one who awakens Adam’s thinking, providing him with the capacity for reflection, which is also the ability to achieve knowledge. This is connected to

\textsuperscript{71} Turner, Sethian Gnosticism and the Platonic Tradition, 227.

\textsuperscript{72} The translation of ἐπινοία may vary between idea, thought and afterthought, whereas its Greek equivalent ἐπίνοια can have the sense of thinking, thought, notion, concept, idea, intelligence and afterthought, among others. Cf. LSJ 648. For more on the translation of ἐπινοία, see also the chapter on Thund.

\textsuperscript{73} For references to the Apocryphon of John, I use the long version of codex 11 from the critical edition by Michael Waldstein and Frederik Wisse, The Apocryphon of John: Synopsis of the Nag Hammadi Codices II,III,IV,IV,1 with BG 8502,2 (NHMS 33; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995).

\textsuperscript{74} For references to the Hypostasis of the Archons, I use the edition by Bernard Barc, L'Hypostase des Archontes. Traité gnostique sur l'origine de l'homme, du monde et des archontes (NH II,4) (BCNH.T 5; Québec: Les Presses de l’Université Laval/Louvain: Éditions Peeters, 1980).

\textsuperscript{75} See the chapter on Thund. for a thorough analysis of these verses (13:19–14:9).
the identification of Epinoia with the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. This aspect of Epinoia will be dealt with in detail in relation to Thund., in which it plays an essential role. In my view, the role of Epinoia in Trim. Prot. clearly presupposes the narratives from Classic Gnostic texts that speak of the figure of Epinoia. According to Poirier, she is “le niveau inférieur de la Prôtennoia.”\(^{76}\) This involves, moreover, the identification of her with the figure of Sophia later in the text (in the last three cases where Epinoia is mentioned).

After this introduction and self-description by Protennoia, the audience is introduced to two terms that are central in relation to the linguistic manifestation of Protennoia: the Sound and Silence. The two terms are introduced immediately before the announcement of the first descent. This, I believe, is no accident, but an exact piece of information to the reader that it is as Sound that she descends.

\[\text{I am a Sound who resonates quietly, existing since the beginning, existing within the Silence . . . . . . . . . . everyone there, and it is the hidden Sound that exists within me, within the incomprehensible immeasurable Thought within the immeasurable Silence.}\]

Here, the first linguistic identification of Protennoia occurs. Although the papyrus is relatively deteriorated, it is easy to deduce that Protennoia proclaims that she is Sound. I follow the restorations of Poirier\(^{78}\) which make the Sound

---

\(^{76}\) Poirier, La Pensée Première à la triple forme, 26.

\(^{77}\) Where nothing else is noted all translations from Coptic are my own. The Coptic text is rendered as in Poirier, La Pensée Première à la triple forme, 132–169.

\(^{78}\) Poirier, La Pensée Première à la triple forme, 134–135. These restorations were published already in Wolf-Peter Funk and Paul-Hubert Poirier, Concordance des textes de Nag Hammadi les Codices xib, xii, xiii (BCNH.C 7; Québec: Les Presses de l’Université Laval/ Louvain: Éditions Peeters, 2002), 332–340.
“resonate” (ｃｉｃｉ ｅｂｏλ) instead of “call out” (ｏων ｅｂολ) or “speaking softly” (ⲟⲕⲧⲇ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲟγϩⲅϩⲙⲏ). The passage shows an intimate relationship between the Sound, the Thought and the Silence. Protennoia has a part in every one of them. She is the Sound and this Sound exists both within the Silence and is hidden within her. It is also hidden within the incomprehensible Thought, with which Protennoia is also herself identified in the very incipit of Trim. Prot. Thus, she is the Sound in the Thought, and the Thought in the Silence.

Already at this early stage of the text, it seems that there is a line of progression between these linguistic terms, beginning from the Silence and moving over the Thought to the Sound. There is, however, a challenge in how we should understand the description of the Sound as resonating “quietly”, moreover as “existing within the Silence”. In what way is a sound quiet? And how is a sound able to exist within a silence? Considering the nature of silence in general, it must be understood as the opposite of any given sound, that is, sounds from nature, animals, human noise, language, music etc. It is easy to understand how a thought may be silent, since a thought produces no sound. However, these things become confusing when Trim. Prot. paradoxically introduces the Sound as existing quietly within the Silence.

As we saw, Turner translates ϩⲏⲥⲩⲭⲏ as “softly”. According to LSJ this is definitely an option, which might even be preferable since it allows the Sound to actually be a sound which is somehow audible. On the other hand, I find it plausible to translate it as “quietly”. In this way, the paradox is retained, and the Sound lies latently within the Thought in the Silence as a possible Sound which is not yet audible. It resonates “quietly” within the Thought just as when we speak to ourselves within our own minds without actually saying anything audible. In either case the adverb ϩⲏⲥⲩⲭⲏ designates a Sound not yet in full blast, that is, not yet made manifest. It also corresponds well with the description of the Sound as existing “since the beginning”. The Sound has always been there in the Thought within the Silence, as a possible mode of manifestation, or, more precisely: as the mode of manifestation, when manifestation is necessary. This reading is supported by the fact that at this stage of the text Protennoia has not yet descended, but is just about to announce that she will

---

79 Schenke, Die Dreigestaltige Protennoia, 26.
do so. Furthermore, after the announcement of her first descent she proclaims to be the “real” Sound, a Sound which is audible.

The themes of sound and silence are interrupted by Protennoia’s announcement of her descent into the Underworld in 36*:4–9 (Ἀνοκ ἄβ[ι] ἐγγαὶ ἐτήμνητε ἡμῶν [ἐ] etc.). The descent is described in terms that recall a creation scene, in that Protennoia proclaims to be shining down upon the darkness, making the water pour. Yet, the text quickly returns to the linguistic theme. Here Protennoia emphasizes and develops her identity and manifestation as Sound:

36*:9–27

Ἀνοκ πετώμι ἱπρόου ἐβο[λ] ἵτοτι ἐφλαεβ ἐβολ ἱγιττηνος ἐβ[ι] ἱοοπ ἤνιατομάξε ἱμοὺ ἤνιατ’

Ὡκονο ἔπαν ἄνοκ πρὸς τασενεις ἡμίνο 

όν υπετε[γ] Ὀὑἱορρόου ἐβολ ἱτοτι ἤν αἰεεύευε ἃ[νο] ἐπὸς ἐταοο ἐπιστραγ ἤνοιον ἵν ἅ ἀρ ἐκοῦ[ν] 

ἡμᾶς ἐφεοισενᾶ ὁοοπ ἠγαὶ ἱρ[το] ἂνοκ πρὸς ἱπαῖ ἡμίν ἐτο ἀρφορπ ἠμ ἐβολ ἴν[π] ροο ἐτε 

𝜋ὼ ἐπὸς πεισζεν ἐνετημίτεγ ἐὰν ἐι ὁοοπ ἡμί[τ] ἤμε[ξ] ἐπιστράτε ἄ 

𝛾οῦν ἐπειετε ἡμ[τ] ἱρ[τ] ἐπιστράτε ἄ 

ὦῦ ἀπειετε ἡμ[τ] ἱρ[τ] ἵν ἅ ἀρ ἐκοῦ[ν] 

τεροὶ ἐφιοιοῦτ[(fid] ἄνοκ ἠγαὶ ἱρ[τ] ἵν 

ἡμάς ἐφεοισενᾶ ἐκοῦ[ν] ἑρ χάο[ν] ἱ ἀρ 

πετρατέ ἡμοὺ ἵν ἠγαὶ ἱρ[τ] ἵν 

πειετε ἐταο ἅ ἀρ ἐκοῦ[ν] ἑρ 

ἑος ἅ ἀρ ὕπροου ἐβολ ἱτοτι ἦ 

πειετε ἡμ[τ] ἐκαὶ οῖ 

It is I who am laden with the Sound. It is through me that Gnosis comes forth, since [I]

existence in the Ineffable and Unknowable Ones. It is I who am the Perception and the Knowledge,

82 The theme of water returns later in Trim. Prot. in relation to passages about baptism (45*:12ff), about the Living Water (46*:17), and about baptism in relation to the Water of Life (48*:7ff). Here at the beginning, the text introduces the theme of baptism in combination with the theme of creation.
send[ing] (out) a Sound through
a Thought. It is I who am the real Sound.
I resound in everyone, and they recog[nise]
it, since a seed exists within [them].
It is I who am the Thought of the Father, a[n]d through
me proceeded [the] Sound,
that is, the Knowledge of the everlasting things since
I am Thought of the [A]ll, joined to
the unkn[o]wable and incomprehensible Thought.
I revealed myself, I, in
all those who recognized me, for it is I,
actually, who am joined with everyone within
the hidden Thought and in an exalted
<S>ound and a Sound from
the invisible Thought.

In the context of her descent, Protennoia explains how she as Sound is the
medium of Gnosis (ⲅⲛⲱⲥⲓⲥ), being herself the categories of both Perception
(ⲁⲓⲥⲑⲏⲥⲓⲥ) and Knowledge (ⲥⲟⲟⲩⲛ). The confusion about her mixed identity
increases as the reader is now made aware that Protennoia is both Thought,
Sound, Perception and Knowledge, all existing together in the immeasurable
Silence (36*:3). However, in light of our analysis of the first “linguistic passage”,
all of this might not be a problem, after all. We saw that Protennoia as quiet
Sound existed in the Silence. She was only potentially audible and as such not
yet manifest. This passage describes Protennoia’s entry into the visible world.
The visible world is characterized by being sensible, that is, it is also the world
of sounds, colours, smells and so forth, whereas the divine realm is character-
ized by the opposite: Silence. It follows that when Protennoia enters into the
world she becomes sensible, which in her case means that she is hearable as a
sound. Therefore, this time Protennoia is not quiet at all. She is “laden with the
Sound”. She is now both hearable and manifest. She is “the real Sound”.

Protennoia reveals how as the real, hearable Sound she functions as a pro-
moter of Gnosis. Thus, through herself and her message, hearers may gain
access to the place from which she comes: the ineffable and the unknowable.
Hence, she also claims to be Perception and Knowledge.

In addition, the line of progression of linguistic manifestations of
Protennoia becomes clearer in this passage. Where the earlier linguistic pas-
sage only indicated a progression, this passage writes it out. The Silence is
not mentioned here but the Thought and the Sound are directly related in
that the latter proceeds from the former: “It is I who am the Thought of the
Father, and through me proceeded the Sound”. Poirier has outlined the progression of Protennoia as it appears now: “pensée (‟عبة = ἔννοια)—connaissance (‟عبة = γνώσις)—perception (‟يدة = φθόγγος)”. He introduces them as follows: “Ces concepts, empruntés au vocabulaire philosophique et grammatical, expriment les diverses étapes de la manifestation de la Prôtennoia”. Poirier continues by comparing the way in which the Sound is “sent out” (‟عبة ⲫⲗⲟⲩ) with the way in which Diogenes Laertius refers to the Stoic description of the human voice as “articulate and issued (i.e. sent out) from thought” („άνθρώπου ‼…” ἐστιν ἔναρθρος καὶ ἀπὸ διανοίας ἐκπεμπομένη). The comparison with the Stoic material is of course highly appropriate and will be elaborated on as we continue. Nevertheless, it is already clear that Protennoia has begun her descent in accordance with the Stoic sequence of a verbal expression.

The self-identification of Protennoia with the concepts of Perception and Knowledge adds a further dimension to her linguistic manifestation. What is at issue is not only about the audibility of the divine but indeed also about understanding the content of what is said. In the present passage, Protennoia proclaims to “resound in everyone, and they recognise it, since a seed exists within them”. Firstly, this recalls the theme of recognition of the divine revealer also known from the canonical gospels, although here in Trim. Prot. Protennoia is recognized contrary to Jesus in, for instance, John 8:40–47. Secondly, the recognition is due to the seed (‟عبة ⲫⲁⲱⲩⲗ) that exists within the hearers. This seed must be understood as a sort of divine element residing within human beings that makes them capable of receiving the divine message. In Trim. Prot. it has the more particular meaning of the ability to recognise Protennoia in her linguistic manifestation, which begins as Sound. If we take into consideration the role of Epinoia discussed above, this was exactly the ability she gave

---

83 Poirier, La Pensée Première à la triple forme, 202–203.
84 Loc. cit. Poirier notes that even though ἐπέμπειν does not figure under the Greek equivalents to ‛عبة ⲫⲗⲟⲩ, one does find πέμπειν under those for ‛عبة ⲫⲗⲟⲩ. Cf. Crum 441b. The Greek text is from Diogenes Laertius Lives VII, 55.
85 As Poirier, La Pensée Première à la triple forme, 203–204 observes, one would expect that the hearers “recognize her” instead of “it” (‟عبة ⲫⲁⲱⲩⲗ) which does not seem to refer to either her or the Sound, which is masc. See Poirier’s analysis of the difficulties presented in the Coptic text in this particular place. I take ⲫⲁⲱⲩⲗ as referring to the Sound, which in any case is Protennoia herself.
86 I quote 8:42–43 “Jesus said to them, ‘if God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and now I am here. I did not come on my own, but he sent me. Why do you not understand what I say? Is is because you cannot accept my word?’”. Translation borrowed from NRSV.
to the first human beings: the ability for reflection, which makes Perception and Knowledge possible for the human being. So, as an “inferior” aspect of the divine first thought, Pronoia/Barbelo/Protennoia, Epinoia plants the seed of reflection in the human being at the creation. That seed is the one that makes the human being able to recognise the First Thought herself when she descends for the sake of human salvation. However, there is a difference between recognizing a sound and understanding the content of its message. If we recall the Stoic comprehension of the level of intelligibility of a sound, we are at the very first stage of a verbal expression, which is so far neither articulate nor intelligible. Thus, from the perspective of the hearer, the first step of Protennoia’s manifestation in the sensible world is nothing more than a mere sound.

From the “I am”-proclamations we move on to a very short narrative part in 36*:27–33 wich concerns a Mystery (ὠνυστηρια). Although the passage is very fragmented, it is possible to deduce a theme of visibility versus invisibility. Another short passage (36*:33–37*:3) includes the readers of the text by using the pronoun ἡνον (we). It deals with the inner transformation of the believer, which makes him a “product of the fruit” that allows him to be delivered to the “Water of Life” (αὐω πετνῷραι ἤρητη ετρηπ γι ὀμοφοροι ἵνεκαρποι αὐτοτί ἦμπου ἦμας), that is, baptism.87 This leads on to the first passage concerning the Son.

37*:3–13

τοτε ὦ

πως ετσικε εβολ γραυβ ἦν ἐτεπαὶ

ἐν πλογο ετσικαὶνε εβολ γηπιπ

προογ εαυρομπρον ὦν εβολ ἰποξε εν

ῄταὶ ἠγα ἤπαρ εἰραι ἤρητη ἐν ὦ

οὐκοινα ἀγονον εβολ ἰνιατρὶ άγ

ο ἐπςυγωνονου τῃρον ἀγονονου

αὐω ὦν ἐτηεκ άπερεινηγε ἦνο

οὐ ἐπεοῃνο εαυογονο εβολ ἀγ

νετονοπ ἢνογυντ καρον ἀποκ ἦμοφορο

ἠνεγε άπταεοειν ηὐ

Then

the Son who is perfect in every respect, that

is, the Word who came into existence through that

87 Cf. Poirier, La Pensée Première à la triple forme, 210–211.
Sound, who has proceeded from the height, who has within him the Name, being a Light, (he) revealed the everlasting things, and all the unknowables were known. And those things which are difficult to interpret and the secret things he revealed, and those who exist in Silence with the First Thought he preached to them.

The description of the Son and his deeds continues for another seven lines (37*:13–20). It is told how he reveals himself to everyone and tells the mysteries and unrepeatable doctrines to those who have become Sons of Light. We shall focus on the part translated above as it is directly related to the linguistic theme of the text.

The passage is a clear example of the way that Trim. Prot. does not follow any logical scheme for the description of Protennoia’s manifestation. If the text was arranged logically, according to her threefold descent as Sound—Voice—Word, each part of the text would represent one mode of manifestation and the analysis would be less complicated. However, Trim. Prot. is a revelation discourse and one should not expect it to be systematically organized. Hence, it is not surprising that the present passage anticipates the manifestation of Protennoia as Word, which would logically be expected to come after the manifestation of Protennoia as Voice. Nevertheless, the introduction of the Word already at this point may indicate its importance for the linguistic triad that is developed and explained in the next passage of the text. There may be several reasons for the introduction of the Son as Word this early. One of them relates to Trim. Prot.’s internal composition: Since the following passage elaborates on the interdependency of the linguistic triad in a complex and obscure manner, the text assures the reader beforehand that the Logos will eventually explain or reveal the things that are “difficult to interpret”. The rational content of the message of the Logos is thus emphasized. This view is supported by Poirier, who argues that the passage mainly focuses on a vocabulary “de l’herméneutique et de l’interprétation”.88

Another reason is related to external circumstances. With a passage such as this, Trim. Prot. may be thought to comment on an already circulating Johannine logos Christology. In fact, Trim. Prot. supports the identification of the Son as Word, and that is underlined by this passage. However, Trim. Prot. expands the linguistic manifestation to comprise levels preceding the Word.

---

88 Poirier, *La Pensée Première à la triple forme*, 212.
Understood in this way, *Trim. Prot.* first makes the reader aware of the similarity between its own theology and that of the Fourth Gospel only to go on to explain how the Word according to *Trim. Prot.* is actually part of a greater linguistic/noetic context.

Let us now move to the passage in which the Voice is introduced in relation to both Sound and Word.

37*:20–30

But the Sound that came into being from my Thought, it is as three permanences that it exists: the Father, the Mother, the Son, a Voice that exists perceptibly, it has a Word within it, this who has every glory, and it has three masculinities and three powers and three names. They exist in the manner of three □□□, which are quadrangles, secretly within a Silence of the Ineffable One.

What we have here is in Poirier's words

un passage-clé qui montre l'articulation par emboîtement des éléments qui traduisent le caractère triadique fondamental de la Prôtennoia: le son, qui est Père, Mère, Fils, est une voix et possède un logos.89

___

89 Poirier, *La Pensée Première à la triple forme*, 218.
Poirier rightly describes this as a key passage. At the same time as it clarifies the triadic nature of Protennoia, it also complicates the picture. While it reaffirms that the Sound’s source is the Thought and introduces the linguistic level of Voice that comes in-between Sound and Word, it also presents the triad consisting of Father—Mother—Son. This triad is described as the three “permanences” (ⲙⲟⲛⲏ) in which the Sound exists. Before we discuss the implications that this second triad may have, we shall continue the consideration of the linguistic manifestation of Protennoia.

In the present passage, it becomes clear that Protennoia is identified with a sequence of linguistic terms: Thought—Sound—Voice—Word (ⲙⲉⲉⲉ—ϩⲣⲟⲟⲩ—ⲥⲙⲏ—ⲗⲟⲅⲟⲥ). However, it is not yet entirely clear how the first two relate to the other two. Sound, of course, issues from Thought and now the reader is told that the Word that was introduced in the foregoing passage is contained within a Voice. However, how does Protennoia go from Sound to Voice? Unfortunately, the text is ambiguous on this question, since Sound and Voice from time to time seem to be employed interchangeably. This unmistakably recalls the above discussion concerning the translation of both the Coptic and Greek terms. But if we look a bit ahead in the text to the beginning of the second major part, the relation between Sound and Voice becomes clearer: “It is I who give the Voice of the Sound to the ears of those who have known me, that is, the Sons of Light” (ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲡⲉⲧϯⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲃ ⲙ̄ⲡϩⲣⲟⲟⲩ ⲉϩⲣⲁⲓ̈ ⲁⲙⲁⲁⲃ ⲛⲟⲕ ⲛ̄ⲡⲟⲩⲟⲓⲓ) (42*:14–17). Here it seems fairly obvious that the Voice is something which proceeds from the Sound. Thus, the sequence is confirmed. Recalling the Stoic sequence of a verbal expression (διανοία—φωνή—λέξις—λόγος) we may fruitfully see it as constituting the dialectical background of the linguistic manifestation of Protennoia. The Stoic sequence is characterized by a movement from the inarticulate to the articulate yet unintelligible to the articulate and intelligible. These levels of intelligibility are, in fact, all different aspects of φωνή in that the verbal expression is a *diairesis*—a division—of the concept of Sound (φωνή). If the manifestation of Protennoia is understood against this background, her descent may be seen as a progression which begins within the Silent Thought and then moves downwards, first as the inarticulate Sound, then as the articulate yet still unintelligible Voice towards the perfectly intelligible and articulate Word/Discourse.

In his extensive monograph on *Sethian Gnosticism and the Platonic Tradition*, Turner points to the similarity between *Trim. Prot.* and the Stoic material:

The creative act of the original author of the Trimorphic Protennoia was an interpretation of the sequence of Protennoia’s successive revelatory
descents according to a theory of the increasing articulateness of verbal communication as one moves from unintelligible sound through articulate speech to explicit word, probably of Stoic provenance.90

It is indeed of Stoic provenance, since they were pioneers regarding these issues. Moreover, the way in which Protennoia is described as originating within the Silence and in addition as the “Logos existing in the Silence”, a “hidden Sound”, the “ineffable Logos”, Turner interprets as deriving “from the Stoic distinction between internal reason (λόγος ἐνδιάθετος) and uttered or expressed reason (λόγος προφορικός).”91 That is an excellent point, which underlines the unity of the nature of Protennoia. Her manifestation in the sensible world is simply an audible expression of her being, which otherwise resides in Silence. The many different aspects with which she identifies herself during her descent are simply different aspects of her. Whatever form she takes, she remains one. Along these lines, she is also capable of containing the newly introduced triad of Father—Mother—Son. The linguistic terms are especially suitable to describe the unity of Protennoia, since this cluster of terms itself is an example of a similar constellation. As was shown in the chapter on Stoic and Platonic dialectics, it is important to acknowledge that all concepts contained in a diairesis are parts of the concept in question. They all describe aspects of that concept, which, for that reason, may be conceived as a unity of the many. This is the case for Protennoia and, as we shall see later, the female revealer of Thund.

In her descent, Protennoia increases her intelligibility, in that she moves from Thought towards Logos, but before she reaches that level, she has to become perceptible to the human ear by first becoming a Sound and a Voice. That is the reason why Trim. Prot. emphasizes the perceptibility of the Voice in the present passage: “a Voice that exists perceptibly…” Turner notices this specific audibility of the manifestation of Protennoia as an important feature, which shows that “salvation derives not only through knowledge or vision, but also through sound and audition.”92 Rather poetically, Turner calls this sort of manifestation a “theophony”.

In research about Trim. Prot. there seems to be a tendency towards regarding the linguistic triad as corresponding to the triad of Father—Mother—Son, so that the Father is identical with the Sound; the Mother with the Voice; and the Son with the Word. This was suggested by Turner in 1990, when he stated:

90 Turner, Sethian Gnosticism and the Platonic Tradition, 153.
91 Loc. cit.
92 Loc. cit.
The three Permanences of Protennoia (the Thought), Father, Mother, Son, correspond to the three linguistic modalities in which the Thought is manifested: Voice (masc., perhaps Greek φθόγγος) corresponds to Father; Sound (fem., perhaps Greek φωνή) corresponds to Mother; and Word (λόγος) corresponds to Son.

This was followed up on by Gilhus and Poirier, the latter of whom makes the comparison only somewhat hesitantly when he writes that the present passage (37*:20–30) “permet probablement de répondre à cette question”, namely the question about the precise identification of the three successive aspects of Protennoia masc.—fem.—masc. (Father—Mother—Son). Poirier finds Turner’s interpretation fitting in the context of the present passage. However, he notices that the way in which it is formulated in the text suggests “une equivalence par emboîtement: le Père en tant que son (⇠ⲣⲟⲟⲩ, φθόγγος) est la triade, laquelle se déploie comme Mère-Voix (⇠ⲧⲕⲏ, φωνή) et Fils-logos.” In my opinion, it seems likely that the two triads are connected in accordance with Poirier’s analysis. Janssens on the other hand sees the triad of Father—Mother—Son as follows: “les trois «demeures» de la Pensée, le Père, la Mère, le Fils, correspondent respectivement à la Perception (ou Pensée), à la Voix et à la Parole.” However, I think it would be more suitable to follow the text itself, which explicitly claims that it is the Sound that exists as the three permanences.

The triadic theme is continued in the last part of the passage, in which the Sound is described as having three “masculinities”, three “powers” and three “names” and they exist as three □□□ (quadrangles). Even though the οῡτε η̄̄̄ᾱ̄γ̄ᾱ y may be understood as a parallel construction to a similar one a few lines before, which concerned the Voice (οῡτε η̄̄̄ᾱ̄γ̄ᾱ οῡ̄̄γ̄λο̄γ̄ος ρᾱ̄ι η̄̄̄ρ̄ιτ̄ε̄), I understand this one as relating to the Sound. These three triads find a parallel in the Apocryphon of John (II, 5:6–9), in which they are ascribed to the figure of Barbelo—the divine Pronoia. However, as Poirier points out, in Trim.

---

93 Here it seems as if Turner has written Sound by mistake instead of “Speech” with which he otherwise translates ⲧⲕⲧⲣⲁⲓ ⲧⲓⲧⲏⲧⲧⲡ ⲧⲓⲧⲣⲛ.  
94 Turner, “Introduction to Codex XIII,” 432. See also 382.  
96 Poirier, La Pensée Première à la triple forme, 15–17 and 220–221.  
98 Ibid.: 221.  
99 Janssens, La Prôtennoia trimorphe, 62.
Prot.: “il s’agit de trois triple réalités que possède (ὄψετε ὃν ὁ θεός ἐστίν) le son venu à l’existence à partir de la pensée de la Prōthenoia.”

In this way they are to be seen as aspects or emanations of the First Thought, who is then the actual possessor of every triad presented so far: Sound—Voice—Word; Father—Mother—Son; three masculinities; three powers; three names; and three quadrangles. All this, combined with the parallel to the tripartite nature of Barbelo in the Apocryphon of John, points forward to a passage in which Protennoia is identified with Barbelo (38*:9). We shall turn to that passage shortly. First, however, it is important to emphasize that after this complex portrayal of the different ways in which Protennoia may be described as threefold, the passage is rounded off by recalling the placement of these qualities within the Silence of the ineffable One.

After a description of the glorification of the Son (or maybe the creation of the Christ cf. 37*:31 in the lacuna), the author of Trim. Prot. turns to give a precise explanation of how we are to understand the identity of Protennoia. This is brought about by an account of the creation of the aeons by the Son. In fact, the short passage concerning the nature of Protennoia interrupts a longer narrative about the creation of the Four Light Aeons, which eventually leads to the creation of the visible world. Through this small detour, the reader is reminded that Protennoia is actually Barbelo.

38*:7–16

He produced the aeons to the Father of all the aeons, who am I, the Thought of the Father, the Protennoia,

---

100 Poirier, La Pensée Première à la triple forme, 222.
101 The triadic nature of the divine is a well-known theme in Classic Gnostic literature. It is analysed in detail in Turner, Sethian Gnosticism and the Platonic Tradition, 209–214 and elsewhere in the same.
that is, Barbelo, the per[fec]t glory
and the invisible, hidden, immeasurable.
It is I who am the image of the Invisible Spirit
and it is through me that the All received image,
and the Mother, the Light, this which she has appointed
being Virgin, she who is calle[d] Meirothea, the incomprehensible womb,
the unrestrainable and immeasurable [S]ound.

Here Trim. Prot. briefly returns to the “I am”-style. It is clear that Protennoia,
the Thought of the Father, is identical with Barbelo. This is expressed through
one of the many examples of the ὑπὸ τὰ τὰ ὁ construction, which is charac-
teristic of Trim. Prot.102 Protennoia’s relation to the Invisible Spirit is reaf-
frmed, and her role as Mother and a “Wisdom-like co-creator” from whom
the All receives its image is supplemented with the identifcation of her with
Meirothea (Μειροθεά). Meirothea is known from other, primarily Classic
Gnostic, sources, in which her androgynous nature is in focus.103 In the Holy
and Zostrianos (NHC VIII,6:30) she is the mother of Adamas.104 According
to Turner, “Meirothea” may likely mean “divine anointed one” (μυρο-θεός)
instead of the usual “destiny god/goddess (μοιρο-θεός)” and “seems to be
essentially androgynous, designating not only the mother of the divine Adam
Pigeradamas, but the divine Pigeradamas himself; (s)he is simultaneously
father, mother and offspring.”105 In Trim. Prot. Meirothea is identifed with
Barbelo herself, the divine First Thought of the Father. The nature of Barbelo
is accordingly characterized as being androgynous, in that she is usually
called the Mother-Father.106 The androgynous nature of Protennoia may be
of some importance, since the shifts between her appearances in the likeness
of a female and a male respectively is written out rather clearly in the text
(42*:4–25). These clear shifts emphasize both Protennoia’s identity as Barbelo
as well as her diferent modes of manifestation as Sound (masc.), Voice (fem.)
and Word (masc.). In 45*:2–12 Protennoia even proclaims to be androgynous
(ἄγγελος ὄγρ[ον] τερς ἄγνωστος ἄγνωστος ὄγρες) at the same time as
Meirothea is mentioned once more.

102 Poirier emphasizes this feature. See Poirier, La Pensée Première à la triple forme, 73–78.
103 In the Three Steles of Seth (NHC VII,119:11–12) she is called both the fem. Mirothea and the
masc. Mirothos.
104 Turner, Sethian Gnosticism and the Platonic Tradition, 211.
105 Loc. cit.
106 See for instance the Apocryphon of John (II,57).
Now, this description of Protennoia as Barbelo and Meirothea is combined with her identification with the Sound. With regard to the linguistic manifestation of Protennoia, it is noteworthy that this passage, in describing the nature of Protennoia in relation to the Invisible Spirit, is replete with apophatic terminology. Thus, we find a wide palette of things which describe her negatively: invisible, hidden, immeasurable, incomprehensible and, as Sound, she is unrestrainable and immeasurable. As the Sound is the first level of linguistic manifestation within the sensible world, it is still inarticulate and thus both unrestrainable and immeasurable by the human mind.

So far so good. After this breath-taking exposition of Protennoia, the text picks up the thread about the Son, who is now also called the “Perfect Son” (ⲡⲧⲏⲥⲕⲧⲡ ⲛⲣⲏⲩⲩ) (38*:22). The passage 38*:16–39*:13 kickstarts a longer theogonic and cosmogonic narration which runs until 40*:7 and constitutes the actual reason for the descent of Protennoia.

First of all, the Perfect Son revealing himself to his aeons is described. Then he reveals, glorifies and enthrones them. He himself is also glorified, both by himself and his aeons. In 38*:22 it is stated for the first time that the Son is “the Christ, the god who came into existence alone” (ⲡⲉⲟⲭⲓ ⲡⲧⲟⲩⲧⲉ Ⲩⲧⲟⲩⲧⲉ ⲣⲟⲥⲱⲟⲩⲡⲥ Ⲣⲧⲩⲟⲧⲉ) (my emphasis). The aeons glorify him by saying or chanting that he is. He is the son of God, the Aeon of Aeons and more. Unfortunately, the text continues into a lacuna at the bottom of page 38*. However, it is relatively straightforward to reconstruct at least some of the content, since it is thematically bound up with the following extant text. The top of page 39* deals with the “establishment” (ⲧⲉϩⲟ), that is, the creation, of the aeons of the Son.

The names and organization of his aeons are well-known from other Classic Gnostic tractates such as the *Apocryphon of John*, the *Holy Book of the Great Invisible Spirit/Gospel of the Egyptians* et al., although they can diverge from one another. In *Trim. Prot.* the four aeons of the Son contains three names each; however, in other Classic Gnostic texts each aeon has four names attached. The names Armozel, Oroiael, Daveithai and Eleleth must be considered the main names of the four aeons, since they are the only names given to the corresponding aeons in the *Apocryphon of John*. This is also stressed in the next passage of *Trim. Prot.*, begining in 39*:13, where the narrative narrows down to the last of the four aeons: Eleleth.

Eleleth is now called the “great Light” (ⲡⲛⲟϭ ⲛⲟⲩⲟⲓⲩ ⲡⲓⲏⲧⲏⲧⲏⲧⲏ). Eleleth is particularly important as it is from him that the famous “fall of Sophia” takes place. Although, in *Trim. Prot.*, the “myth of Sophia” is not spelled out, the allusions in the passage 39*:13–40*:7 show that it is definitely presupposed. The

---

passage narrates how a word (ⲗⲟⲅⲟⲥ) that comes forth from Eleleth boasts that he is King and asks who belongs to Chaos and to the Underworld. This saying results in the formation of the great Demon who reigns over the Underworld and Chaos and who is called “Saklas”, “Samael” or “Yaltabaoth”. This is where the reader is reminded of the “myth of Sophia”, since Yaltabaoth is “he who had taken power, who had snatched it away from the innocent one” (39*:28–29). The “innocent one” is Sophia, as becomes clear in 40*:15.

We shall pause for a moment to consider the meaning of this account of the “fall of Sophia”, which, unusually, does not seem to imply a fall. There are several interesting points with regard to this passage. First of all, it is striking that in a text like Trim. Prot., in which the linguistic theme is so essential, we meet a description of a word (ⲗⲟⲅⲟⲥ) coming forth from Eleleth; a word which is not to be mistaken for the manifestation of Protennoia as Word.108 Rather, this word appears to cause the creation of Yaltabaoth. Accordingly, the boasting of the word recalls the boasting of Yaldabaoth in the Apocryphon of John (II,11:19–21).109 However, if the logos that comes forth from Eleleth is applied to Yaltabaoth, why does Trim. Prot. employ a similar term for one of Protennoia’s manifestations? The two logos are surely not identical, but how, then, are we to understand the logos from Eleleth? Poirier draws attention to a similar passage in the Holy Book of the Great Invisible Spirit (III,56:22–24) on the installation of the King of Chaos, which comes about by a saying of the Great Light Eleleth.110 However, the context shows that this saying is accompanied by sayings of another Great Light: Oroiael. So, even though Trim. Prot. is close to the narrative found in the Holy Book of the Great Invisible Spirit, its focus is different. Trim. Prot. seems to care much for the innocence of Sophia, and one way of removing the guilt from Sophia is to let the aeon in which she resides to begin with (at least according to the Apocryphon of John) be responsible for the creation of the great demon and with him also of the visible world. On the other hand the logos of Eleleth may also signify the importance of another interesting feature of this particular passage, namely the role of Epinoia in Trim. Prot.

We have already touched upon the role of Epinoia in Trim. Prot. as the “inferior” aspect of Protennoia, and as the life-giving element that makes the world move. In the present context it is another aspect of Epinoia which is in focus, namely the reflection-providing element. The text describes how the word that comes forth from Eleleth has a light which is manifested and

108 Poirier, La Pensée Première à la triple forme, 252–253.
110 Poirier, La Pensée Première à la triple forme, 253. See also Schenke, Die Dreigestaltige Protennoia, 117.
is endowed with Epinoia: “and at that moment his light appeared radiant endowed with Epinoia” (Ἀνω Ἕτοιμῳ ἑτέρῳ ἀποθεωμένῳ ἀνακύρω ἐβολ ἐπιπήπτῳ ἑγίταξ’ ἡμῶν [γὰρ ὧν ἔτειπνοι] (39*:17–19). This logos which has Epinoia within it is the part that was snatched away from the “Innocent One” and which makes Yaltabaoth capable of creating the world according to the “real” aeons (40*:4–8); even though he “creates them out of his own power”, he needs the divine logos/Epinoia to show him a model. Thus, the logos of Eleleth is not to be understood as being equivalent to the manifestation of Protennoia, but rather as the ability that follows with the possession of the divine Epinoia: the ability for reflection, that is, for knowing and understanding connections in the world.\footnote{111 From a Stoic point of view, this could be seen as an equivalent to the all-pervading Logos/Pneuma. Cf. Colpe, “Heidnische, jüdische und christliche Überlieferung in den Schriften aus Nag Hammadi III,” 119 and Turner, “Introduction, NHC XIII,1*: Trimorphic Protennoia 35*, 1–50*, 24* 374.}

This one (Yaltabaoth) who has taken a power which he had stolen from this innocent one, which he had conquered at first, that is, the Epinoia of the light who descended, her from whom he had come forth from the beginning.

Here it seems as if Epinoia is identified with the Innocent One, who is identified as Sophia in 40*:15 and in 47*:33–34 (if the reconstruction is correct). Moreover, since the innocent Sophia is described as the one who descended and who was conquered (40*:15–16), it would seem that in the present passage the identities of these two female figures are somewhat mixed up. Modern scholars have understood the passage in this way, for instance Turner writes:

However, see 39*, 29–30, where (Eleleth’s) ἐπίνοια is virtually identified with “the innocent one”, who is Sophia (40*, 15). This reference, in
conjunction with 39*, 31–32, constitutes an implicit claim that Sophia is the innocent creator of Yaltabaoth.\textsuperscript{112}

Poirier agrees with this mutual identification\textsuperscript{113} and compares it with a mention of the “Sophia of Epinoia” in the long version of the \textit{Apocryphon of John} (II,9:25): Ἡ πρὸτεννοιά.\textsuperscript{114} The context of this single instance is that of the fatal decision of Sophia to make something for herself, which results in the creation of Yaldabaoth.

There is no doubt that Epinoia and Sophia are tightly connected to one another, just as there is no doubt that \textit{Trim. Prot.} is unclear about the exact relation between them—whether they are one or separated. However, the overall impression remains that they are separate beings: Sophia as the innocent creator of Yaltabaoth, who somehow descended (but the text does not tell us how), and Epinoia as the inferior aspect of Protennoia as well as the power that was stolen from Sophia when she was conquered. This power, the Epinoia, is the reason for the descent of Protennoia, since she has come for the sake of her “part” that was in that place when Sophia was conquered. Now, the above passage is usually read as referring to only Epinoia; however, I suggest that the passage may be understood as referring to both Epinoia and Sophia. Firstly, the passage is about Yaltabaoth who has stolen a power from the Innocent One. As has been shown, the Innocent One can be no other than Sophia. Secondly, the power that was stolen I understand as Epinoia, the part of Protennoia for the sake of which she has come. Thus, the mention of Epinoia (ἐτεταλῆ τε τεπεννοιά: ἡπνογονοῖ) refers back to the power (οὐχομ) and the relative Ἔπαθεν ηὐγή (who descended) refers to the Innocent One/Sophia, who is also the one from whom he came forth from the beginning. This interpretation may be forcing the Coptic text in an impossible direction, but if the text does allow us to see two different figures, the passage fits far better into the overall picture of these characters given in \textit{Trim. Prot.}

This variant of the classic myth of Sophia and the birth of her ignorant offspring, Yaltabaoth, ends with his production of the lower aeons. Then \textit{Trim. Prot.} has established the basis for its main issue: the account of the descent of Protennoia.


\textsuperscript{113} Poirier, \textit{La Pensée Première à la triple forme}, 254: “…la suite du texte (lignes 29–30) montre que l’Épinoia doit être identifiée à la «sans malice», laquelle n’est autre que la Sagesse (cf. 40*, 15 et 47*, 33–34)”. See also Janssens, \textit{La Prôtennoia trimorphe}, 70.

\textsuperscript{114} \textit{Loc. cit.}
40*:8–42*:2 is the last passage of the first main part of *Trim. Prot.* In continuation on the part of the narrative, we now see how “I am”-proclamations of Protennoia are blended in. The creation of the lower aeons is the primary motivation for the first descent of Protennoia, which is described in this passage. She descends by revealing herself as Sound, telling why she has come: for the sake of her part (ⲙⲉⲣⲟⲥ), that is, her Epinoia, which was snatched away from the innocent Sophia. The Sound of Protennoia disturbs everyone in the “house of the ignorant light”, that is, the Underworld and the Abyss tremble. The “Archigenetor of Ignorance”, who reigns over Chaos and the Underworld, is Yaltabaoth. He produces a man whose power Yaltabaoth does not know, since he is produced in the likeness of the descended Protennoia.

From 40*:29–42*:2 Protennoia again recounts her descent into Chaos. This time the reader is given a very detailed description of the soteriological aim of her descent. Through 1st person narrative and a few “I am”-proclamations Protennoia tells that she has come to be with “her own”, that is, “the Sons of Light” (ⲛ̄ϣⲏⲣⲉ ⲙ̄ⲡⲟⲩⲟⲉⲓⲛ) (41*:1), whom she empowers and shapes. She tells them (as their Father) a mystery (ⲙⲩⲥⲧⲏⲣⲓⲟⲛ) about her saving act: through the destruction of the gates and walls of darkness, she saves them from the chains of the Demons. She nullifies all the evil powers in order to let the Sons of Light enter into the place where they were at first. Protennoia repeats that she is the first who descended (41*:20) because of her part (ⲙⲉⲣⲟⲥ), which is now referred to as the Spirit (ⲡⲡ︤ⲛ̅ⲁ︥):

```
41*:20–29
ανοκ' πε παορπ ιταἰει απιτι
єτβεπαλαρος ετσοχι' ετεπα' πε
πιπα ετρωοπ γιηγιγκι ιταιαμαυ
πε εβολ γιπννουγ ιπωςι αγω εβολ
γιπαχσι υιυγυυσηπιον αειασαχε
ανοκ ιυιααρξιν αγω γενεζογια
αειβακ γαρ ερφι εασαιπιτι ιπου
λας αγω αειαχ υιυγυυσηπιον ανε
ηεινι ουυγυυσηπιον εαφηι αγωαλ
εβολ υιυχανγ υιυτβει υ{αιν}ανερ
```

It is I who descended at first because of my part that remains, that is, the Spirit, which dwells in the soul, that came into being from the water of life and from the washing by the mysteries. I spoke,
I, with the archons and the powers, for I descended below their language and I spoke my mysteries to my own, a hidden mystery. They were released from the bonds and eternal oblivion.

Protennoia descends because of her part that remains. This part has earlier been identified with the Epinoia as the part/power that was stolen from the Innocent One by Yaltabaoth. In this passage, the part of Protennoia is identified with the Spirit, which corresponds to a passage on page 47*:31–34. There the relations between Protennoia, her part (Epinoia/Spirit) and Sophia are reaffirmed. But how come Epinoia is now identified with the Spirit? As Poirier notices, it is important not to confuse this Spirit which dwells in the soul with either the Invisible Spirit (37*:33 and 38*:11) or the Holy Spirit (45*:29). Rather, it is simply a variant term for the part of Protennoia that dwells within the soul, namely: Epinoia. However, I would like to point out that the beginning of Trim. Prot. describes Epinoia as the life-giving element that moves in every creature. This may be understood as an equivalent to the all-pervading Stoic πνεῦμα. Moreover, the comparison with Stoic thought may be continued with regard to the way in which Trim. Prot. describes the Spirit as dwelling within the soul (ⲯⲩⲭⲏ). For, according to Sandbach, the Stoic conception of the soul of human beings was understood as a physical breath (πνεῦμα) “which gives a man life and reason”. Without concluding that Trim. Prot. adopts the Stoic conceptualization of the soul and the life-and-reason-giving spirit within, I believe that the resemblance is striking. The Epinoia in Trim. Prot. has the same functions as the Stoic spirit: she gives life by moving whilst dwelling within the soul of human beings, granting them ability for reflection and knowledge. The similarity with the Stoic material comes to an end when Trim. Prot. describes how the spirit came into being from the water of life and the washing by the mysteries, which clearly refers to the entering or awakening of the mind (or the faculty of reason) of the human being at baptism.

41*:26ff. is especially interesting in relation to the linguistic manifestation of Protennoia, since she states that she descends below the language of the archons and powers to tell the mystery to “her own”. The text appears slightly confusing in that Protennoia, to begin with, states that she spoke to the archons and powers whereupon she descended below their language to speak to her

115 Poirier, La Pensée Première à la triple forme, 283.
116 Cf. for instance Sandbach, The Stoics, 73.
117 Ibid.: 42.
own about the mysteries. Because of the ⲁⲧⲣⲉ Ⲇⲣ, it seems as if her descent below their language is caused by the fact that she spoke to the archons. However, later in the text it is explicitly said that the powers did not recognize either the Sound or the Voice of Protennoia (cf 44*:*2–12) when she descended. I suggest the following interpretation: On her way down, so to speak, Protennoia passes by the archons and powers who rule the visible world. She speaks to them because she descends linguistically. Thus, passing by the level of the archons, Protennoia is already manifest as Sound; however, as will become apparent later, they do not understand the content of that Sound. Moreover, the incomprehension of the archons may also be due to the fact that the mystery which Protennoia speaks to “her own”, that is, the “Sons of Light”, is a hidden mystery. Poirier interprets that Protennoia’s descent “jusqu’au plus profond” of the language of the archons signifies what he, along with Sevrin, calls an example of “la polymorphie de Prôtennoia”. 118 This means that by speaking with the archons Protennoia also changes herself into their appearance, which makes her able to cheat them and thus loosen the chains of “her own”. 119

The first part of Trim. Prot. ends with Protennoia bearing fruit among “her own”, that is, the Thought of the unchanging aeon. In Protennoia, they become Lights (42*:*1). This may indicate that the Sons of Light, in contrast with the archons and powers, understand her message. In the second part of the text, the content of Protennoia’s message becomes clearer.

Second Part: On Fate
The second main part of Trim. Prot. runs from 42*:*4 through 46*:*4. There is consensus about reconstructing the title of this part as [ⲡⲧⲓⲙⲁⲣⲙⲚⲛⲏ ⲃ] (46*:*4). This title stands out from the other two since it is not concerned with the identity of Protennoia, but rather with the contents of this particular part of the text, that is, the mysteries that Protennoia reveals. It deals with the constitution of the visible world, how it is governed by Fate (ⲧⲓⲙⲁⲣⲙⲚⲛⲏ), as well as the reaction of the archons to Protennoia’s descent. These mysteries lead to an invitation to enter into the Light which involves baptism. We begin with the introduction of this part, since it adds several details to the linguistic theme of the text.

42*:*4–18

\begin{verbatim}
42*:*4–18
ⲧⲏⲣⲟ υⲧⲡⲡⲟⲟⲩ ⲧⲃⲧⲣⲟⲟⲩ ⲅⲏⲇⲟⲩ 41
ⲧⲧⲟⲧⲧⲧⲧⲧ ⲁⲧⲡⲁⲡⲡ ⲁⲧⲡⲟⲩ ⲑ ⲙⲧⲣⲁⲧⲣⲉ Ⲅⲧⲕⲧⲣⲉ Ⲅⲧⲕⲧⲣⲉ Ⲅⲧⲕⲧⲣⲉ Ⲅⲧⲕⲧⲣⲉ Ⲅⲧⲕⲧⲣⲉ Ⲅⲧⲕⲧⲣⲉ Ⲅⲧⲕⲧⲣⲉ Ⲅⲧⲕⲧⲣⲉ Ⲅⲧⲕⲧⲣⲉ Ⲅⲧⲕⲧⲣⲉ Ⲅⲧⲕⲧⲣⲉ Ⲅⲧⲕⲧⲣⲉ Ⲅⲧⲕⲧⲣⲉ Ⲅⲧⲕⲧⲣⲉ Ⲅⲧⲕⲧⲣⲉ Ⲅⲧⲕⲧⲣⲉ Ⲅⲧⲕⲧⲣⲉ Ⲅⲧⲕⲧⲣⲉ Ⲅⲧⲕⲧⲣⲉ Ⲅⲧⲕⲧⲣⲉ Ⲅⲧⲕⲧⲣⲉ Ⲅⲧⲕⲧⲣⲉ Ⲅⲧⲕⲧⲣⲉ Ⲅⲧⲕⲧⲣⲉ Ⲅⲧⲕⲧⲣⲉ Ⲅⲧⲕⲧⲣⲉ Ⲅⲧⲕⲧⲣⲉ Ⲅⲧⲕⲧⲣⲉ Ⲅⲧⲕⲧⲣⲉ Ⲅⲧⲕⲧⲣⲉ Ⲅⲧⲕⲧⲣⲉ Ⲅⲧⲕⲧⲣⲉ Ⲅⲧⲕⲧⲣⲉ Ⲅⲧⲕⲧⲣⲉ Ⲅⲧⲕⲧⲣⲉ Ⲅⲧⲕⲧⲣⲉ Ⲅⲧⲕⲧⲣⲉ Ⲅⲧⲕⲧⲣⲉ Ⲅⲧⲕⲧⲣⲉ Ⲅⲧⲕⲧⲣⲉ Ⲅⲧⲕⲧⲣⲉ Ⲅⲧⲕⲧⲣⲉ Ⲅⲧⲕⲧⲣⲉ Ⲅⲧⲕⲧⲣⲉ Ⲅⲧⲕⲧⲣⲉ Ⲅⲧⲕⲧⲣⲉ Ⲅⲧⲕⲧⲣⲉ Ⲅⲧⲕⲧⲣⲉ Ⲅⲧⲕⲧρⲉ Ⲅⲧⲕⲧρⲉ Ⲅⲧⲕⲧρⲉ Ⲅⲧⲕⲧρⲉ Ⲅⲧⲕⲧρⲉ Ⲅⲧⲕⲧρⲉ Ⲅⲧⲕⲧρⲉ Ⲅⲧⲕⲧⲣⲉ Ⲅⲧⲕⲧⲣⲉ Ⲅⲧⲕⲧⲣⲉ Ⲅⲧⲕⲧⲣⲉ Ⲅⲧⲕⲧⲣⲉ Ⲅⲧⲕⲧⲣⲉ Ⲅⲧⲕⲧⲣⲉ Ⲅⲧⲕⲧⲣⲉ Ⲅⲧⲕⲧⲣⲉ Ⲅⲧⲕⲧⲣⲉ Ⲅⲧⲕⲧⲣⲉ Ⲅⲧⲕⲧⲣⲉ Ⲅⲧⲕⲧⲣⲉ Ⲅⲧⲕⲧⲣⲉ Ⲅⲧⲕⲧⲣⲉ Ⲅⲧⲕⲧⲣⲉ Ⲅⲧⲕⲧⲣⲉ Ⲅⲧⲕⲧⲣⲉ Ⲅⲧⲕⲧⲣⲉ Ⲅⲧⲕⲧⲣⲉ Ⲅⲧⲕⲧⲣⲉ Ⲅⲧⲕⲧⲣⲉ Ⲅⲧⲕⲧⲣⲉ Ⲅⲧⲕⲧⲣⲉ Ⲅⲧⲕⲧⲣⲉ Ⲅⲧⲕⲧⲣⲉ Ⲅⲧⲕⲧ>r
\end{verbatim}

119 Poirier, La Pensée Première à la triple forme, 285.
It is I who am the Sound that appeared through my Thought, for it is I who am the (masc.) syzygetic one, since I am called the Thought of the Invisible One. Since I am called the unchanging Voice, I am called the (fem.) syzygetic one. I am one, being undefiled. It is I who am the Mother [of] the Sound, speaking in many ways, completing the All. It is in me that knowledge exists, the knowledge of <those who> have no end. It is I, [who] speak within every creature and I was known by the All. It is I who give the Voice of the Sound to the ears of those who have known me, that is, the Sons of Light. Now I have come for the second time in the form of a woman and I have spoken with them.

The second part of Trim. Prot. follows the first, beginning with a passage of self-proclamations. Here we find a confirmation of the sequence of linguistic manifestations of Protennoia beginning with a repetition of the nature of the Sound as originating from the Thought. The androgynous nature and “plural unity” of Protennoia is emphasized by the dictum that she is called “he who is syzygetic” and “she who is syzygetic”. These few lines are arranged chiastically, so that the two times Protennoia proclaims herself to be syzygetic enclose the sayings concerning her identity as Thought and Voice. Protennoia appears in several ways throughout the text. However, in this passage her unity is stressed both by the characterization of her as “syzygetic” (ροτρε) and as “one” (ογιε).
This exemplifies Protennoia’s *diairetic* mode of manifestation. As has been shown, she follows the Stoic sequence of a verbal expression as a scheme for her descent, and since the Stoic sequence is, in fact, a definition by division (*diairesis*) of φωνή, Protennoia’s descent must be considered a sort of “divine *diairesis*”. In this way, the plurality of her unity is underlined, since that is what characterises the method of *diairesis*. In the analysis of *Thund.*., it will become an even more important theme.

Now, this passage functions as an introduction to Protennoia’s second descent, which is announced in 42*:17–18, this time in the form of a woman, a point that may refer to the gender of ςⲙⲏ (fem.). On the other hand, Protennoia begins this second main part by proclaiming that she is the Sound. Hence, the three descents of Protennoia as Sound, Voice and Word do not logically follow the three main parts of *Trim. Prot.*. Thus, in this second part Protennoia appears as both Sound and Voice. Anyhow, this introduction strongly emphasizes the linguistic mode of manifestation of Protennoia, since she is the Mother of the Sound, that is, it is from her as Thought that the Sound is issued. It follows, of course, that the succeeding emanations of that Sound—the Voice and the Word—also originate in the Thought of the Invisible One. Being Sound, Protennoia proclaims to be speaking in many ways. This corresponds to the way the female revealer in *Thund.* proclaims: “It is I who am the Voice whose Sound is manifold” (ἀνεκ τε τεσσαρεις αγιως πεσιροου) (14:12–13). In both texts, this refers to the various modes of linguistic manifestations.

Moreover, Protennoia makes the intention behind her descent clear: to inspire with knowledge, since it is in her that knowledge exists.120 Her message is primarily intended for “her own”, that is, the Sons of Light, to whom she descended, bypassing the archons and powers. Therefore, she gives the Voice of her Sound to them, and they understand it in contrast to the archons. Protennoia is at this point manifest as both Sound and Voice and it is rather important to notice that the Sons of Light are, in fact, able to understand her message. For if we compare with the Stoic sequence of a verbal expression again, the manifestation of Protennoia as the Voice of the Sound (τεσσαρεις ήμροους) has now reached the level of articulateness, in that “Voice” corresponds to the Stoic level of λέξις, which is articulate though unintelligible. The intelligibility comes with her appearance as Word (Logos). From the passages that follow it is obvious that her message is being understood, though only by the Sons of Light. Perhaps we see here a tendency towards a graduation of the

120 Cf. also *Trim. Prot.* 36*:9–27.
receivers of Protennoia’s manifestation, since at this level of Sound and Voice she only addresses her speech among “her own”.

Now, in her second descent, Protennoia proclaims that she has come “in the form of a woman” (ⲙⲧⲁⲥⲟⲧ ⲛⲟⲩⲥϩⲓⲙⲉ) to tell them (the Sons of Light) a mystery which is about the coming end of the aeon, about the changeless aeon to come, and a mystery of this particular aeon. At the bottom of page 42* and at the top of page 43*, Protennoia explains how this aeon is run by hours and months, that is, time and Fate (ⲓⲧⲁⲣⲕⲓⲧⲓ). All this leads to a longer narrative passage (43*:4–44*:29) about the powers of the Underworld and their reaction to the descent of Protennoia, which to them sounds as thunder:

43*:13–21

And the lots of Fate together with those who measure the houses were very much disturbed over a great thunder and the thrones of the powers were disturbed, since they were overturned and their king was afraid and those who pursue Fate gave their number of visits to the path and they said to the powers “what is this disturbance and this shaking that has come upon us from a Sound (belonging) to the exalted Voice”.

Protennoia’s descent causes great disturbance. Not only are the foundations of the Underworld shaken, the “lots of Fate” and “those who measure the houses” too are disturbed by a great thunder (ⲟⲩϩⲣⲟⲩⲙⲡⲉ). Through this description, the text provides an image of the well-known and wide-spread conception of a divine manifestation being articulated as thunder. This theme is greater elaborated in Thund., where it is combined with the notion of the divine
That is not the case in Trim. Prot., although both Nag Hammadi texts employ the thunder phenomenon in relation to the linguistic manifestation of the divine. This is a clear indication of the importance of the audibility of the manifestations. These texts do not focus on visions of the divine; rather what matters is what you experience with your ears.

The passage is part of a narrative section about the incomprehension of the archons and powers. It is especially interesting that even though they only hear thunder, that is, an inarticulate Sound, the content of which they do not understand, they recognise that this thunder comes from above. It is followed by a rather amusing passage, which describes how the powers decide to go up to the Archigenitor (Yaltabaoth) to ask him what this thunder is all about. The powers are obviously confused and express their frustration:

44*:2–12

Behold, now [a] Sound has appeared [belonging] to that invisible Voice of [the aeon] which we do not know and we ourselves [we did not] know to whom we belong, for that Sound which we heard is foreign to us and we do not know it. We did not know whence it was. It came, it put fear in our midst and relaxation in the members of our arms. Now, let us weep and mourn in great mourning.

121 This issue is dealt with in detail in the chapter on Thund.
It is clear that the powers are aware of their own ignorance and this insight makes them miserable. They are frightened not only because of the terrifying thundering Sound, but also because their own comprehension of the world's constitution is suddenly put into question. They realize that the Voice comes from an aeon that they do not know and this makes them reflect about their own origin. In a passage directly related to this one, it is shown how even the Archigenitor does not know the Voice: “For behold, even he, the Archigenetor of our birth, because of whom we pride ourselves, he did not know this Voice” (44*:27–29).

The following passage (44*:29–45*:2) stands in sharp contrast to the uncomprehending Powers of the Underworld. Now Protennoia, as the Voice of the Mother, speaks directly to the “Sons of Thought” in a second-person imperative: “So now, listen to me, Sons of Thought, to the Voice of the Mother of [your] mercy, for you have become worthy of the mystery…” (44*:29–32). Since the Sons of Thought are worthy of the mystery, they must be able to understand.

The term “Sons of Thought” has not been employed in Trim. Proten before this point. Earlier the term that was used for Protennoia’s elected people was “Sons of Light”. However, the two expressions may be considered synonymous, in that both labels seem to cover the same group of people to whom Protennoia descends. They are “those who have known” her (42*:15–16), which is repeated below (45*:11–12), and “those who are worthy in the Thought of my changeless aeon” (42*:26–27). The invocation of the Sons of Thought has correctly been compared to the way in which the Jewish Wisdom calls to her sons in Proverbs 7:24 “Now, my sons listen to me”.

Although parts of her talk is hidden from us in the lacunae, Protennoia clearly tells them of the end of this aeon and maybe of the coming aeon. Through a short insertion of “I am”-sayings in the direct speech of Protennoia,

---

123 Cf. for instance 41*:16.
124 On the other hand, one might also argue that Protennoia descends to three different groups of “Sons”, which would correspond to her three different appearances. Thus, the first group would be the “Sons of Light”, a term which is used in the first part of Trim. Proten. The second group would be the “Sons of Thought”, the term which is used in the second part of Trim. Proten. And the third would be the “Sons of Man”, which is employed in the third part of Trim. Proten. (49*:18). This issue will have to be further investigated.
the reader is reminded of who we are dealing with: the androgynous one, the Mother and the Father and Meirothea, the glory of the Mother, she who casts a “Sounded Voice” (Ὧϲⲧⲓ ⲛ̄ϩⲣⲟⲟυ) into the ears of those who know her (45*:9–12). This last reference to Protennoia’s linguistic descents is placed right before she issues a direct invitation to enter into the perfect Light. It is, in my opinion, not by coincidence that the reader is reminded here of the linguistic manifestation of the divine Thought, as an introduction to what is, in fact, a baptism scene. For it is through her Sound and Voice that the Sons of Light/Thought may understand where they belong in contrast with the powers. Moreover, it is through baptism that Protennoia completes her mission, which is to set free her “part”/the Spirit/Epinoia that was stolen from the Innocent One (Sophia). Thus, Protennoia also calls herself the one “who completes the All” (ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲡⲓ ⲡⲱⲟⲩⲕ Ⲗⲝⲗ ⲙⲧⲏⲣϥ·) (45*:9), that is, she brings back the missing part.

In the passage on baptism that follows, the text returns to the second-person narrative (45*:12–20). Protennoia invites the “you” into the exalted, perfect Light, where they will be glorified, enthroned, given robes and baptized. Then they will be as glorious as they once were.126

The last passage of this second main part of Trim. Prot. is again a first-person narrative. This time Protennoia explains how she gives shape to the All and changes their forms until the All will receive a form. From Protennoia originated the Sound and she puts both breath and the Holy Spirit in them. As Poirier notices, this final saying about the Sound originating in Protennoia forms an inclusion with the self-proclamation which marks out the beginning of the second main part of Trim. Prot.: “It is I who am the Sound that appeared through my Thought” (42*:4–5).127

In 45*:32–34, we find a saying which might be misunderstood in a somewhat peculiar way: ἁⲉⲧⲓ Ⲣⲣⲁⲓ ⲝⲧⲟⲩⲧⲣⲉ ⲑⲩⲓⲧⲟⲩ ⲛⲧⲟⲩ[ⲁⲃ . . . . . . . . . . . . ]. “I ascended without my branch, I sat there among the Sons of the holy light…” The problem is the translation of the preposition ἁⲧ──, which is often translated by “without” (as I have done).128 On the other hand, ἁⲧ── has multiple meanings and may also be translated by “to”, “upon”, “over”, “for”, “against” etc.129 The translators of Trim.

127 Poirier, La Pensée Première à la triple forme, 325–326.
128 Crum 25b.
129 Crum 757a.
Prot. are divided on this issue and fall into two groups: Gesine Schenke, Bentley Layton and John D. Turner all render ρας —in the meaning of “upon”. By contrast, the French translations by Yvonne Janssens and Paul-Hubert Poirier both translate by the meaning of “without”. If we choose to render it “upon” we get the meaning that Protennoia ascends and sits upon her branch. The peculiarity becomes apparent when one imagines a bird flying up to sit upon a branch in a tree or a child climbing high up dangling its feet from a branch. Although I am quite sure that that was not the intended association by the English and German translations, I think the solution we find in the French translations makes very good sense. As Poirier convincingly explains in his commentary, the “branch” should be seen in relation to other plant metaphors which are attested in a wide range of Biblical literature, for instance Rom 11:16–21 where the branches are the Christ-believing individuals who grow from the rich root of the tree. The imagery of the root is, as Poirier recalls, also present in the so-called “Pronoia hymn” in the long recension of the Apocryphon of John where Pronoia ascends to her root of light: θεοὶς ητυκη ἔτανογε Νοοιαίν, “I ran up to my root of light” (30:30–31). Poirier suggests, and I think he is right, that it makes more sense if Protennoia ascends without her branch, that is, the human beings now connected to her through the baptism which was just explained (45*:12–20) and through the Holy Spirit which she casts into her own. She leaves them behind in order to return for the third time.

The end of the second part is unfortunately deteriorated at the top of page 46*.

Third Part: The Discourse of the Manifestation

The third and last part of Trim. Prot. (46*:5–50*:21) is mainly reserved for the manifestation of Protennoia as Word. It begins as follows:

46*:5–33

In the translation which follows, I have left the Logos untranslated despite the fact that I render it “Word” or “Discourse” in the analysis.
It is I who am the [Log]os who exist[s in the] ineffable [Light] exi[s]ting in [........]
undefiled and a Thought re[vealed itself]
perceptible through [a great]
Voice of the Mother, since a male offspring [......]
supports me, and it (fem.) exists from the begin[ning]
in the foundation of the All. But there is a Light [that]
exists hidden in Silence it was first to [come],
but she alone exists as Silence.
It is I alone, who am the Logos, ineffable,
undefiled, immeasurable, inconceivable.
It is a hidden Light who gives a fruit of
life, pouring forth a water of life
from the invisible, undefiled, immeasurable
spring, that is, the Sound of the glory
of the Mother, unrepeatable, the glory of the offspring
of God, a male virgin (issued) from
a hidden mind, that is,
the Silence hidden from the All, being unrepeatable,
an immeasurable Light, the source of the A[l]l,
the root of the entire Aeon. It is the basis that supports
every movement of the Aeons that
belong to the mighty glory. It is the foundation of
every b[a]se. It is the breath of the powers. It is the eye
of the three permanences. She is Sound
through a Thought and a Logos
through the Voice who was sent
to illumine those who exist in the dar[k]ness

Protennoia is now manifest as Word and in this introductory passage to the
third main part of Trim. Prot. the relation between the different linguistic
aspects of Protennoia is explained. Unfortunately the first third of the passage
misses some words towards the end of the line, which makes it harder to read.
However, it is possible to follow the general lines of what is stated here.

The beginning of the passage places the Word in relation to the previous
aspects of Protennoia, recalling the location of Protennoia before her descents
into the visible world. Thus, the text begins by placing the Word in relation
to the Light, which further ahead in the passage is said to reside within the
Silence. In this Silence exists the Thought that reveals itself perceptibly as
Sound and Voice. This recalls earlier passages, especially 36*:12–14 in which
Protennoia proclaims herself to be “perception” and “knowledge”\textsuperscript{134} By repeti-
tion of the former manifestations of Protennoia and her source of origin, the
reader is prepared for her final manifestation as Word. First, however, Trim.
Prot. emphasizes Protennoia’s identity and existence as Silence from which
the Light proceeds. As Poirier notices, the Light plays a decisive role in this
passage, since “ce Logos est lumière et il est envoyé pour illuminer ceux qui
sont dans les ténèbres.”\textsuperscript{135} Lines 9–10 may cause some confusion, in that it is
stated that she (that is, the Mother) alone exists as Silence whereas the first-
person who speaks is the Word. It might seem as if there were two different

\textsuperscript{134} Poirier, \textit{La Pensée Première à la triple forme}, 330.
\textsuperscript{135} \textit{Ibid.}: 332.
persons involved. However, that is not the case. For Protennoia is one, she simply appears in different aspects, which may eventually have different genders (cf. the sayings in lines 5 and 16–17). I would argue, with Poirier, that the reason for the opposition in lines 12–13 “doit être que la procession de la Prôtennoia comme Logos n’annihile pas son existence comme silence.”\textsuperscript{136}

The theme of water and fructification is now combined with the coming of Logos the Light. This clearly alludes to the theme of baptism, which was already introduced in the second main part of \textit{Trim. Prot}. Here it is underlined that this last manifestation of Protennoia is also a source of life and salvation. Both Sevrin and Poirier understand these life-giving elements as the providers of gnosis.\textsuperscript{137} I read this role of the Word with regard to the provision of the life-giving elements as a reaffirmation of the unity of all the manifestations of Protennoia, since in the following lines 15–25 this statement about the Word is placed in the context of the very source of the All. In this way, the reader understands that every manifestation of Protennoia, even this last one as Word, has a single origin, which is in the Silence. The passage alludes strongly to the beginning of the entire text, in which it was described how Protennoia as the life of her Epinoia exists within every movement in the creation (35*:12ff). Moreover, the repetition continues in line 29 with a mention of the three permanences (ⲙⲟⲛⲏ), which in its previous occurrence (in 37*:21–22) was understood as the three modes of being of the Sound as Father, Mother, and Son. In fact, the present passage follows the line of thought from this much earlier presentation of the different manifestations of Protennoia, since the next few lines recapture the interrelation between her linguistic identities. She is Sound through a Thought and a Logos through the Voice. Thus, in this introduction to the third main part of \textit{Trim. Prot}, the author establishes the position of the Word in relation to the other manifestations of Protennoia and confirms her line of linguistic descent, which now appears as follows:

\[\text{ⲡⲕⲣⲟⲩ—ⲡⲡⲑⲧⲧ—Ⲣⲡⲟⲩⲧ—ⲡⲟⲩⲓⲣⲓ} \]
Silence—Thought—Sound—Voice—Word/Discourse

I have argued from the beginning that this sequence corresponds to the Stoic sequence of a verbal expression. This implies that the descent of Protennoia must be understood as a movement from the inarticulate Sound, over the articulate, but unintelligible Voice, to the articulate and fully intelligible Word/
Discourse. Thus, Protennoia has now reached her final level of manifestation as the rational Logos. To the Stoics, the Logos constituted the highest semantic level in a verbal expression. Nothing was more exalted than the Logos. However, even though we understand the Stoic scheme as an underlying matrix in Trim. Prot., functioning as a model for describing the descent of Protennoia, it is important to acknowledge that she descends from above, which means that the highest level of Protennoia must lie within the Silence. In this way, the Stoic model is used in Trim. Prot. in a way that turns it “upside-down”. This needs some explanation, since the issue can be approached from at least two different perspectives.

From the perspective of Protennoia herself the Logos is, as already indicated, the last and the lowest level of her manifestation. This is the aspect of her which descends into the darkness to illumine those who exist there (cf. line 32–33 in the above passage). In her previous descents she has been neither fully articulate nor fully intelligible. That became apparent as she descended past the archons and powers, who did not understand her message. Some, however, did understand her, namely the Sons of Light. As Word, Protennoia becomes perceptible even to those trapped in the darkness of Chaos. It follows that from the perspective of the receivers of her revelation, who at the level of Logos must be considered to be the Sons of Man, the mortal brethren of Protennoia, she constitutes the semantic level that they are able to comprehend. Thus, to them, the Logos must appear as the highest semantic level. Meanwhile, as will become apparent, through the baptism of the Five Seals they will eventually enter into the Light in the Silence.

The text continues into a series of exhortations to the hearers to listen. Unfortunately, the beginning of Protennoia’s speech is lost in the lacuna. However, from the beginning of page 47* the exhortations are turned into a first-person narrative in which Protennoia again recalls her previous descents. From the top of page 47* in the lacuna until line 11 it seems likely that the text is about the first descent because of the reference to the teaching of the mystery through the Sound. The Sound exists in the Perfect Mind (ⲛⲟⲩⲥ ⲛ̄ⲧⲉⲗⲉⲓⲟⲥ), which naturally constitutes a clear parallel to the title of Thund. Poirier acknowledges this, but understands the expression as an adverb, translating “Je les ai instruits des mystères par le son qui est d’une manière parfaitement
“intelligible” (my emphasis).139 Understood in this manner, the text emphasizes the intelligibility of Protennoia’s manifestation as Sound. This holds true for the Sons of Light, but, as I argued above, neither for the powers nor the Sons of Man. So, in one way the Sound is perfectly intelligible, and in another it is not. Poirier’s understanding of the expression is of course possible, and the “Perfect Mind” does not play the role of a separate entity in the text. Nevertheless, I have translated the saying in such a way that the Sound is understood as existing within the Perfect Mind. In this way, it is seen as an alternative description for the Invisible Spirit.

Lines 11–13 recall the second descent, in which Protennoia came in the Voice of her Sound (ⲡⲙⲁϩⲥⲉⲡ⳿ ⲥⲛⲁⲩ ⲁⲓ̈ⲉⲓ ϩⲛ̄ⲧ̣[ⲥⲙⲏ] ⲙ̄ⲡⲁϩⲣⲟⲟⲩ). Thus, in line 13 the reader is prepared for the third and final descent of Protennoia as Word. As such, she reveals herself in their “tents” (ⲡⲱⲡⲓⲙⲓ) as well as “in the likeness of their image” (Ⲇⲫ ⲫⲟⲯⲟⲛⲓⲁ Ⲝⲏⲟⲩ ⲟⲩⲟⲛⲧ⳿ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲑⲛ̄ⲧⲟⲩϩⲓⲕⲱⲛ̣), wearing their “garments” (ⲣⲏⲧⲡⲟⲩ) (47*:15–17). From lines 19–29, the reader is again reminded of the beginning of the text by the statement that Protennoia as Word exists within every level of the cosmos from angels and powers to movements in matter (ⲧⲫⲏ). The difference is, though, that at the beginning of Trim. Prot. it was as the Epinoia that Protennoia moved everyone. Now it seems as if the Word has taken over that role. The interchangeability of roles could very well be understood simply as an expression of different aspects of Protennoia. On the other hand, I think it is important that it is the Word as the third, final, and rational descent of Protennoia that is capable of illumining those who exist in matter. She has come to illumine them because of their ignorance, but it is exactly as the rational, fully articulate and intelligible Logos that she can reach them. This is closely connected to the motivation of her descent in the first place, which is, very suitably, reiterated and further explained in the passage that follows (47*:29–48*:35).

The reason for Protennoia’s coming, and now as Word, is “the Spirit that remains in that which [descended], which came forth [from] the [innocent] Sophia” (ⲡⲱⲡⲓⲙⲓ ⲑⲛ̣ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲋⲓ Ⲧⲫⲏ Ⲏⲡⲛⲣⲏⲩ ⲩⲏ ⲩⲫⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ Ⲝⲏⲯ ⲉⲑⲟⲩ [ⲧⲏⲧⲏⲧ ⲑⲛ̣ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲑⲛ̣ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲧⲕ⋯) (47*:32–34). In other words, Protennoia descends in order to save the Divine Spirit. As was shown above, that Spirit is the missing “part” of Protennoia, the Epinoia, which she has come to recollect by leading the “mortal” ones through the baptism of the Five Seals, which is described on page 48*. Epinoia constitutes the human ability for reflection and knowledge and therefore it is only proper that it is awakened by a divine linguistic manifestation as Logos/rational Discourse. Thus, the actual reason

139 Poirier, La Pensée Première à la triple forme, 341.
for the manifestation of Protennoia in linguistic terms is that her task is to awaken the rational faculty in human beings, namely their (divine) ability for reflection—their Epinoia.

In the baptismal scene, Protennoia describes how she strips the “mortal” and “puts upon him a shining Light, that is, the knowledge of the Thought of the fatherhood” (ⲁⲓ̈ⲁⲓ ϩⲓⲱⲱϥ ⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲟⲉⲓⲛⲉ ⲉϥⲡⲣ̄ⲣⲓⲱⲟⲩ ⲉⲧⲉ̣ⲡ̣ⲁ̣ⲓ̈ ⲡⲉ ⲡⲥⲟⲟⲩⲛⲉ ♐ⲡⲙⲉⲉⲩⲉ ⲛ̄ⲧⲙ︤ⲛ̅ⲧ︥ⲉⲓⲱ̣[ⲧ]) (48*:13–14). She delivers him to those who give robes, the Baptists, those who enthrone and those who glorify. Those who “snatch away” do so and he is taken into the Light where he “receives the Five Seals from the Light of the Mother, Protennoia” (48*:31–32). Taking part in the mysteries, he becomes a light in the Light.

The first passage on page 49* returns to the “I am”—proclamations, now given in the mouth of Protennoia as Word. He reveals himself to various beings in the cosmos as one of their own. That is why the archons thought that he was their Christ. He reveals himself as the son of the Archigenetor. Among the angels, he is in their likeness, and among the powers, he is one of them. Thus, among the Sons of Man he is a Son of Man. Here he remains hidden, only revealing himself to his “members” (ⲙⲉⲗⲟⲥ), explaining to them the ineffable ordinances of the Father. The next passage, which runs from 49*:26 through 50*:12, explains what these ordinances are: namely the Five Seals. If one has them, he has “stripped off the garments of ignorance and put on a shining Light” (49*:30–32).

Page 50* is the last page of the text. It is also very fragmented at the top, as are many other pages in the codex. What is special about this page, though, is the mention of Jesus, which happens only here in Trim. Prot. In line 12, Protennoia as Word states that she “puts on Jesus”.

The text ends with the message of Protennoia to the effect that she is unrestrainable together with her “seed”, which she places in the holy Light within the incomprehensible Silence. This final statement shows how the actual goal for the initiate is not the comprehension of the manifestation of Protennoia as Word, but rather the place from which she descended, that is the Silence. This again shows how the employment of the Stoic sequence of a verbal expression in Trim. Prot. is turned “upside-down”.

Conclusion

For the sake of clarity, let us summarize our observations concerning the use of linguistic terminology for the description of Protennoia's tripartite descent into the sensible world.
In *Trim. Prot.*, Protennoia describes her three descents into the sensible world as a linguistic movement starting from within the ineffable Silence, where she exists as the Thought of the Father. As the Thought enters into the sensible world it becomes hearable first as a Sound (ῥοώ), then as Voice (中外) and at last as the Word (λόγος). Thus, *Trim. Prot.* expresses the divine manifestation in accordance with the progressive levels comprised in a verbal expression. This particular way of describing a verbal expression was developed by the Stoics and we saw how the author of *Trim. Prot.* had adopted a similar schema for describing the descent of Protennoia. The Stoic mode of describing a verbal expression beginning from within Thought as a movement from the inarticulate, to the articulate yet unintelligible, to the articulate and fully intelligible, was visualized as follows:

\[
\text{διάνοια—φωνή—λέξις—λόγος}
\]

Thought—Sound/Voice—Speech—Word/Discourse

*Trim. Prot.*’s equivalent appears as this:

\[
\text{ⲕⲁⲣⲟⲩ—ⲙⲉⲉⲉ—ⲣⲟⲟⲩ—ⲙⲏ—ⲗⲟⲅⲟⲩ}
\]

Silence—Thought—Sound—Voice—Word/Discourse

Even though these terms are not easily translated, we saw that the Coptic terms correspond to the levels articulated in the Greek sequence. This is due to the importance of recognizing that we are dealing with a cluster of terms, and that this cluster expresses a particular movement from inarticulate to articulate, and from unintelligible to intelligible. In this way, the linguistic manifestation of Protennoia is understood as a movement from the inarticulate Sound, over the articulate, but unintelligible Voice, to the articulate and intelligible Word/rational Discourse.

The Stoic sequence of a verbal expression is not used on a one-to-one scale in *Trim. Prot.*, for it is clear that in this Nag Hammadi text, a theory similar to the Stoic one has been integrated into a revelatory, mythological scene very different from the systematic, philosophical context in which it was developed in the first place. For this reason, I regard the Stoic theory as constituting an underlying, dialectic matrix in *Trim. Prot.*, which it does in several ancient authors, if one thinks of the amount of texts which in one way or another employ linguistic terminology, for instance in Philo and Augustine, just to mention a couple. However, *Trim. Prot.* integrates this rather common cluster of linguistic terms in a specific way: by turning it “upside-down”. For whereas the highest semantic level in the Stoic sequence lies in the rational discourse, the Logos, it is
the other way round in *Trim. Prot*. There the highest semantic level is located within the Silence, since that is the place from which Protennoia descends, at the same time as it is the place to which she invites the hearers of her message. In accordance with this, the different levels and modes of manifestation of Protennoia correspond to a differentiation between the receivers and their respective abilities for comprehending her. Thus, it is clear that the “Sons of Light” do understand the content of Protennoia’s message already at the level of Sound and Voice, whereas the archons and powers of the Underworld have no idea from what and where that thundering Sound originates. Furthermore, in her manifestation as Word, Protennoia has reached the level of rational discourse, which means that she is graspable by every living being.

Now, it is clear that *Trim. Prot.* uses the Stoic sequence as a model for the different levels of linguistic manifestation, but why a linguistic manifestation? I believe the answer lies within Protennoia’s motivation for descending in the first place, which lies in the “part” of Protennoia that was stolen from the Innocent One (Sophia), and which now resides within the soul of human beings. That part is the Spirit or Epinoia, which constitutes the human ability for reflection as well as the life-giving movement, that is, breath. To awaken this ability in human beings the divine First Thought must descend perceptibly level by level in order to become able in the third and final manifestation to communicate with humans on the level which everyone has the possibility of comprehending, that is, the level of the Logos. So, in order to save human beings and the part which makes them “God-like”, Protennoia has to speak directly to that part by manifesting herself in accordance with it, that is, linguistically.
CHAPTER 4

The Thunder: Perfect Mind

The *Thunder: Perfect Mind* (NHC VI,2) (*Thund.*) is one of the most enigmatic and beautiful texts of the Nag Hammadi collection. It continues to fascinate and puzzle its readers and its poetic and paradoxical mode of expression is quite exceptional. However, we do find several themes that place *Thund.* in close connection with other Nag Hammadi texts, even showing intertextual relationships with Christian, Jewish, philosophical and Egyptian literature.

In the present context, the focus is on one of these themes, namely the language-related speculation especially found in three “linguistic passages”. This theme occupies a key position in relation to the overall interpretation of *Thund.*, although it has been left almost untouched by scholarship. As in the case of *Trim. Prot.*, we shall see how the Stoic understanding of a verbal expression lies behind the linguistic manifestation of the female revealer, although as in *Trim. Prot.* it has to be understood “upside-down”. However, that is not all. *Thund.* is not only to be understood in the context of Stoic philosophy of language: the Platonic dialectical method of division, *diairesis*, also plays a central role in this text, as does the Platonic notion of “the name”.

To begin with, we shall consider the situation of the manuscript.

*The Manuscript*

*Thund.* is a relatively short text which occupies pages 13 to 21 as the second text in codex VI. The title of *Thund.* (ⲧⲉⲃⲣⲟⲧⲛ Ⲡⲟⲩ ⲛⲧⲉⲗⲉⲟⲥ) is located at the beginning of the text at the top of page 13. This is quite unusual for a Nag Hammadi text since normally we see the titles as rounding off texts, as, for instance, the three subtitles of *Trim. Prot.* The codex is rather well preserved as the lacunae are limited to the first ten lines at the top of the pages. However, from time to time, this disturbs the reading of the text.

Even though the Nag Hammadi codices was found in 1945, the editio princeps of *Thund.* was not published until 1971 by Krause and Labib, followed by a photographic publication in the Facsimile Edition of 1972. The photographic evidence was adjusted and reanalysed based on other unique photographic

---

1 Krause and Labib, *Gnostische und Hermetische Schriften aus Codex II und Codex VI*.
2 Robinson, “Preface”.

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2016 | DOI 10.1163/9789004309494_005
evidence in 1979 and 1984, respectively.\textsuperscript{3} Within the cartonnage of the covers of codex VI, was found twenty-three Greek lists of names and accounts which had been used to strengthen the binding. However, they unfortunately do not bring us closer to a dating of the Coptic manuscript, since they contain no actual dates.\textsuperscript{4}

As mentioned in the previous chapter, codex XIII, containing Trim. Prot. was also found inside the front covers of codex VI. It was also discussed how the diverse texts in codex VI may or may not be connected to one another.

The orthography and language of codex VI is thoroughly described and analysed by W.-P. Funk,\textsuperscript{5} who concludes that the Coptic of codex VI is:

\begin{quote}
un sahidique partiellement non standard, qui se distingue notamment par un certain nombre de “régionalismes” de provenance méridionale. Il en résulte, d’un point de vue socio-linguistique, que, de toute évidence, cette version de Brontè n’a pas été produite dans un des centres de la culture linguistique du sahidique standard. Sur le plan géographique, la région comprise entre Thèbes et Hermopolis serait, comme lieu d’origine, très probable, et celle qui avoisine Nag Hammadi, tout à fait possible.\textsuperscript{6}
\end{quote}

With regard to the dating of the manuscripts, it is important to note that within the cartonnage of codex VII was found three contracts\textsuperscript{7} which had visible dates on them: 341, 346 and 348 CE. The latter of these dates provides a terminus a quo for at least the cover of codex VII.\textsuperscript{8} Assuming that the codices were made during the same period of time, scholars more or less agree on dating the manuscripts to the middle towards the end of the fourth century. However, the dating of the manuscripts remains imprecise and tentative. Moreover, a dating of the composition of the actual text is even more tentative, since it is the general assumption that the Nag Hammadi codices


\textsuperscript{4} For a general overview of the research history concerning the manuscript, see Poirier, \textit{Le Tonnerre intellect parfait}, 1–8.

\textsuperscript{5} Two contributions in Poirier, \textit{Le Tonnerre intellect parfait}, 13–53 and 53–97.

\textsuperscript{6} W.-P. Funk in Poirier, \textit{Le Tonnerre intellect parfait}, 96–97.

\textsuperscript{7} Among many other fragments of, for instance, personal letters which do not contain any visible dates.

are translations from an earlier Greek Vorlage, and dating these hypothetical sources is impossible. On the other hand, the contents of the Nag Hammadi scriptures point towards a second-century composition. This may be assumed against the background of the writings of Irenaeus of Lyon who wrote around 180. In his work, he offered descriptions of various mythological accounts of which some are very similar to what we find in, for instance, the Apocryphon of John. Thus, it is possible that Irenaeus might have had access to texts that were perhaps earlier Greek versions of the Nag Hammadi texts. In addition to this, the philosophical speculation reflected in many of the texts including Thund. and Trim. Prot., has numerous aspects in common with what is usually labelled “Middle Platonism”. For these reasons, the original texts are presumed to have been composed during the second century.

The Content of the Thunder: Perfect Mind

The Question of Genre

Thund. is a monologue performed by a divine female revealer. She addresses her audience through a monotone series of paradoxical “I am”-proclamations, interrupted occasionally by exhortations and encouragements to the “hearers”. The exceptional form of this text finds no parallel within the Nag Hammadi collection, which has led Layton to call it “the most bizarre of all works from the Nag Hammadi corpus”.9 Thund., which is indeed bizarre but beautiful, is not easy to classify. Due to its distinctive features, especially the “I am”-proclamations, the text has been characterized as “poetic and hymnic”,10 a “revelation discourse with a hymnic structure”11 and as a “powerful poem”.12 The latter characterization is Layton’s, who, furthermore, describes it as a “wisdom monologue” parallel to that of the Jewish figure of Wisdom or to the aretalogical speeches by the Egyptian Isis.13 But as Poirier has pointed out, this comparison remains partial and can only account for a few characteristics in Thund.14

9    Bentley Layton, “The Riddle of the Thunder (NHC vi,2),” 38.
14    Poirier, Le Tonnerre intellect parfait, 97–98. The comparison to the Jewish Wisdom literature and the Isis aretalogies will be discussed below.
Others restrict themselves to designating *Thund* as a “åbenbaringstale”\(^{15}\)/*Offenbarungsrede* or even as a “*gnostische* Offenbarungsrede” (my emphasis).\(^{16}\) This specifically “gnostic” genre was developed by H. Becker in his work on the Fourth Gospel.\(^{17}\) In his commentary, Poirier outlines the characteristics of this “Gnostic revelation discourse” and concludes that even though it is indisputable that *Thund* is a revelation discourse combined with an appeal to the “hearers” in the texts, Becker’s model does not cover the theme of the divine as being “sent out” that is of great significance in *Thund*.\(^{18}\) Poirier chooses to characterize *Thund* as “…un discours auto-déclaratoire, dont le seul autre exemple est la *Prôtennoia trimorphe* du Codex XIII”.\(^{19}\) In a note, he adds that the so-called Pronoia-hymn in the long recension of the *Apocryphon of John* has also been compared with *Thund* in regard to its “*I am*”-sayings.\(^{20}\) Through a discussion of different styles of religious speech canvassed by, for instance, Johannine scholars, Poirier eventually analyses the literary form of *Thund* as a “Botenselbstbericht”. This is a genre identified by J.-A. Bühner in his examination of the different features regarding the role of an envoy. The genre focuses on the self-presentation towards the receivers of the message and is summarized in two typical formulations: “Je suis venue/viens de la part de…” and “je suis un tel et un tel…”\(^{21}\) Thus, it is the combination of the theme of the divine as being “sent out” and “*I am*”-proclamations which signifies this kind of genre. *Thund* fits well into this picture and the identification of the genre as a “Botenselbstbericht” or a “discourse of self-proclamation” emphasizes, in my opinion, the soteriological role of the female revealer.

Nicola Denzey, on the other hand, points to the possibility that the content of *Thund* (and *Trim. Prot*. for that matter) might as well be regarded as prophetic in nature. She writes:

---

\(^{15}\) Ingvild S. Gilhus and Einar Thomassen eds., *Gnostiske Skrifter. Utvalgt, oversatt og med et innledende essay av Ingvild Sælid Gilhus og Einar Thomassen* (Verdens Hellige Skrifter; Oslo: De Norske Bokklubbene, 2002).


\(^{19}\) *Ibid.*, 97.

\(^{20}\) This will be touched upon below.

\(^{21}\) Poirier, *Le Tonnerre intellect parfait*, 100.
Trimorphic Protennoia’s aretalogical passages and Thunder: Perfect Mind might easily qualify as oracular literature; they are statements considered by a community to be inspired and contain first-person monologues that would have been “delivered” or spoken by a member of that community, presumably within a liturgical or catechetical context.22

Denzey bases her suggestion on a comparison between our two Nag Hammadi texts and Montanist prophecies,23 focusing on the contact with a community, which she seems to find more explicit in the prophetic literature than in a “revelatory discourse”. This leads her to suggest that we should consider Thund. a song or a type of hymn instead of a poem, which does not mark its “impact on a religious community when recited aloud and considered a sacred, authoritative text.”24

Poirier and Denzey both focus on the receivers/audience of the revelation. I agree that this is an important feature of Thund. which, when put into focus, adds other perspectives to the text, for instance, the use of the text. It is hard to say anything about the presumed use of Thund., since there are no hints of, for instance, a ritual context in it. It may therefore be more fruitful to say something about Thund.’s literary structure and its poetic devices, and analyse how these may affect the hearer or reader of the text. That implies especially an investigation of the function of paradox in Thund., which will soon be discussed. First, however, we shall look at its structure.

The Structure of Thund.
There is no doubt that at a first glance it is difficult to detect a logical structure within Thund. As Poirier has shown, the text is neither a tale nor a didactic tractate. Furthermore, there is no narrative framework to provide the reader with a context.25 In fact, there are only two elements that are easily identified, namely the self-proclamations in the “I am”-style and the exhortations, interpellations and questions to the hearers of the text in the “you”-style.

22 Denzey, “What did the Montanists read?” 442.
23 Ibid. Denzey cites David E. Aune, “The Odes of Solomon and Early Christian Prophecy,” in NTS 28 (1982): 435–460, where he defines a prophecy or an oracle as “a written or oral message from a god, occasionally encoded, mediated by a human spokesperson. It is a form of ‘social communication’, usually secured through distinctive forms of behaviour (possession or trance), and/or a verbal claim that the forthcoming (or preceding) message has a supernatural origin”.
24 Denzey, “What did the Montanists read?” 444.
25 Poirier, Le Tonnerre intellect parfait, 103.
A paraphrase of the text that follows the shifts between these elements will look like those given by B. Layton and S. Giversen. This sort of division of the text is perhaps necessary to outline one’s first overview. On the other hand, the switches between the two elements are so frequent that the meaning of the text remains as obscure as before it was divided up. For this reason I adhere to Poirier’s thematic division of Thund, although I do believe that the formal shifts from time to time also follow the thematic shifts in the text.

Poirier divides Thund into fifteen main paragraphs, which are then subdivided. The divisions are based on the specific vocabulary, themes or redaction of the single passages. In most cases, I agree with Poirier’s divisions; however, there are some instances in which I choose differently. In what follows, I compare my own division to Poirier’s. I do not separate the single lines into “a” and “b” as Poirier does, since I find the result somewhat confusing, even though it is admittedly more accurate:

Poirier’s Fifteen Paragraphs

§1 (13:1) Titre

§2 (13:2–16a) Prologue

(13:2–5a), (13:5b–15a), (13:15b–16a)


§3 (13:16b–14:9a)


26 Layton, The Gnostic Scriptures, who characterizes Thund’s fundamental elements as “identity riddles” and “exhortations”, respectively. Layton divides the text into thirteen parts that follow the main shifts between the two elements. However, his division is not entirely unproblematic, in that some of the parts are not entirely pure “exhortations” or pure “identity riddles”, but mixtures of the two kinds. On the other hand, already in his article from 1986: Layton, “The Riddle of the Thunder (NHC VI,2),” 40 n. 9, he admits that some sayings are difficult to identify as one or the other element.


28 Poirier, Le Tonnerre intellect parfait, 104.

29 Shortened from his structural analysis in Le Tonnerre intellect parfait, 103–112 in which he provides the reader with many explanatory comments, although without giving headlines except for the title, prologue and epilogue. See also the “traduction structurée” on pp. 341–348.
§4 (14:9b–15a)

§5 (14:15b–27a)

(14:15b–17), (14:18–25), (14:26–27a)

§6 (14:27b–15:29a)


§7 (15:29b–17:3b)


§8 (17:3b–18:8)

(17:3b–6a), (17:6b–18a), (17:18b–24a), (17:24b–32a), (17:32b–36a), (17:36b–18:5a), (18:3b–8)

§9 (18:9–26)

(18:9–20a), (18:20b–26)

§10 (18:27–19:4a)

(18:27–31), (18:32–19:4a)

§11 (19:4b–20a)

(19:4b–8), (19:9–15a), (19:15b–20a)

§12 (19:20b–20:5a)


§13 (20:5b–26a)

(20:5b–11a), (20:11b–18a), (20:18b–26a)

§14 (20:26b–21:5a)

§15 (21:5b–32) Épilogue

(21:5b–20a), (21:20b–32)

Structural Analysis of Thund.

For the sake of gaining an overview, I find it helpful to divide Thund. into four main parts. I have marked the subdivisions by headings; however, it is important to note that these headings by no means cover all topics dealt with in the single parts; they only serve as “signposts”:

1 13:1–14:15 “Beginning”

(13:1) title; (13:2–16) prologue; (13:16–14:9) family relations; (14:9–15) first linguistic passage.

---

2 14:15–18:8 “Opposite Social Concepts”

3 18:9–19:20 “Female Revealer”
   (18:9–20) the perfect mind; (18:20–26) hate—love; (18:27–35) substance—no substance; (18:35–19:8) damaged text; (19:9–20) union—dissolution.

4 19:20–21:32 “End”

Of the four main parts, the first and the last are the easiest to delimit. The first is marked out by the prologue and the passage on family relations rounded off by the first linguistic passage, all of which introduce the reader to the female revealer, her provenance, her task and her way of descent. The same is true of the last main part, which I call the “End”. This last part twice reemphasizes the linguistic theme that was raised in the “Beginning”. The linguistic emphasis is part of the key to understanding the female revealer, and it is further reiterated when located right before the epilogue of the text, where the female revealer discloses what can be expected for the ones who find her.

The two parts that fall between the beginning and the end are, by contrast, not easy to delimit and, as is obvious, the first of the two is much longer than the second. Moreover, it is not a straightforward task to decide where to make the subdivisions because of the repetition of themes throughout the text. For instance, the theme of “hate vs. love” is a returning feature which is elaborated in different directions that bind the social relations together across the text. The second major part of Thund. contains what I call “opposite social concepts”. Through different passages that switch between self-proclamations and exhortations to the hearers, the female revealer communicates opposite concepts that are all connected to human social life. These opposites are presented partly as concepts with which the female revealer identifies herself and partly as descriptions of the relationship between the female revealer and her hearers. The third main part concentrates on the female revealer through yet another sequence of self-proclamations.

Ultimately, a division of Thund. remains tentative and the four-part structure is meant to make sense as a rough survey. Poirier’s division is very precise and detailed. However, it does not give the larger framework of Thund., which I seek to capture by speaking of four parts.
“I am”-Proclamations and Thund.’s Literary Parallels

From the beginning of the research history of Thund., the “I am”-proclamations have been a central topic for discussion. They are closely related to the discussion of genre since the self-proclamations form a distinctive literary feature that makes them unavoidable in the attempt to locate Thund. in relation to other texts. For this reason, the present paragraph will include a discussion of Thund.’s literary parallels.

To begin with, Thund.’s “I am”-proclamations (ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲧⲉ/ⲡⲉ) are clear parallels to the ἐγώ εἰμι-sayings found in the Gospel of John.31 This was already noted by Giversen in his introduction and translation of Thund. into Danish from 1975. Giversen, however, did not think that Thund. adds anything to our understanding of the Fourth Gospel.32 Another obvious Biblical parallel to Thund.’s “I am”-proclamations is the self-presentation of the Jewish Wisdom figure, חכמה/Sophia, especially as she appears in Proverbs 8. The self-proclamations are not the only parallels between the two revealers, since many general themes from Jewish Wisdom literature, including the Wisdom of Solomon and Sirach, are repeated in Thund. Poirier has treated this topic thoroughly in his commentary, in which he emphasizes the theme of the female revealer as being an envoy, searching and finding, as well as invitations to hearing her message.33 The female revealer in fact proclaims herself to be the Sophia (Wisdom): “For I am the Wisdom of the Greeks and the Knowledge of the Barbarians” (ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲧⲥⲟⲫⲛⲟⲩ ⲛⲣⲓⲓⲛⲏⲛ· ⲁⲩⲱ ⲧⲅⲛⲱⲥⲓⲥ ⲛⲃⲣⲓⲅⲟⲥ·) (16:3–5).34 There is no doubt that Thund. draws on and alludes heavily to Jewish Wisdom literature but, as will also become apparent with regard to the use of ancient philosophy of language, it is used by Thund. in a slightly different manner than in its original setting. Therefore, the female revealer cannot be identified with the Jewish Dame Wisdom. Furthermore, even though we find “I am”-proclamations in Proverbs, the literary style is quite different.

31 For instance John 8:32.
32 Giversen, “Jeg-er teksten 1 kodeks v1 fra Nag Hammadi,” 71. Whether the Fourth Gospel adds anything to our understanding of Thund. is interesting, but will not be addressed here.
33 Poirier, Le Tonnerre intellect parfait, 157–161. Poirier concludes: “Si elle (the female revealer) a hérité certains traits de la Sagesse biblique, elle a, en revanche, peu à voir avec la Sophia des mythes gnostiques classiques.” Ibid.: 161. Thus, according to Poirier the Classic Gnostic Sophia figure, who “falls” from the divine realm and causes the creation of the sensible world, does not have very much in common with the female revealer of Thund.
34 Where nothing else is noted, all translations from Coptic are my own.
from the one found in *Thund.*, since the former does not present monotonous series of self-proclamations, but only a few scattered sayings.\(^{35}\)

One obvious parallel to the monotonous “I am”-style of *Thund.* is the Isis aretalogies, in which Isis reveals herself in ἐγώ εἰμι-sayings. An inscription from Cumae\(^{36}\) even parallels the content of specific passages from *Thund.*\(^{37}\) Based on the parallels between *Thund.* and the Isis aretalogies in both form and content, and the fact that both are female revealers, several scholars have found that the author of *Thund.* must have been familiar with the aretalogies and perhaps been inspired by them.\(^{38}\) However, one important difference between them, which has been observed by G. W. MacRae,\(^{39}\) is that whereas Isis only employs positive designations for describing herself, the female revealer of *Thund.* employs both positive and negative designations. For this reason, MacRae does not see the Isis aretalogies as parallels to the contents of *Thund.*

Poirier calls attention to another element which marks a difference between the two, namely, the structural complexity of *Thund.* *Thund.*, he writes, is a combination of self-proclamations and exhortations, whereas the Isis aretalogies are limited to self-proclamations.\(^{40}\)

Within the Nag Hammadi library, the most obvious parallel to *Thund.* is *Trim. Prot.* We discussed the similarities between them earlier, so for the moment it

---

35 This is also noted by George W. MacRae, “Discourses of the Gnostic Revealer,” in *Proceedings of the International Colloquium on Gnosticism, Stockholm August 20–25, 1973* (ed. Geo Widengren and David Hellholm; Kungl. Vitterhets historie och antikvitets akademiens handlingar; Filologisk-filosofiska serien 17; Stockholm: Almquist & Wiksell International/Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1977), 115, who adds that neither does Proverbs include the antithetical element.


suffices to repeat that Trim. Prot. also contains long sequences of ἀνόκ τῆ/τη-sayings. Another important subject of comparison is the “Pronoia-hymn” from the long recension of the Apocryphon of John, which we have dealt with in the chapter on Trim. Prot. The same can be said here, namely, that the ἀνόκ τῆ/τη-sayings signify a specific mode of divine expression, which in these three examples is put into the mouths of female revealer figures not unlike the Jewish Dame Wisdom or Isis for that matter. One major difference, though, is that the female revealer of Thund. has been sent (“It is from the Power that I have been sent” ([ⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲩⲧⲁⲟⲩⲟⲉ ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ϩ︤︤ⲛ ⲧⲡⲁⲙ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ϩ︤︤ⲛ ⲧⲡⲙ] (13:1–2)), whereas both Protennoia and Pronoia descend on their own initiative. Moreover, once again the identification with opposite concepts is unique for the self-presentation of the female revealer of Thund. The other revealers, like Isis, only present themselves in positive terms.

A particular literary parallel to Thund. is found in the untitled text that is usually referred to as On the Origin of the World (NHC II,5 and XIII,2). This text delivers a parallel to the “I am”-proclamations and also seems to quote directly from Thund., or perhaps more probably, from a common unknown source. The passage in question is at the beginning of Thund., where the female revealer identifies herself with opposite female characters (13:19–14:9). Thus, for instance, she proclaims: “It is I who am the woman and the virgin” (ἀνόκ τε τετραοική ἄνω τᾷπροφνος·) (13:19–20). This proclamation and others belonging to the same passage are found in On the Origin of the World 114:7–15. Thus, 114:9 reads, “It is I who am the woman. It is I who am the virgin” (ἀνόκ τε τῇπρε. ἀνόκ τε τᾷπροφνος). In this text, the sayings are ascribed to Eve. Likewise, in another Ophite text, the Hypostasis of the Archons (NHC II,4), one finds a short passage that contains similar sayings (89:16–17), although this time they are not formulated as self-proclamations but as Adam’s praise of Eve.41

These parallels have led Layton to suggest that the solution to the identity-riddle of the female revealer in Thund. may be Eve; and thus, the hypothetical common source of these three Nag Hammadi texts may be the so-called Gospel

---

41 See all three texts synoptically in Poirier, Le Tonnerre intellect parfait, 124–125. Poirier, Le Tonnerre intellect parfait, 122 observes that the passages in On the Origin of the World and the Hypostasis of the Archons are most likely quotations from an external source, since the passage On the Origin of the World introduced by the formulation: “therefore it is said about her, that she has said . . .” (ἀνόκ τοῦτο σεκαθ Ἴνος εφος χε ἄχσοος χε); and in the Hypostasis of the Archons, it is introduced by χε. The passage in Thund. is far more well-integrated, however, Poirier does not doubt that the passage in Thund. also derives from somewhere else, since the vocabulary does not occur elsewhere in the text (Ibid., 128–132).
of Eve cited by Epiphanius (*Panarion* 26.3.1). Epiphanius’ extract describes a person who stands on a mountain and sees two men. He/she hears a thundering voice from the sky saying: ἐγὼ σὺ καὶ σὺ ἐγώ, “I am you and you are me”. According to Layton, this scene depicts the fleshly Eve being addressed by the heavenly Eve. Recalling the twofold role of Eve in the *Hypostasis of the Archons* (in which Eve is both understood as the heavenly Eve, the divine female principle, and the fleshly Eve), Layton considers that the female revealer in *Thund.* is a sort of heavenly Eve. Poirier is not entirely convinced by Layton’s hypothesis, since neither the *Gospel of Eve* nor the *Hypostasis of the Archons* contains the same kind of dynamic of thesis and antithesis as *Thund.* and *On the Origin of the World*.

Another literary parallel to *Thund.* is found in the so-called “Dinanukht’s Book” of the Mandeans *Ginza*, which offers not only a parallel to the “I am”-proclamations, but also to the antithesis and paradoxes which the other literary parallels have not been able to match. In the Book of Dinanukht, a heavenly Ewath reveals herself in sayings that are very similar to the ones professed by the female revealer of *Thund.* Thus she proclaims: “I am death, I am life. I am darkness, I am light.” MacRae suggests that perhaps the passage in the *Ginza* “echoes an oldertopos in the Mandean literature that has roots common with *The Thunder.*” Poirier is not persuaded either by the parallel in the *Ginza*. He writes:

A notre avis, le témoignage du *Ginza* illustre seulement à quel point le recours au paradoxe et au parallélisme antithétique était répandu dans l’antiquité dès que l’on voulait décrire en style poétique la transcendance d’un être divin.

I agree with Poirier on this point and he touches upon an important issue with regard to the antitheses and paradoxes in *Thund.*, namely their function.

---

42 Layton, “The Riddle of the Thunder (NHC VI,2),” esp. 48–51.
43 *Ibid.*: 51. See below, where I discuss Layton’s hypothesis in relation to the identification of the female revealer with Epinoia.
46 *Ibid.*: 207.35–36. I have translated Lidzbarski’s German translation.
47 MacRae, “Discourses of the Gnostic Revealer,” 119.
49 For a few other literary parallels see Poirier, *Le Tonnerre intellect parfait*, 132–141, where he draws attention to P. Berol. 15995, f. 21r, *Apophasis Megale* cited by Hippolytus in his *Elenchos* (v1.172–3), and a Naassene hymn to Adamas.
The Function of Paradox and Antithesis

The most striking element in *Thund.* is, in fact, not the “I am”-proclamations, to which many parallels may be enumerated, but rather their paradoxical nature. This section will serve as a rough survey of the different approaches to the function of paradox that have been adduced by a number of modern scholars.

MacRae was one of the first to consider this topic. His point of departure was the comparison with the Isis aretalogies. The difference between the revelations of the two goddesses is, according to MacRae, that the purpose of the self-proclamations by Isis is to describe her universality, whereas the paradoxical self-proclamations by the female revealer in *Thund.* add another dimension, so to speak, and describe her transcendence. He writes:

She is not simply the truth or reality of all men’s aspirations, but she is of a higher order than the moral, conventional and rational standards of the world . . . In the face of divine revelation no human values are adequate.50

With this observation, MacRae laid the foundation for later approaches, which also, in one way or the other, understand the female revealer as a transcendent being. Layton is an exception in that he understands the function of paradox as an expression of *Thund.*’s affiliation with Greek riddles.51

In her article from 1994, McGuire suggested that we should understand the unexpected blend of terms in divine self-description as if it “breaks down some of the restrictive functions of these polarities.”52 This is done either by including antitheses into the divine or by turning them into paradoxes and thus crossing the boundaries between them. Furthermore, McGuire argues that the antitheses indicate the liminality of the female revealer as one who exists “betwixt and between” the visible and invisible, the immanent and transcendent.53 Thus, McGuire does not follow MacRae’s interpretation of the female revealer as transcendent, but rather as one who exists in between. Nevertheless, she does follow MacRae in the understanding of the antitheses as being re-evaluated when they are comprised in one being. McGuire emphasizes that the readers of *Thund.* will come to new understandings of their “categories of difference” which:

50 MacRae, “The ego-proclamations in Gnostic Sources,” 133.
link the speaker directly to the conflicting, though sometimes overlapping, roles of women. In this way, the text opens new possibilities for the critique and reinterpretation of such polarities, the identities they shape, and the values they ascribe to the female gender in its divine and human manifestations.\(^\text{54}\)

To Poirier the antithetical and paradoxical self-proclamations tell us that the female revealer is “un être absolu”.\(^\text{55}\) He focuses on the soteriological aspect of the treatise in that the task of the hearers is to find the female revealer by recognizing her identity and thereby gaining eternal life. This is done through a crossing (or transcendence) of all oppositions, for as Poirier writes: “en sa personne, elle les annule en les assumant.”\(^\text{56}\) He underlines that

> les auditeurs sont invités avec urgence à ne plus l'enfermer, et, du même coup, à ne plus s'enfermer eux-mêmes, dans des catégories contradictoires et opposées qui ne sauraient valoir à son endroit.\(^\text{57}\)

The three approaches all agree on the one thing: that the opposite concepts, whether formulated as antitheses or paradoxes, are nullified or transcended when comprised in the one divine being, the female revealer. McGuire's approach is somewhat “earthly-oriented”, in that she argues that the nullification of the opposite concepts makes the human being re-evaluate its understanding of existing human relations. Poirier points to the recognition of the female revealer as an absolute being who claims a universal cult in which all opposites are transcended.

Two recent studies are of special interest. In 2010, a group under H. Taussig published a small volume on *Thund.*, which took the form of a new translation and introduction, the latter of which is a collection of articles that examine *Thund.* from different points of view.\(^\text{58}\) With respect to the function of paradox and antithesis in *Thund.*, Taussig’s team seems to be much in line with

\[^{54}\text{Ibid.}: 43.\]
\[^{55}\text{Poirier, Le Tonnerre intellect parfait, 119.}\]
\[^{56}\text{Loc. cit.}\]
\[^{57}\text{Loc. cit.}\]
\[^{58}\text{The main interest of the group seems to be in the socio-anthropological aspects of the text, which find expression in articles concerning gender questions and cultural and social order. Moreover, Taussig’s team also deals with genre questions and poetic style, as well as the adoption of *Thund.* in modern culture. I shall not discuss their approaches in detail here, since it would lead us too far away from our main question.}\]
McGuire’s socio-cultural approach, especially focusing on gender questions, in that they find that the function of the language of *Thund* is to: “…disorient and invert social order and identity patterns.” It undoes “assumptions and create an open space where the assumptions had held sway.” And “it bends gender by comically mixing masculine and feminine categories, calling into question the conventional gender boundaries and connections between people.”

Moreover, N. L. Elkjær Olsen describes *Thund*’s language as a *cataphatic* discourse which constantly dissolves itself, corrects itself, and destabilizes meaning. Olsen suggests that we should understand this as equivalent to the function of an *apophatic* discourse, although language is still an important feature in *Thund*. Therefore, she suggests that the main purpose of *Thund* is of a performative nature. By reading *Thund*, the paradoxes and antitheses will eventually cause a condition of mental irresolution by which common patterns of recognition and distinction are dissolved.

Through my analysis of *Thund*, it will become apparent that I agree with McGuire, Poirier and Olsen in many respects; however, I shall add new perspectives, especially with regard to the understanding of opposites and the notion of the name.

**Linguistic Manifestation in the Thunder: Perfect Mind**

In three passages, the author of *Thund* demonstrates a keen interest in language, not only in playing with language to such a degree that the reader is puzzled or even confused by the complexity and paradoxical expression of the text, but also in identifying the female revealer herself with language. The three passages, which I call the “linguistic passages”, occupy key positions in the text with regard to its structure, which again has vital consequences for its overall interpretation. As we shall see, these passages constitute a link between *Thund* and *Trim. Prot.*; they are found in: 14:9–15; 19:20–25 and 20:28–35. It is important to note that Poirier only counts two of these as language-related, namely the first and the last, but also adds another (21:11–13), which I do not.

---

61 Although I do not consider the question of performativity.
It is not an entirely new observation that the similarity between *Thund.* and *Trim. Prot.* has primarily to do with the linguistic reflections on the divine. Turner, Layton and Denzey have all seen this connection. However, these scholars have relegated this aspect to footnotes, mentioned it in passing or touched upon it lightly. The articles by Layton and especially Denzey treat the topic to some extent. Layton’s article “The Riddle of the Thunder (NHC VI,2): The Function of Paradox in a Gnostic Text from Nag Hammadi” summarizes a list of parallels between *Thund.* and other Classic Gnostic texts. Many of these are, in fact, parallels between *Thund.* and *Trim. Prot.*, but the article is not concerned with the relationship between these two texts in particular. Meanwhile, Denzey argues for a correspondence between the Montanist logia, *Thund.* and *Trim. Prot.* that consists in “a marked emphasis on word, speech, and hearing in both sets of documents, the themes of divine speech or call, and the claim to a divine authority.”

The aim of the next paragraph is to provide a more thorough analysis that follows up on the insights of these scholars. We shall begin with the first linguistic passage that is located almost at the opening of *Thund.*, preceded only by the prologue and the passage on female identities/family relations.

The First Linguistic Passage

14:9–15

... ἄνοκ πε πκᾶραψ
eτεναχοταρψ ἄψ τενίνοι
α τετεναχομενοτίσεγε
ἄνοκ τε τεχν τετεναχομεν
γροογ ό ροις ετεναχο
πεκέιν; ἄνοκ πε παχε ν
παραπ’

... It is I who am the Silence
that is incomprehensible, and the Thought
whose remembrance is great.
It is I who am the Voice whose Sound

---

64 Layton, “The Riddle of the Thunder (NHC V,2),” 52–54.
65 Denzey, “What did the Montanists Read?” 443.
66 See above for my division of *Thund.*
is manifold, and the Word whose form is manifold.67 It is I who am the Utterance of my Name.

In this passage, the female revealer identifies herself with a number of linguistic terms. She proclaims to be Silence, Thought, Voice, Word (sentence/discourse) and Utterance. The sequence of linguistic terms may be visualized as follows:

ⲕⲱⲣⲱⲥ—ⲉⲡⲓⲛⲟⲓ—(ϩⲣⲟⲟⲩ)—ⲥⲙⲏ—ⲗⲟⲅⲟⲥ—ⲡⲱⲥⲉ—(ⲣⲁⲛ)
Silence—Thought—(Sound)—Voice—Word/Discourse—Speech/Utterance—(Name)

This sequence turns out to be much the same as the manifestation of Protennoia in Trim. Prot.:

ⲕⲱⲣⲱⲥ—ⲙⲉⲉⲩⲉ—ϩⲣⲟⲟⲩ—ⲥⲙⲏ—ⲗⲟⲅⲟⲥ
Silence—Thought—Sound—Voice—Word/Discourse

The similarities between the two texts in this regard are striking, and indeed reason enough to assume that they also share, at least to a certain extent, a common theology. As is obvious from a first glance at the two sequences, there are of course some differences. First, however, let us recall the Stoic sequence of verbal expression for comparison:

διάνοια—φωνή—λέξις—λόγος
Thought—Sound/Voice—Speech—Word/Sentence/Discourse

Placed next to one another, the three lines appear very similar. All three go from the inarticulate and unintelligible to the articulate and fully intelligible. Unlike the Stoic sequence, though, the two lines of linguistic manifestation in Thund.

---

67 I have chosen to follow the Coptic text closely in the translation of the saying: ⲡⲉ ⲧⲉ ⲧⲉⲥⲙⲏ ⲡⲉⲛⲁϣⲉⲡⲉϩⲣⲟⲟⲩ ⲁⲩ ⲡⲅⲟⲥ ⲡⲉⲛⲁϣⲉⲡⲉⲓⲛⲉ, in that I have rendered both ⲩⲣⲟⲟⲩ and ⲉⲛⲁⲡⲉ in the singular ("whose sound is manifold" and "whose form is manifold"), although it is a possibility to render both in the plural because of the ⲛⲁⲡⲉ. Cf. the translation of Poirier, Le Tonnerre intellect parfait, 180–181 "C’est moi la voix dont les sons sont nombreux et la parole dont les aspects sont multiples," and Layton, The Gnostic Scriptures, 80 “It is I who am the voice whose sounds are so numerous: And the discourse whose images are so numerous.”
and *Trim. Prot.* begin in Silence. This will be discussed below. Meanwhile, all three agree that a “verbal expression” originates in thought (διάνοια/ⲙⲉⲉⲉ/ⲉⲡⲓⲛⲟⲉ). Even though the three terms are different and certainly connote different aspects of the noetic faculty, they represent the location from which an utterance issues, recalling the Stoic expression: Λόγος δέ ἐστι φωνὴ σημαντικὴ ἀπὸ διανοίας ἐκπεμπομένη (a sentence (logos) is an intelligible voice, issued from thought).

The remaining, hearable aspects of the utterance are rendered somewhat differently in the three lines, although still expressing the same sequence of levels and the same interrelation between these levels. The differences will be analysed below, as will the questions and difficulties concerning the Coptic translations of the Greek words. For now it suffices to indicate that the point of departure for the following analysis of *Thund.* is that the two Nag Hammadi texts clearly enclose a theory of language, similar to the Stoic one, as an underlying matrix in their description of the divine manifestation. The resemblance between the three sequences is striking, and reading both *Thund.* and *Trim. Prot.* against the background of Stoic dialectics proves immensely helpful for the understanding of their linguistic themes.

It is important to stress again that this study is not proposing to give a “Stoic reading” of either of the two Nag Hammadi texts, in the sense of simply taking them to be Stoic texts, but rather to read them as having integrated existing philosophical reflections into a revelatory framework. Furthermore, as is probably already apparent, Stoicism is certainly not the only philosophical school which influenced the shaping of these two Nag Hammadi texts.

In what follows, we shall investigate the single steps in the sequence of the linguistic manifestation of the female revealer in *Thund.*. The preceding analysis of *Trim. Prot.* will be taken into consideration, pointing out differences and similarities between the two texts and their relation to Stoic dialectics.

**Silence**

The Coptic noun καρόα (silence) occurs only once in the entire text, namely, here in 14:9. It introduces the linguistic sayings and stands in direct contrast to the text as a whole and the first linguistic passage in particular. This passage, I suggest, is about language and the manifestation of the divine in and through language. That makes it all the more striking that the goddess begins her linguistic sayings by stating that she is the Silence. After all, the aretalogical style of the text provides a divine manifestation which is anything but silent.

---

This incongruity radically emphasizes the paradoxical nature of the goddess. She is Silence; but on the other hand, she incessantly speaks about herself.

It is obviously important that “Silence” occurs in direct relation to and as the introduction to a paragraph replete with linguistic terminology. First, the female revealer proclaims herself to be Silence whereupon she identifies herself with Thought, Voice, Word/Discourse, and Utterance, of which only Thought must be considered silent. However, Silence as the clear contrast to any kind of sound must be understood as the stage before (or after) sound, and thus as belonging to the same field of terminology. In this particular context in Thund., the Silence fits well into the line of linguistic self-proclamations because it marks the level before any kind of sound and even before any thought. As we shall see below it may, in fact, represent the level of the perfect mind.

The Silence is characterized as “incomprehensible”. This recalls Trim. Prot., in which the Silence is also described as incomprehensible as well as immeasurable. Protennoia herself is once identified with the Silence (46*:13), but otherwise it seems to designate a certain place or condition in which she and the Father exist together with the Sons of Light/Thought.

In the discussion of Trim. Prot. we saw that although the Stoic understanding of a verbal expression underlies the sequence of manifestations of Protennoia, it must be understood “upside-down”. From the perspective of Protennoia and the initiate, i.e. the “the Sons of Light/Thought”, the highest semantic level is not situated within the logos, as it was for the Stoics, but rather within the Silence. The Silence is therefore the actual goal for the reader of that text. The same is true of Thund. The reader must start at the (at least to the human mind) most intelligible level of the revealer, namely, the logos (Word/Discourse), and climb up the linguistic ladder towards its source: Silence. On the way up she/he will pass Speech, Voice, Sound and Thought. The goal is to find her and thereby find the “resting place” in order to live and not die again (21:28–32).

Nevertheless, the manifestations of both Protennoia and the female revealer of Thund. go downwards from Silence to logos, following the Stoic sequence of a verbal expression.

The notion of silence is a widespread feature that plays an important role in related Nag Hammadi texts, especially the Holy Book of the Great Invisible Spirit (the Gospel of the Egyptians) (NHC III,2 and IV,2),69 Marsanes (NHC X),70

---

69 In which is found passages like “the child of the silent silence, the crown of the silent silence, the glory of the father, the virtue of the mother” (111,2; 42:21–43:1).

117

**Allogenes (NHC XI,3)** and others. In these texts, the concept of silence is used to describe the indescribable and may thus be seen as a sort of apophatic portrayal of the divine.72

**Thought**

The female revealer of *Thund*. moves from being *Silence* to designate herself as the *Thought (ⲉⲡⲓⲛⲟⲓⲁ)*. This Greek loan-word, *epinoia*, is often translated as “afterthought” in both its Coptic and Greek appearances. However, this is far from the only denotation *epinoia* possesses. From a brief look in the *LSJ*, it appears that *epinoia* can have the sense of thought, notion, concept, idea, intelligence and afterthought, among others.

Scholars do not agree on the translation of *ⲉⲡⲓⲛⲟⲓⲁ* in *Thund.*, varying between “idea”, “thought”, “afterthought” and the untranslated “Epinoia”.73 Three translations vote for “afterthought” and only one or two for the remaining three possibilities. As is clear from my translation, I have chosen to render *ⲉⲡⲓⲛⲟⲓⲁ* by “thought”, thus following Poirier and McGuire. Yet this translation creates some inaccuracy when one takes into consideration the Coptic noun *ⲙⲉⲉⲩⲉ*, which is the common equivalent for “thought”. This is clear from *Trim. Prot.*, where Protennoia is designated as *ⲙⲉⲉⲩⲉ* (Thought) and of course the

---


72 For an investigation of the notion of silence as a consequence of the “Greek pessimism about the efficacy of language” see Mortley, *From Word to Silence*. 1, 110–124. He writes: “... somewhere in the history of Greek thought there began to develop a deep suspicion of discourse, and the corresponding belief that lack of words, or silence, could convey the deepest meanings sought.” Mortley, *From Word to Silence*. 1, 110.

According to Crum, Ṧege can be either a translation of the Greek διάνοια, νόημα, ἔννοια, ἐπίνοια, and many other terms, which shows the breadth of the Coptic noun. The female revealer of *Thund.* is not designated as Ṣege, but only as Ḫn. *Thund.* does, however, use the Coptic Ṣege, although only in compound expressions such as Ṣe—(think of/ recognize) (13:4, 6 and 16:26, 31) and Ṣn Ṣe (remembrance) (14:11). The obvious question now is why *Thund.* does not use Ṣe for “thought” instead of Ḫn, since the latter term is used in related Nag Hammadi texts with implications other than mere “thought”.

Within the corpus of Classic Gnostic texts, Epinoia plays the role of the divine female spiritual principle, sent into the visible world to restore the deficiency of Sophia. She is the helper of Adam, the one who awakens him by giving him gnosis and thus making him remember. She is the mediator between the invisible and visible worlds. Such is the role of Epinoia in the *Apocryphon of John*, where she is identified as the “Epinoia of light” (τεταρτον ὑπογειων) and is referred to as “life” (ζωή) (*Apocryphon of John NHC II,20:19*). Most importantly, though, she is called “the Epinoia of luminous Pronoia” (τεταρτον ὑπερφων Νυογοι), which shows that Epinoia is to be understood as the part of Pronoia/Barbelo which is present at the beginning of time when the human being is created. She is described as assisting Adam, teaching him about the descent of his seed and about the way of ascent (εστι προηγοι τοποθετημενει Αντην ιππερη… ἐπιλαμβανει εφραϊ) (20:21–24). Furthermore, she is the one who awakens his thought (περιηγεσθε). Especially interesting with regard to the figure of Epinoia in the *Apocryphon of John* is the fact that she is described as identical to the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil (22:4–6), or in the form of an eagle sitting on the Tree of Knowledge (23:27–28). The tree is also of great importance in the *Hypostasis of the Archons (NHC II,4)*, in which the specific Ophite exegesis of Genesis is distinctive. The positive attitude towards the snake in that story is due to the female spiritual principle, which resides within the snake as it persuades the woman to eat from the tree (89:31–90:12). In the *Hypostasis of the Archons*

---

75 For references to the *Apocryphon of John*, I use the long recension of codex II from the critical edition by Waldstein and Wisse, *The Apocryphon of John*.
76 According to Karen L. King, *The Secret Revelation of John* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006), 106 note 24, one possible solution to the confusing fact that Epinoia is taking the form of an eagle and not a snake, could be “a pun (or mistranslation) based on the phonetic similarities between ‘snake’ (hiera) and ‘eagle’ (hierax) in the Greek translation (LXX)”. 
the female spiritual principle is not designated “Epinoia”, but it plays the same enlightening role as Epinoia in the Apocryphon of John, and I believe they must be considered as representing the same aspect of Pronoia/Barbelo. Therefore, whereas Epinoia in the Apocryphon of John is identical with the tree of knowledge, the female spiritual principle in the Hypostasis of the Archons is incarnate in the snake in order to make humans eat. In both instances it is clear that eating from the tree gives humans the divine knowledge of good and evil, and that they are made to eat by an aspect of Pronoia/Barbelo. In the Apocryphon of John they might even be said to be eating of Epinoia, since she is the tree! The point is of course, as King notes: “the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil . . . is associated with the teaching of Epinoia (and Christ).”

In both texts, the classic motif of sleep and awakening is played out in relation to the Genesis account of Adam being put to sleep by Jahwe. The Apocryphon of John explicitly says that the sleep is referring to the sleep (ⲃⲉⲕ) of Adam’s perception (ⲧⲃⲱⲧ) (22:25). The state of mind of Adam is also described as a drunkenness from which he is to become sober (ⲣⲏⲩⲩⲓ) by the help of Epinoia (23:8). The same soberness is achieved by the hearers at the end of Thund. when they have found their resting place and thereby also found her (. . . οⲛⲱⲓϣⲫⲏⲩ ⲛⲧⲝⲉⲡⲱⲧ ⲉϩⲣⲁⲓ ⲯⲟⲩⲩⲓⲧⲓⲣⲓⲟⲛ· ⲁⲩⲟ ⲥⲉⲛⲁϭⲓⲛⲉ ⲙⲧⲟⲩⲣⲏⲩⲓ ⲙⲧⲉⲱ ⲉⲧ ⲙⲧⲉ ⲙⲧⲉ) (21:27–30).

In Trim. Prot. the term ⲉⲡⲓⲛⲟⲓⲁ is not used as a designation for Protennoia. There Epinoia functions in more or less the same manner as in the Apocryphon of John, namely, as in Turner’s words, an “avatar” of Pronoia/Barbelo. According to Turner, Trim. Prot.’s “ἐπίνοια (“externalized ἔννοια”) is the productive power of Protennoia later (39*,13–40*,7 as Sophia) stolen by Yaltabaoth.”

Even though the female revealer of Thund. is designated “Epinoia”, she uses the same form of communication as Protennoia in Trim. Prot. and Pronoia

77  King, The Secret Revelation of John, 104. In the Hypostasis of the Archons the story is told differently. When the Archons want to plant their seed in the woman (Eve), as she possesses the divine female spiritual principle, she laughs at them and turns into a tree (89:25), although it does not seem as if this tree is the tree of knowledge. Furthermore, it has been suggested by Ingvild S. Gilhus, The Nature of the Archons, that in the Hypostasis of the Archons the female spiritual principle (the Holy Spirit) fills out the role of Genesis’ Tree of Life, in that Adam and Eve are thrown out of the garden so that they might not commit themselves to the Holy Spirit (91:7–11). See also Ingvild S. Gilhus, “The Tree of Life and the Tree of Death. A Study of Gnostic Symbols,” in Religion 17 (1987): 337–353.

78  There are four instances of ⲉⲡⲓⲛⲟⲓⲁ in Trim. Prot. See chapter on Trim. Prot. for references.


in the long version of the *Apocryphon of John*, namely, the “I am”-declaration (ἈΝΩΚ ΠΕ/ΤΕ). Moreover, the task of her descent is also soteriological: the awakening of the human being, the communicating of gnosis and making the human being remember. The fact that these texts employ a similar kind of language for a similar soteriological act on the part of the divine female principle shows that whether the revealer/saviour/enlightener is called Pronoia, Barbelo, Protennoia, Ennoia or Epinoia they are all simply different aspects of one and the same First Thought of the highest god, the Invisible Spirit. With some restrictions, even Eve, Sophia and Christ could be added to this list. On the other hand, several of these figures may be present within the same text acting out different roles, but this does not mean that they are sharply distinguished.

This is underlined by Turner in his analysis of the “Sethian” treatment of “the figure of Sophia, the divine Wisdom of the Hebrew Bible”. He writes:81

> In the hands of Sethian Gnostics, the biblical functions of Sophia as creator, nourisher, and enlightener of the world were distributed among a hierarchy of feminine principles: a divine Mother called Barbelo, the First Thought of the supreme deity, the Invisible Spirit; and a lower Sophia responsible for both the creation of the physical world and the incarnation of portions of the supreme Mother’s divine essence into human bodies. Salvation was achieved by the Mother’s reintegration of her own dissipated essence into its original unity.82

Furthermore he explicates:

> In the Sethian texts, Sophia becomes the cause of cosmogonic deficiency, so she is replaced on the transcendent plane by the higher feminine figure of Pronoia/Barbelo, and on the earthly plane by Pronoia’s avatars Epinoia, Zôê, the spiritual Eve, and even the masculine Christ as the culminating Savior (rather as the Johannine prologue recasts a descending wisdom figure as Christ the Word).83

Now, how does all of this relate to *Thund*? The fact that the female revealer of *Thund* designates herself as “Epinoia” implies that she is a manifestation of Pronoia/Barbelo/Protennoia. The female revealer employs the same tool of

81 It shall be noted here, that this passage from Turner was already quoted in the chapter on *Trim. Prot*. It is brought again for the sake of clarity.


83 *Ibid.*: 227–228.
manifestation: the “ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲡⲉ/ⲧⲉ”-sayings. She descends and her task is soteriological. And most importantly: she reveals herself in linguistic terms, as does Protennoia in *Trim. Prot*.

The association with the Classic Gnostic material was already suggested by Layton in his aforementioned article from 1986, in which he analyses *Thund.* as being closely related to Jewish Hellenistic Wisdom traditions, Isis aretalogies and Greek riddles. We have discussed this above; however, his points are recalled for the sake of clarity to the present argument. Layton finds the solution to the riddle of *Thund.* in the two related Nag Hammadi texts, the *Hypostasis of the Archons* and *On the Origin of the World* (*NHC 11.5*), which both share a few verses with *Thund.* In these two texts, the self-proclamations are either pronounced by Eve84 or retold in a third person narrative about Eve,85 which naturally led Layton to suggest “Eve” as the solution to the riddle of *Thund.*86 He also suggested, as we know, that these three Nag Hammadi texts might share a common literary antecedent in a certain “*Gospel of Eve*” mentioned by Epiphanius, but unknown to us.87 Layton’s insights show us that the sayings of the female revealer of *Thund.* are elsewhere uttered by Eve—the heavenly Eve, who is Epinoia residing inside the fleshly Eve as she awakens Adam. In the *Hypostasis of the Archons*, this makes Adam proclaim her to be his mother, the midwife, the wife, and she who has given birth (89:11–17).88

The sort of interrelated identification between the different aspects of Pronoia/Barbelo which is apparent in *Thund.* is an intentional strategy which, according to King, “produces correspondences between diverse episodes and resource materials by identifying their main characters with each other. It also connects different levels of reality.”89 Thus, the female revealer of *Thund.* is intentionally identified, directly or indirectly, with Pronoia, Epinoia, Eve, Sophia, Isis and perhaps others.

With the above discussion of Epinoia in mind, two things are of special importance to the present analysis of *Thund.* Firstly, the role of Epinoia as an

---

85 The Hypostasis of the Archons (*NHC 11.4*) 89:11–17.
87 As Layton himself is very much aware, the thesis is extremely hypothetical and in the end probably unprovable. Nevertheless, it is certainly very interesting that Epiphanius has known of such a gospel and that it seems to have something in common with the material found in the three Nag Hammadi texts.
88 The text may also be understood as if Adam is speaking to both the heavenly and the fleshly Eve.
aspect of Pronoia/Barbelo, who is the emissary of the Power (ⲧⲥⲟⲯ), sent to enlighten people and to make them find her. She is the one who is first present within humanity, awakening their thought from the sleep of perception by giving them knowledge. She is an aspect of Pronoia, the Thought of the Father. Subsequently she can also be understood and referred to as Thought. Secondly, if we consider the role of Epinoia in the Apocryphon of John and the female spiritual principle in the Hypostasis of the Archons as the one whose teaching is associated with the Tree of Knowledge, and if we place some value on the fact pointed out by Layton that Thund. shares some material with the Hypostasis of the Archons and On the Origin of the World where the sayings are associated with Eve—the heavenly Eve, who is also to be understood as Epinoia—then I suggest that we should understand the role of Epinoia in Thund. in the following way.

The female revealer of Thund. is Epinoia, that is, she is the aspect of Pronoia/Barbelo who has been sent to awaken man from the sleep of his perception. By identifying herself with Epinoia and by making proclamations which in related texts are associated with Eve, the female revealer of Thund. strongly alludes to the Classic Gnostic paradise myth. Hereby she also implies that her teaching is associated with the essence of the Tree of Knowledge. She is in fact her identification with the Tree of Knowledge in the Apocryphon of John and the numerous self-proclamations in Thund. What Epinoia is doing in Thund. is awakening the thought of human beings by giving them the essence of the Tree of Knowledge, that is, the ability to recognize Good and Evil. Since she identifies herself with opposites like “knowledge and ignorance” (ⲡⲥⲟⲟⲩⲛ ⲁⲩⲟ ⲧⲙⲛ̅ⲧⲃⲧⲥⲟⲟⲩⲛ) (14:26–27), “war and peace” (ⲡⲧⲟⲙⲧⲟⲩⲛ ⲁⲩⲟ ⲧⲣⲏⲛⲏ) (14:31–32), or “the union and the dissolution” (ⲧⲧⲧ ⲧⲃⲱⲗ ⲯⲃⲟⲩ) (19:10–11), she provides the human being with knowledge of how this world is to be conceptualized in opposites—in “Good and Evil”. In other words, she awakens the human being’s ability to perceive the world and makes him/her remember the perfection of the divine world. This understanding of Thund. has not been suggested before and throughout the remaining analysis of the linguistic passages we shall return to it continually.

Already the immediate context of the identification of the female revealer with Epinoia confirms her role as a transmitter of gnosis—knowledge of the divine world—in that she is described as the one “whose remembrance is great”.90 Whereas “remembrance” (ⲣⲙⲐⲧⲟⲩⲛ) is not even mentioned in Trim. Prot., it is enormously important in the Apocryphon of John, especially

90 The notion of “remembrance” is a well-known phenomenon in Biblical studies. For the most part, it deals with the remembrance of the covenant made between Jahwe and
in the so-called “Pronoia-hymn” in the long recension of the text (NHC II,1 and IV,1). In all of her three descents into the “realm of darkness”, Pronoia proclaims, in the “ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲡⲉ/ⲧⲉ”-style, that she is either “the remembrance of the Pleroma” (30:16), or “the remembrance of the Pronoia” (30:24, 35). Furthermore, when she awakens those who sleep, she enjoins them to remember and to follow their root (31:14–16). In the context of the Apocryphon of John, Pronoia’s descent reaffirms the act of her Epinoia at the creation of man. She seeks to awaken human beings and make them remember their divine origin, to bring them home, so to speak. This indeed recalls the understanding of “remembrance” in Thund, that was noted above; by making the human being eat from the Tree of Knowledge, Epinoia provides him with the divine knowledge which makes him remember the Pleroma. In addition to this, I invoke yet a different perspective on the notion of remembrance, which will turn out to correspond to the linguistic focus on the text.91

In the discussion of the Platonic notion of diairesis in the chapter on ancient philosophy of language, it was concluded that a definition by division (diairesis) is not only focused on the final inseparable concept as the essence of the thing in question. Rather, the whole process of the diairesis must be taken into account, so that the concepts or names, which are encountered in the different divisions, form part of the concluding definition. The final product of the diairesis is a unity of the many. Going through the diairesis and its many different concepts was suggested to be regarded as a process of anamnesis, of remembrance. What the performer of the diairesis is remembering while carrying out this procedure are the Platonic Ideas/Forms.

Against this background, it is helpful to understand the notion of remembrance in Thund, in close relation to its language-related speculations. This idea is supported by the fact that remembrance is mentioned in direct relation to Epinoia, and is even situated within the first linguistic passage.

Epinoia’s teaching is associated with the essence of what the human being receives from the Tree of Knowledge, namely, the ability to perceive and recognize good and evil, understanding “good and evil” as an indicator of all the opposites of which our language consists. What Thund is implying, then, by identifying Epinoia as the one whose remembrance is great, is that her teaching makes human beings remember not only that a part of them belongs in the divine world, but also their ability to perceive the world as constituted and

———

Israel; in the New Testament context, it is the “new covenant” established between God and man through Jesus which is to be remembered in the Eucharist.

91 In his otherwise extensive commentary, Poirier does not comment on the motif of “remembrance”.
conceptualized by opposites, as well as his ability to perceive these opposites as a unity—as a whole. When later on in the third linguistic passage, the female revealer of *Thund*. proclaims herself to be the “manifestation of the division” (ποιμεν ἔβολ ἉΓΩΝΕας) (20:34–35), it is precisely the *diairesis* of opposite concepts she makes us remember. At the same time, she shows the reader how to grasp the unity of this plurality that she represents.

Besides offering a new understanding of the antithesis and paradoxes of *Thund*., this analysis also gives them sense, instead of reducing them to mere nonsense. We shall return to this discussion below, but leave it for now in order to get back on track with the analysis of the first linguistic passage. As has been shown, the female revealer manifests herself in the same sequence of linguistic terms as does Protennoia in *Trim. Prot*. However, until now we have only encountered the female revealer as Silence and Thought. Thus, she is still not uttered or articulated. The articulation of her manifestation comes with the Sounds of her Voice.

**Voice**

An important difference between the manifestations of the female revealer of *Thund*. (Epinoia) and Protennoia is that the former does not explicitly identify herself with Sound (ἐροογ), as does Protennoia throughout *Trim. Prot*. In *Thund*, Sound figures as a description of the multiplicity of the Voice (ⲥⲙⲟⲩ): “It is I who am the Voice whose Sound is manifold”.

The Voice (ⲥⲙⲟⲩ)\(^{92}\) is a designation with which both the Epinoia of *Thund*. and Protennoia are identified. But whereas *Trim. Prot*. distinguishes rather sharply between ἐροογ and ⲛⲩⲥ, *Thund*. seems to be closer to the Stoic understanding of the Greek equivalent to ⲛⲩⲥ, that is, φωνη, than *Trim. Prot.* is. According to Diogenes Laertius’ account of the Stoic theory of a verbal expression, φωνη is to be understood as indicating both animal, unarticulated voice, that is, sound/noise (ἦχος), and human unarticulated voice, which can also be regarded as a mere sound, but is human in that it is issued from thought. In the Stoic sequence, the terms sound and voice are thus collected under the one category: voice (φωνη). Therefore, when Protennoia reveals herself as both sound and voice, she splits up the Stoic notion of φωνη into sound (ἐροογ) and voice (ⲥⲙⲟⲩ). *Thund*. does use the term “sound” (ἐροογ) but only as a descriptive term for Voice, thereby pulling sound and voice together. Thus, it lies somewhat closer to the Stoic conception of φωνη as the unarticulated human voice.

---

\(^{92}\) Contrary to the diversities of translation of ⲛⲩⲥ in *Trim. Prot.*, the translators of *Thunder* agree on rendering the Coptic noun by “voice” (in their respective languages).
If the Stoic interpretation is followed, the identification of the Epinoia of *Thund.* with Voice means that she is now hearable but not necessarily intelligible. From a Stoic point of view, a voice is material because it causes the effect that it is heard by the recipient (the hearer). Whether *Thund.* also implies that the Epinoia of *Thund.* is material in that she becomes Voice is not clear from the text. However, since she descends into the material world, she has to become material in some way to be recognized by the hearers of her message.

A Voice of Thunder? The Title of *Thund.* Reconsidered

In a wide range of religious literature, the moment of the descent or the revelation of the divinity is marked by a sound/clap of thunder. It is then the obvious, immediate conclusion to assume that the title of *Thund.* (ⲧⲉⲃⲣⲟⲛⲧⲏ: ⲛⲟⲩⲥ ⲛ̄ⲧⲉⲗⲉⲓⲟⲥ) has something to do with the revelation which takes place in the text. The following paragraph will sustain this understanding of ⲃⲣⲟⲛⲧⲏ to be correct. The discussion of the title is introduced at this point because ⲃⲣⲟⲛⲧⲏ will appear to be at the core of the present interpretation of Voice.

Since the very beginning of the research history of *Thund.*, the title has been the subject of much discussion: firstly, due to the missing first letter; secondly, because of the uncertainty of the connection between the two parts of the title; and thirdly, because of the connection between the title and the content of the text. We shall focus mainly on the third issue.

In 1974, M. Tardieu showed how the title of *Thund.* makes sense as an example of a φωνὴ θεοῦ (a voice of god). He suggested that “Thunder” is the name of the female revealer, which again is qualified by the second part of the title:

---

93 In the nearest context of our texts, that is, in Biblical literature, Hellenistic philosophy as well as in Hellenistic Egyptian literature, the notion of thunder as a tool of revelation is widespread. See, for instance, MacRae, “The ego-proclamations in Gnostic Sources,” 130, in which he compares with “Juppiter tonans of classical literature, the magical papyri, the God of the Old Testament, John 12:29, Rev. 10:3–4 etc.”

94 Already in the *editio princeps* of the text by Krause and Labib, *Gnostische und Hermetische Schriften aus Codex II und Codex VI*, it was suggested to reconstruct the first letter by “и”, so that together with the proceeding “е” it would constitute the definite article “и е”. This is the current consensus, although it has not gone unchallenged. In the translation into German (Bethge, “‘Nebront’ Die zweite Schrift aus Nag Hammadi-Codex VI,”) by the Berliner Arbeitskreis, it was suggested to reconstruct: Ⲫⲃⲣⲟⲛⲧⲏ, regarding Nebront as a parallel to the Mandean Namrus or the Manichaean Nebroel or even the Jewish Nimrod, whose Greek spellings are Nebrot, Nebroth or Nebrod. The reconstruction of the Arbeitskreis should thus provide a close parallel to the figure of Sophia/Barbelo. See also Poirier, *Le Tonnerre intellect parfait*, 201–208 for a detailed discussion of the title.
Furthermore, in an additional article from 1975, he argues that \textit{Thund.} is part of a second-century, Middle Platonic exegetical tradition of the Platonic myth of Er,\textsuperscript{96} where a clap of thunder and an earthquake mark the ascent of the souls to their original home.\textsuperscript{97} Although Tardieu’s thesis sheds some light on the understanding of the title, it seems improbable that the myth of Er should be the \textit{direct} literary source of \textit{Thund}.\textsuperscript{98} Poirier does not agree with Tardieu either. He acknowledges the originality of Tardieu’s idea, but on the other hand criticizes Tardieu for insufficiently and only on a very general level establishing a link between the thunder figuring in the title and the text as a whole.\textsuperscript{99} The problem of finding a link between the title of \textit{Thund.} and the text it introduces lies in the fact that nowhere in the text is the term \textit{βροντή} repeated. Nor is its Coptic equivalent \textit{ⲡϩⲣⲟⲩⲡⲉ/ⲡϩⲣⲟⲩⲃⲁⲓ}.\textsuperscript{100} Meanwhile, it is the general opinion that the second part of the title might be reconstructed in 18:9 “\textit{ληωκ ⲧⲧ ⲉⲧⲛⲟⲩⲥ ⲛ̣̄ⲧⲉⲗⲉⲓⲟⲥ}”. In this way, the female revealer may be identified at least with the second part of the title.

Even though Poirier is very much aware that thunder is rendered nowhere in the body of the text, he understands the compound title in such a way that one part explains the other, so that the female revealer \textit{is} the Perfect Mind, which means that she \textit{is} the Thunder. He illustrates it in the following manner: \textit{βροντή} = \textit{νοῦς τέλειος} = locutrice.\textsuperscript{101} However, Poirier does not attach any great importance to the identification of the female revealer with Thunder; he only sees it as “une image traduisant le caractère divin ou l’autorité de la révélatrice

\begin{footnotes}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Michel Tardieu, “Le titre du deuxième écrit du codex vi,” in \textit{Mus} 87 (1974): 523–530. He concludes that \textit{Thund.} draws on both Jewish and Christian ideas about the heavenly voice (see for instance Ps 77:18–19; Mt 3:17; 17:5), as well as traditions which describe Athena as \textit{μήτις, σοφία, νοῦς, διάνοια} and \textit{νόητις}. (p. 529).
\item \textit{Republic} X, 621 b 1–4.
\item \textit{Ibid.}: 367.
\item Poirier, \textit{Le Tonnerre intellect parfait}, 204–205.
\item Giversen, “Jeg-er teksten i kodeks vi fra Nag Hammadi,” 71, makes an attempt to reconstruct the usual Coptic rendering of the Greek \textit{ⲡϩⲣⲟⲩⲡⲉ} (the voice of heaven) in 18:9: “\textit{ληωκ ⲧⲧ ⲉⲧⲛⲟⲩⲥ ⲛ̣̄ⲧⲉⲗⲉⲓⲟⲥ} \textit{ⲡⲓⲧⲛⲏⲧⲡⲡ} \textit{ⲡⲣⲟ ⲡⲟ̣ⲡⲉ} “Men jeg er den fuldkomne tanke og hvilen for [himlens stemme] (: tordenen)”. The manuscript is so deteriorated in this particular place that it is impossible to decide if he is correct. It would certainly be convenient but the suggestion seems impossible, see also Poirier, \textit{Le Tonnerre intellect parfait}, n. 35.
\item Poirier, \textit{Le Tonnerre intellect parfait}, 205.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotes}
et de son message.” One could object that this point of view is not very different from the one for which Poirier himself criticized Tardieu, since it is also a rather general thesis. On the other hand, Poirier seems to support the idea that thunder is alluded to throughout the text. He mentions as an example the verse which is being analysed in this paragraph: “It is I who am the Voice whose sound is manifold” (14:12–13). Moreover, Poirier also calls attention to a passage from Psellus’ commentary on the *Chaldean Oracles*, where, as Poirier cites, we meet: “‘une voix articulée qui gronde du haut du ciel’ exprimant les pensées d’un dieu qui ‘entend sans voix nos voix’.” Poirier finds it interesting that Psellus speaks of “l’image de la voix du tonnerre pour illustrer un oracle qui porte sur le νοῦς.” However, Poirier still compares the use of thunder in the title with apocalyptic literature and theophanies where the voice of thunder is only a cliché.

Whether “Thunder” is actually the name of the female revealer, as Tardieu suggested, remains an open question for now. It will be discussed when the notion of the name appears in the text. Considering the placement of the particular saying (14:12–13) within the first linguistic passage of *Thund.*, I find it very reasonable to assume that the “Voice whose Sound is manifold” is in fact referring to the Voice which the female revealer produces as she is sent into the world. Together with the notion of φωνὴ θεοῦ, this calls for an understanding of the Thunder of the title as the Voice of the female revealer. The Thunder is the first Sound heard by the receivers of the revelation. But Thunder is still an unarticulated Sound or Voice, to some even a mere noise, and thus not an intelligible Voice. This is shown very clearly in a passage from *Trim. Prot.* (43*:13–44*:11), where the Powers hear a thunder, which they call a “sound from the exalted voice”, and which they do not understand. They go up to the Archigenetor to ask him what the thundering was all about, but he does not know either. They are all frustrated about their lack of recognition. It appears that ὁ θόντης of the title of *Thund.* is to be understood in a similar way and in close relation to the linguistic manifestation of the female revealer. Her Voice of Thunder is the first encounter with the material world as an unarticulated

---


103 Poirier, *Le Tonnerre intellect parfait*, 205. Giversen, “Jeg-er teksten i kodeks vi fra Nag Hammadi,” 71, also mentions this verse as having a possible connection to the thunder.


105 *Loc. cit.*

106 Here one might compare John 12:28–30, in which “a voice from heaven” (God’s) is heard by Jesus, whereas some people in the crowd take it to be a case of “thunder”.
Sound/Voice. But in order to be fully understood in the material world she has to transform herself into something intelligible—the Logos.

Now, if we accept the reconstruction of ὅς ἔτελεῖος in 18:9, where the female revealer identifies herself with the “Perfect Mind”, then the connection between the two parts of the title must be as follows: the Thunder is the first hearable and unarticulated Sound of the revelation of the Perfect Mind. This means that I do not agree with Poirier that the two parts of the title explain each other as that would mean the Thunder is identical with the Perfect Mind and thus they appear to be on the same semantic level. However, I do agree that the female revealer is both the Thunder and the Perfect Mind, but not that they are either the same thing or explanations of one another. As I shall argue below in relation to the notion of the name in Thund., I understand τρονθ to be the Sound of the revelation: the Sound that is made when the Perfect Mind utters its name. Thus I would illustrate my understanding of the title like this:

The Thunder of the Perfect Mind

In this way, the title as a whole makes an introduction to the text, which is quite illustrative with regard to its linguistic focus. It shows how the female revealer descends at first, namely as an inarticulate Sound—a thunder, and it shows from where this Sound originates, namely from the Perfect Mind, i.e. the Divine Mind. The Mind (ὁς) as the place from which the linguistic manifestation evolves corresponds well with the sequence of manifestation, which is introduced in the first linguistic passage. Recalling that sound is issued from thought, then it is reasonable to conclude that it is in the Mind that the Thought itself arises. ὅς then appears to be located at the level before the Thought which is, in fact, in the Silence. The Perfect Mind may thus be understood as equivalent to the incomprehensible Silence; it is the stage before any sound and even before any thought. A small passage from Trim. Prot., which was analysed above, supports the understanding of ὅς as Silence and origin: “…ὑνοῦς εἰρήνη εὐτέλεσται τῆς τοιοῦτος εἰρήνη λύπηρη ἐκο ἡστοῦ ἀρχής ὑνοῦν ἑκτῆτι τὴν ἑκτῆτι τῶν ἱππῶν τηρῆ”, (a hidden mind, that is, the Silence hidden from the All, being unrepeatable, an immeasurable Light, the source of the All, the root of the entire Aeon) (46*:22–25). On the following page of Trim. Prot. we may detect (despite the lacunae) a reference to a “Perfect Mind” (ὑνοῦς ἔτελεῖος[. . .]) and something, perhaps the Sound, appears to exist within it. In any case, it seems clear that the Mind is identified with the Silence, and that it is designated as perfect.
The title not only informs the readers from where the thundering Sound originates, it also shows that it is toward the Perfect Mind and the Silence beyond any thought that they must orientate themselves.

Word/Discourse
The λόγος (Word/Discourse) is to be considered the highest semantic level of both the Stoic sequence of a verbal expression as well as the (at least to the reader) fully articulate and perfectly intelligible mode of manifestation of the goddess. So far, the Epinoia of Thund. descends by the same linguistic scheme as Protennoia, both employing the Stoic model for the description of a verbal expression, although with a few minor differences.

But why, being the Logos, does she describe herself as the one “whose aspect is manifold” (ⲉⲧⲉⲛⲉ ⲡⲉϥⲉⲓⲛⲉ)? The translation of ἐπινεια as “form” is only one of several possibilities. Most translators of Thund. render the Coptic word “image”, “appearance”, or the like. These renderings are certainly possible, and they make very good sense in that they catch the diversity of the self-proclamations of the female revealer. She is indeed many different things. However, I find the proclamation far more complex than this. If we take the linguistic context into consideration, I find it more accurate to translate it, as McGuire does, as “forms”, since this comes closer to the language-related conception of the term. According to Crum, ἐπινεια is the Coptic equivalent of many Greek terms, including ἐἴδος, which again may have several meanings. I fasten on the language-related context in which ἐἴδος has the connotation of class, kind or form, or more precisely: logical species. In the Statesman it is even found in the context of the notion of diairesis. This supports my assumption about the knowledge which is given through the revelation of the female revealer of Thund.: she is knowledge of “good and evil”, that is, of opposite concepts by which we conceptualize our world. Through her teaching, the female revealer makes it possible to recognize the differences between concepts. She is herself associated with that teaching; therefore she is able to proclaim that

---


108 Cf. LSJ. The specifically linguistic use of ἐἴδος is attested in for instance Plato’s Sophist 235d and the Statesman 285b.
she is “the Logos whose form is manifold”. The descent of the female revealer of *Thund.* is now described as follows:

Silence—Thought—(Sound)—Voice—Word/Discourse

This shows a clear familiarity with Stoic dialectics, albeit used within a completely different framework than originally proposed. The two Nag Hammadi texts reframe this widespread linguistic theory into a revelatory setting, elaborating the classic notion of φωνὴ θεοῦ. However, I must stress an important difference which covers both the difference between *Thund.* and *Trim. Prot.*, on the one hand, and their sources of inspiration, on the other: in both Nag Hammadi texts the revealers begin from Silence. Since both texts are distinctly soteriological and since a central theme, especially in *Thund.*, is about seeking and finding\(^{109}\) the female revealer, this Silence, must be considered the real goal for the hearers/readers of the texts. *Thund.* may thus, as was also *Trim. Prot.*, be understood as employing the Stoic sequence of a verbal expression but turning it “upside-down”, so that the Silence actually belongs at the highest semantic level instead of the Logos.

Speech/Utterance

\[\text{ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲡⲉ ⲡϣⲁⲱⲛ ⱳⲡⲱⲣⲁⲛ}\] (“It is I who am the utterance of my Name”) (14:14–15). The last concluding proclamation in the first linguistic passage poses new questions with regard to the linguistic relation. In what way are we to understand the Coptic term ϑαⲧⲧⲉ? It is usually translated as either “speech”, “utterance” or even “word”, and thus understood as the Coptic equivalent for the Greek λόγος. However, *Thund.* clearly distinguishes between the untranslated Ϝⲁⲣⲟⲛ, which was employed in the preceding proclamation, and ϑαⲧⲧⲉ. Therefore, we must assume that in *Thund.* ϑαⲧⲧⲉ has a different connotation than Ϝⲁⲣⲟⲛ.

In his commentary, Poirier renders ϑαⲧⲧⲉ by “énoncé”, thus understanding it as corresponding to the Greek ῥῆμα\(^{110}\) which means “that which is said or spoken” (not to be confused with how the Stoic lekton is described), “word”, “saying” or “verb”.\(^{111}\) Poirier emphasizes that he does not understand it as the specific, grammatical term “verb” as opposed to “noun”, and I agree that such an understanding would not make much sense of the saying. Poirier sees the meaning of ϑαⲧⲧⲉ as “son acception générique de mot, language, acte

---


\(^{110}\) According to Crum 613–614, this is certainly a possibility.

\(^{111}\) LSJ: 949–953.
d’énonciation”. I find this understanding very plausible since it underlines the linguistic context within which it is situated as well as pointing to the central feature of the saying: the Name. However, Poirier ends his commentary on this particular proclamation by suggesting that ωαξε might also be rendering λέξις. Although this is not accounted for in the material employed by Crum, it is an attractive theory, since in that case Thund. might be even closer to the Stoic theory of language than assumed above.

We may recall that the Stoic notion of λέξις was characterized both as a φωνὴ ἐγγράμματος and as ἔναρθρον, that is, a voice which is writable and articulate. λέξις is primarily understood as opposed to voice alone, which can also be a mere sound/noise (ἦχος). It is important to remember though, that a λέξις is still a φωνὴ, since it differs from λόγος in that it is not necessarily intelligible. λέξις is the combination of different elements (στοιχεῖα), i.e. letters or primary sounds. This combination makes it both writable and articulate.

In the above analysis of Trim. Prot. We saw that φιμ should be understood as the articulated, but not yet intelligible Voice, since in that text it accounts for the level preceding the λόγος (Word/Discourse), which is the articulate and fully intelligible level of a verbal expression (or in this case, of the divine manifestation). In this way, Trim. Prot. unites what is separate in the Stoic understanding of a verbal expression, namely, the φωνὴ and the λέξις. In Thund. it seems at first sight as if the same distinction is at stake. However, if ωαξε is understood corresponding to the Greek λέξις, it would follow that Thund. differentiates between φιμ (Voice) and ωαξε (Speech), thus following the Stoic delineation of the different levels of a verbal expression.

In Thund. φιμ may thus be understood as both the inarticulate and articulate, but unintelligible, Voice. Accordingly, ωαξε must be understood as the always articulate but still unintelligible Speech/Utterance/Pronouncement. However appealing this understanding of ωαξε may sound, it remains hypothetical, since we do not have any supporting sources at our disposal. Nevertheless, I do believe the hypothesis makes perfect sense in this Stoic-inspired linguistic context. And when it is carried on to the analysis of the name, it is only confirmed.

Name
The Name (Ραν) of the female revealer of Thund. is a topic which has been treated separately in scholarship. The question is actually fairly simple: what is the Name of the female revealer of Thund.? However simple, it is a very good question. Throughout Thund. the female revealer speaks about her Name,

112 Poirier, Le Tonnerre intellect parfait, 232.
although she never reveals it. The first instance occurs here in 14:15, where she proclaims herself to be “the utterance of my Name”. The second instance (in 19:33 “It is I who am the knowledge of my Name”) is located in direct connection with the second linguistic passage, and the third in 20:32–33 “It is I who am the Name of the Voice and the Voice of the Name”. This proclamation is part of the third linguistic passage. Furthermore, in the epilogue of *Thund.*, we find two occurrences of ṣⲧⲧ (21:9, 11). However, these do not seem to refer to the name of the female revealer. The first of these (21:9) is found in the middle of a somewhat fragmented section of the page, and is therefore not easily analysed. The female revealer is talking about the “great power” (ⲧⲛⲟϭ ⲛ̄しまいⲟⲙ) and about not moving the name (ⲧⲕⲓⲙ ⲁⲛ ⲙ̄ⲡⲣⲁⲛ), but it is not clear who it is that is not moving the name. Poirier suggests that the subject of ⲧⲕⲓⲙ ⲁⲛ is the same as in 21:10 [ⲡⲉⲧⲁϩⲉⲣⲁⲧ︤︤ϥ︥ ⲡⲉⲛⲧⲁϥⲧⲁⲙⲓⲟⲓ̈ (“It is he who stands firm who created me”). From this, it follows that the one whose name she is saying in 21:11 is her creator. Therefore, in this part of the text, it is not her own Name, unless she is herself to be understood as the Name of her creator in line with the nature of the Son in the *Gospel of Truth*.114

Anyhow, the three instances where the female revealer is referring to her own Name are all found in direct relation to the three linguistic passages. This, I believe, is not just a simple coincidence but an intentional strategy in order to make apparent the connection between the linguistic manifestation of the female revealer and her Name.

As has already been mentioned, it was suggested by Tardieu that the name of the female revealer corresponds to the ⲙⲣⲟⲧⲃ of the title of *Thund.*, so that her name is “Thunder”.115 Even though Poirier understands the title in such a way that the female revealer is the “Perfect Mind” and thereby also the “Thunder”, he notes that this does not imply that the Name of the female revealer is ⲙⲣⲟⲧⲃ. Nevertheless, he agrees with the view of McGuire, whom he cites from an unpublished article in which she discusses the two parts of the title: “It is possible that these terms simultaneously name both the text and its speaker”.116 Here it seems as if McGuire agrees with Tardieu that “Thunder”

---

113 Poirier, *Le Tonnerre intellect parfait*, 198–199 suggests the following reconstruction of the passage: ⲩⲧⲛⲟⲭ ⲛⲟⲩⲧ ⲛⲧⲧⲁϩⲧⲧⲟⲓ ⲧⲕⲓⲟⲇ ⲧⲧⲛⲟⲟ ⲡⲧⲧⲟ ⲛ ⲙ̄ⲡⲣⲁⲛ ⲧⲕⲓⲙ ⲁⲛ ⲙ̄ⲡⲣⲁⲛ ⲧⲕⲓⲟⲇ ⲧⲧⲧⲧ ⲧⲕⲓⲟⲇ ⲧⲧⲧⲧ ⲧⲕⲓⲟⲇ (“de la grande puissance et celui [qui] [se tient debout] n’ébranlera pas le nom. [C’est celui qui se tient] debout qui m’a créée.”).


actually _is_ the Name of the female revealer, although she expands the signification of that Name to embrace the text in its entirety as well. In agreeing with this statement Poirier appears ambivalent, although in the end, I believe, he does not approve of the suggestion that “Thunder” is her real Name. In a published article from 1994, McGuire formulates her position differently and, in my opinion, quite to the point:

... in defining herself as “the utterance of my name”, the ‘voice' of the text links her identity directly to philosophical and religious reflection on the divine ‘name’ and to the central activity of the text, the self-revelatory utterance of that name.\(^\text{117}\)

McGuire rightly links the notion of the Name in _Thund._ with speculation on the divine name. This derives primarily from Jewish reflection on the name of Jahwe.\(^\text{118}\) More importantly, she describes the manifestation of the female revealer as an act of utterance of that Name.

My own opinion is much in line with that of McGuire, although I wish to amplify her statement. ⲡⲣⲟⲧⲏ is _not_ the actual name of the female revealer, understood in such a way that she holds the name “Thunder” before, during, and after her manifestation. Rather, ⲡⲣⲟⲧⲏ is the Sound which is heard by the hearers of her manifestation. The rumbling thunder is the Sound of her revelation, the Voice which is heard as she utters her Name. It is noteworthy that the female revealer never refers to herself as the _Logos_ of her Name, but only as the utterance, knowledge and Voice of her Name. If she had gone all the way to the _Logos_, her Name would probably have been understandable to the human rational mind. Her divine and real Name remains a secret, since it is unutterable in the language of this world. When uttered in this world of rational discourse, her Name sounds like thunder. If the hearer recognizes this, then he has also recognized/remembered the structure of language and thus the human conceptualization of the world. For she is the knowledge of her Name.

Another perspective on the notion of the name is the specific linguistic one, which obviously occupies an important position in the present study. In the above chapter on ancient philosophy of language, the question of names was discussed in relation to the _Cratylus_ and to Stoic etymology. The fundamental question for both traditions was about the relation between a thing and its name. The conclusion which Socrates presented in the _Cratylus_ was that names are at the outset naturally attached to the things they name, although

---

\(^\text{117}\) McGuire, “Thunder, Perfect Mind,” 45.
\(^\text{118}\) More on this issue below.
names do not sufficiently describe the essence of things. Therefore it is necessary to look at the thing itself in order to grasp its true nature. If this understanding of name and referent is taken into consideration with regard to the Name of the female revealer of *Thund.*, we see that her Name, as it is heard, within this world—ⲃⲣⲟⲛⲧⲏ—does not capture her true essence. In order to find her it is not enough to know her Name, i.e. to know her as “Thunder”, since that does not sufficiently give her full signification. Rather, one has to chase her through the numerous opposites which in fact constitute her teaching, with which again she herself is associated.

Another point of comparison between the reflection on names in the *Cratylus* and *Thund.* is the manner in which the earthly Name of the female revealer is composed, emphasizing that it is a hypothetical attempt. Socrates advances a theory concerning the use of certain sounds/letters which bear in themselves basic meanings which are reflected in the names in which they are employed. I already mentioned the example of the letter rho, which according to Socrates is a tool to express change, since pronouncing rho makes the tongue vibrate. Applied to ⲃⲣⲟⲛⲧⲏ, this idea actually makes sense, since rho marks the rumbling of thunder, as well as the necessary changeability of the female revealer as she enters into a world that is characterized by change and movement. However, Socrates still admits that not all names are perfect and that some names might even be misleading, so the conclusion is, in the end, that in order to comprehend the true nature of things (and gods?) one must look into the things themselves. Therefore, hearing and recognizing the female revealer as “Thunder” is somewhat misleading, and this sound of her name can never provide the hearer with knowledge of her real essence. This point coincides better with the Stoic notion of “sound-words” which, according to Long,119 is a revision of the *Cratylus*. The Stoics agreed with Plato that a name is naturally attached to the thing it is naming. But they did not understand single letters or syllables as containing meanings. Contrary to this, they assumed that certain “sound-words” affect us sensuously in that the similarity between sound and referent becomes manifest. They are associated with what the Stoics called “primary sounds” (τῶν πρώτων φωνῶν), that is, sounds that imitate the things they name as a sort of onomatopoeia. However, these “sound-words” do not explain or contain the meaning of what is being said, as Long stated: “The word’s sound is appropriate to but not fully constitutive of

---

119 Long, “Stoic linguistics, Plato’s *Cratylus*, and Augustine’s *De dialectica*”. For a closer discussion of Long’s article see the chapter on Ancient Philosophy of Language, *Stoic etymology and the Cratylus*. 
its significance.”\textsuperscript{120} So, the sound of the female revealer is ḫⲣⲟⲧⲏ which obviously is a “sound-word”. Being an onomatopoetic of the thunder phenomenon, however, it does not really capture the essence of the revealer who is signified by this thunder. This kind of approach to names is what Long, in relation to his discussion of the \textit{Cratylus}, calls a “formal naturalism”. Its focus is not on the phonetic values of a specific name, but on the form it signifies. We may again recall Long, when he says that this form of naturalism is strong in that “meaning transcends its phonetic representation: the same meaning or form can be expressed in different languages…”\textsuperscript{121}

\textbf{Conclusion on the First Linguistic Passage}  

As was clear from the visualized sequence of the manifestation of the female revealer, her way of descent follows the same pattern as the one by Protennoia in \textit{Trim. Prot.}, although with a few minor differences. To summarize the manifestation of the female revealer:

\begin{quote}
Silence—Thought—(Sound)—Voice—Word/Discourse—Speech/Utterance—(Name)
\end{quote}

Even though some of the terms vary from the manifestation of Protennoia, both texts show a dependency on a tradition which is built upon the systematic reflections on language especially developed within Stoic dialectics. The sequences of manifestation followed by the divine female entities of the two Nag Hammadi texts are rooted within the Stoic theory of voice which reflects the sequence of a verbal expression. This is characterized by a movement from the unarticulated thought and sound/voice (\textit{phonē}), over the articulated yet unintelligible speech (\textit{lexis}), to the articulated and fully intelligible word/discourse (\textit{logos}). Reading this short passage from \textit{Thund.}, the similarity with the Stoic theory is quite striking, above all because of the cluster of terms contained within the sequences. The linguistic manifestation of the female revealer moves from the Silence, the stage which is even before thought, over the Thought and the Voice (and Sound) to the Word/Discourse and finally the Speech/Utterance. So the same cluster of linguistic terms, used by the Stoics to describe an utterance, is employed in \textit{Thund.} to describe the manifestation of the divine. At the same time \textit{Thund.} combines the use of Stoic material with the Platonic notion of the name found in the \textit{Cratylus}, which again was revised by the Stoics.

\textsuperscript{120} \textit{Ibid.}: 47.  
\textsuperscript{121} \textit{Ibid.}: 44.
Poirier also sees this passage of *Thund.* as a section that uses a vocabulary of grammar. However, he approaches it slightly differently. Firstly, he sees a coherence between the vocabulary employed by *Thund.* and the description of the five stages of knowing adduced by Plato in the *Seventh Letter.* I summarize the progression of terms as they are quoted by Poirier:

- ὄνομα, “nom”
- λόγος, “définition”
- εἴδωλον, “représentation”
- ἐπιστήμη (καὶ νοὺς ἀληθῆς τε δόξα), “science”, “connaissance”
- ὁ δὴ γνωστόν τε καὶ ἀληθῶς ἐστιν ὄν, “l’objet de la connaissance et ce qui existe vraiment”.122

This line of progression certainly contains concepts that correspond to the line of manifestation of the female revealer of *Thund.*, and the fact that the movement goes from “name” to “that which truly exists” (which I expect Poirier to believe corresponds to Silence) brings great coherence to her manifestation in that it includes the Name in the sequence. Moreover, as Poirier rightly writes, where the movement in Plato is one of ascent, that of the female revealer is one of descent; in other words, the sequence is turned “upside-down”. Poirier’s own hesitation about this comparison is that while Plato’s different levels of knowledge are distinct from each other; the levels of the female revealer characterize different manifestations of the same reality.123 This problem is absent when her linguistic manifestations are compared to the Stoic sequence, since the latter is basically a division (*diairesis*) of φωνή, from which it follows that the various divisions are all part of the so-called *summum genus*, the concept which is being defined, which in the Stoic case is the voice. The last undividable concept, the *logos*, thus cannot be understood apart from the previous levels of the division, that is, sound, voice and speech. They are necessary parts of the *logos*. In *Thund.*, the different manifestations of the female revealer must be understood similarly, which was also Poirier’s point. Although the comparison with the *Seventh Letter* is illuminating, I find the resemblance with the Stoic material much stronger both with regard to the correspondence between the different terms of the sequences and to the interrelatedness between these terms.

---

Poirier also presents three solid parallels to the series of manifestations in *Thund*. Firstly, the *Tripartite Tractate* (128:19–129:34) describes the names that are surpassed by the sacrament of baptism. These names are parallel with many of the self-designations of the female revealer in *Thund.*: όνομα (Word), ρῆσιν (Voice), νοσός (Mind) and ἡ συνέκαρω (Silence).\(^{124}\) Although Poirier does not comment further on this particular passage, the similarity with the first linguistic passage in *Thund.* is obvious. Even though the sequence of the *Tripartite Tractate* is one of ascent and thus mentions the “word”\(^{125}\) as the first level, its inclusion of “mind” creates an important parallel to the link between the title of *Thund.* and the linguistic manifestation described in it. However, the sequence in the *Tripartite Tractate* is not formulated as “I am”-proclamations and it is employed in a fairly different context than in *Thund.* The “I am”-proclamations in particular are what unites *Thund.* with *Trim. Prot.* It may simply be the case that, as Poirier also notes, these “categories de la pensée” were rather prevalent in Gnosticizing milieus.\(^{126}\) It is important to acknowledge, though, that the terms are used in very different ways and contexts in *Thund.* and *Trim. Prot.* on the one hand, and the *Tripartite Tractate* on the other. However, this naturally does not imply that the *Tripartite Tractate* does not rely on Stoic dialectics.

Another parallel is found in the Simonian *Apophasis*, attested in Hippolytus’ *Refutatio omnium haeresium* VI,12, 2, which enumerates six roots of the engendered world: νοῦς, ἐπινόια, φωνή, ὄνομα, λογισμός and ἐνθύμησις. These terms, however, only overlap the sequence of self-designations by the female revealer in *Thund.* to a certain extent. Like in the case of the *Tripartite Tractate*, the terms in the *Apophasis* are employed differently than in *Thund.*\(^{127}\)

Finally, Poirier calls attention to a passage from Augustine’s *De doctrina christiana* describing the manifestation of the Word (Verbum) in a sequence very much like the one we find in both *Thund.* and *Trim. Prot.* Poirier reconstructs the sequence as follows: cogitatio—verbum—sonus—vox—locutio.\(^{128}\) This is indeed an obvious parallel, which confirms the extent to which these categories of thought and language were employed. Without being an expert in

---

124 Translations are rendered as Poirier, *Le Tonnerre intellect parfait*, 227 brings them, although one could argue for different translations of these words. For instance ρῆσιν, which is another spelling of ἑρῷος, could also be translated with “sound” as it is done in *Thund.* and *Trim. Prot.* However, “voice” is still possible.

125 The Coptic word όνομα may be a translation of the Greek λόγος.


127 *Loc. cit.* and *ibid.*: 147–149 for a close analysis of the Simonian material in relation to *Thund.*

128 *Ibid.*: 228.
Augustinian Studies, I assume that this line of linguistic terms builds upon his theories of language as found in the *De Dialectica*, in which he defines most of the above mentioned terms. According to Long, Augustine draws heavily upon Stoic dialectics.\footnote{Long, “Stoic linguistics, Plato’s *Cratylus*, and Augustine’s *De dialectica*,” 49–55.} This indicates, in my opinion, that later Christian and Jewish thinkers were influenced by Stoic dialectics, if they had not directly adopted them. There is no doubt that something similar is at stake in Augustine’s description of the manifestation of the Word as we encounter in our two Nag Hammadi texts, namely, the topic of linguistic manifestation which furthermore connects these texts to the Johannine Logos Christology. However, both the two Nag Hammadi texts and the passage from Augustine differ from the Johannine logos tradition in that they contain the same *cluster* of linguistic terms. This cluster, I argue, derives from the Stoic sequence of a verbal expression. *Thund.*, furthermore, expands its use of ancient philosophy of language, since it also implies Platonic language-related topics, such as the notion of the *name* and *diairesis*.

In the end, Poirier does not place much value on the linguistic manifestation of the female revealer, describing the function of the passage as follows: “…pour illustrer la transcendance et l’immanence de l’entité supérieure qui prend la parole tout au long du monologue.”\footnote{Poirier, *Le Tonnerre intellect parfait*, 224.} Thus, according to Poirier, the linguistic sayings are just another way of describing the transcendence and immanence of the female revealer.

Before we turn to the second linguistic passage in *Thund.*, I recall my four part division of *Thund.*, since the major part of the text lies in-between the first and the second linguistic passages. The first linguistic passage is followed by the second major part of *Thund.* (14:15–18:8), in which the female revealer’s proclamations and exhortations primarily focus on the relationship with her hearers. Through opposite concepts that describe their ambiguous relationship, the female revealer calls attention to a wide range of social relations. These are followed by the third major part of *Thund.* (18:9–19:20), in which the female revealer returns to describing herself. Right before the second linguistic passage, it seems as if the female revealer anticipates the linguistic theme especially as it is expressed in the third linguistic passage. By her proclamation, “It is I who am the joining and the scattering. It is I who am the union and it is I who am the dissolution”\footnote{See below for further analysis.} (\(\text{ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲡⲉ ⲡϩⲱⲧ︤ⲣ︥ ⲙ︤ⲛ︥ ⲡⲃⲟⲗ· ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲡⲉ ⲧⲙⲟⲛⲏ· ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲡⲉ ⲡⲃⲱⲗ} \(\text{ⲥⲟⲩⲧⲁ ⲡⲁⲧⲱⲧⲥⲏ ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲡⲉ ⲡⲃⲱⲗ} \(\text{ⲁⲩⲱ ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲡⲉ ⲡⲃⲱⲗ}) (19:10–12), the female revealer touches upon a central issue of the notion of *diairesis*, with which she identifies herself in the third
linguistic passage. Moreover, she alludes to the theme of female characters, especially with reference to the figure of Eve, which was a central topic of the first major part of *Thund*. Thus, she proclaims: “I, I am sinless, and the root of sin derives from me. It is I who am desire of the sight, and it is in me that continence of the heart exists” (ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲟⲩⲁⲧⲛⲟⲃⲉ· ⲁⲩⲱ ⲧⲛⲟⲩⲛⲉ ⲙ̄ⲡⲛⲟⲃⲉ ⲯⲟⲩⲃⲟⲗ ⲛ̄ϩⲏⲧ ⲧⲉ· ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲧⲉ ⲧⲉⲡⲓⲑⲩⲙⲓⲁ ⩙︤ⲛ︥ⲟⲩϩⲟⲣⲁⲥⲓⲥ· ⲁⲩⲱ ⲧⲉⲅⲱⲣⲁⲧⲉⲓⲁ ⲙ̄ⲥⲟⲟⲡ ⲛ̄ϩⲏⲧ·) (19:15–20).

We shall now turn to the second linguistic passage.

*The Second Linguistic Passage*

19:20–25

... ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲛⲏⲃⲡⲓ ⲁⲧⲉ ⲛⲃⲧⲓ ⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲟⲛ ⲛⲃⲧⲓ ⲙ︤ⲛ︥ⲡϫⲉ ⲉⲧⲉⲙⲁⲩϣⲉ ⲙ︤ⲛ︥ⲟⲩϩⲫⲉ ⲉⲧⲉ ⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲙ︤ⲛ̅ⲧ︥ⲧⲁⲙ︤ⲛ̅ⲧ︥Ⲫⲧⲁⲙ︤ⲛ̅ⲧ︥ⲧⲁⲙ︤ⲛ̅ⲧ︥Ⲫⲧⲁⲙ︤ⲛ̅ⲧ︥ⲧⲁⲙ︤ⲛ̅ⲧ︥ⲧⲁⲙ︤ⲛ̅ⲧ︥ⲧⲁⲙ︤ⲛ̅ⲧ︥ⲧⲁⲙ︤ⲛ̅ⲧ︥ⲧⲁⲙ︤ⲛ̅ⲧ︥ⲧⲁⲙ︤ⲛ̅ⲧ︥ⲧⲁⲙ︤ⲛ̅ⲧ︥ⲧⲁⲙ︤ⲛ̅ⲧ︥ⲧⲁⲙ︤ⲛ̅ⲧ︥ⲧⲁⲙ︤ⲛ̅ⲧ︥ⲧⲁⲙ︤ⲛ̅ⲧ︥ⲧⲁⲙ︤ⲛ̅ⲧ︥ⲧⲁⲙ︤ⲛ̅ⲧ︥ⲧⲁⲙ︤ⲛ̅ⲧ︥ⲧⲁⲙ︤ⲛ̅ⲧ︥ⲧⲁⲙ︤ⲛ̅ⲧ︥ⲧⲁⲙ︤ⲛ̅ⲧ︥ⲧⲁⲙ︤ⲛ̅ⲧ︥ⲧⲁⲙ︤ⲛ̅ⲧ︥ⲧⲁⲙ︤ⲛ̅ⲧ︥ⲧⲁⲙ︤ⲛ̅ⲧ︥ⲧⲁⲙ︤ⲛ̅ⲧ︥ⲧⲁⲙ︤ⲛ̅ⲧ︥ⲧⲁⲙ︤ⲛ̅ⲧ︥ⲧⲁⲙ︤ⲛ̅ⲧ︥ⲧⲁⲙ︤ⲛ̅ⲧ︥ⲧⲁⲙ︤ⲛ̅ⲧ︥ⲧⲁⲙ︤ⲛ̅ⲧ︥ⲧⲁⲙ︤ⲛ̅ⲧ︥ⲧⲁⲙ︤ⲛ̅ⲧ︥ⲧⲁⲙ︤ⲛ̅ⲧ︥ⲧⲁⲙ︤ⲛ̅ⲧ︥ⲧⲁⲙ︤ⲛ̅ⲧ︥ⲧⲁⲙ︤ⲛ̅ⲧ︥ⲧⲁⲙ︤ⲛ̅ⲧ︥ⲧⲁⲙ︤ⲛ̅ⲧ︥ⲧⲁⲙ︤ⲛ̅ⲧ︥ⲧⲁⲙ︤ⲛ̅ⲧ︥ⲧⲁⲙ︤ⲛ̅ⲧ︥ⲧⲁⲙ︤ⲛ̅ⲧ︥ⲧⲁⲙ︤ⲛ̅ⲧ︥ⲧⲁⲙ︤ⲛ̅ⲧ︥ⲧⲁⲙ︤ⲛ̅ⲧ︥ⲧⲁⲙ︤ⲛ̅ⲧ︥ⲧⲁⲙ︤ⲛ̅ⲧ︥ⲧⲁⲙ︤ⲛ̅ⲧ︥ⲧⲁⲙ︤ⲛ̅ⲧ︥ⲧⲁⲙ︤ⲛ̅ⲧ︥ⲧⲁⲙ︤ⲛ̅ⲧ︥ⲧⲁⲙ︤ⲛ̅ⲧ︥ⲧⲁⲙ︤ⲛ̅ⲧ︥ⲧⲁⲙ︤ⲛ̅ⲧ︥ⲧⲁⲙ︤ⲛ̅ⲧ︥ⲧⲁⲙ︤ⲛ̅ⲧ︥ⲧⲁⲙ︤ⲛ̅ⲧ︥ⲧⲁⲙ︤ⲛ̅ⲧ︥ⲧⲁⲙ︤ⲛ̅ⲧ︥ⲧⲁⲙ︤ⲛ̅ⲧ︥ⲧⲁⲙ︤ⲛ̅ⲧ︥ⲧⲁⲙ︤ⲛ̅ⲧ︥ⲧⲁⲙ︤ⲛ̅ⲧ︥ⲧⲁⲙ︤ⲛ̅ⲧ︥ⲧⲁⲙ︤ⲛ̅ⲧ︥ⲧⲁⲙ︤ⲛ̅ⲧ︥ⲧⲁⲙ︤ⲛ̅ⲧ︥ⲧⲁⲙ︤ⲛ̅ⲧ︥ⲧⲁⲙ︤ⲛ̅ⲧ︥ⲧⲁⲙ︤ⲛ̅ⲧ︥ⲧⲁⲙ︤ⲛ̅ⲧ︥ⲧⲁⲙ︤ⲛ̅ⲧ︥ⲧⲁⲙ︤ⲛ̅ⲧ︥⋯

... it is I who am
the Hearing that is receivable to everyone
and the Speech that cannot be
grasped. I am a mute
who cannot speak and great
is my multitude of speaking.

The second linguistic passage is not as long as the other two and does not add much to the linguistic theme of the text compared to the first and third passages, which might be the reason why Poirier does not include it in his listing of passages containing “les categories du language et de la pensée”.

At first glance the passage is about hearing and speaking as framed in paradox. But a closer look shows that it fits nicely into the linguistic line of thought that was launched by the first linguistic passage. It is obvious that this second linguistic passage does not follow the same sequence of terms that derived from the Stoic theory of voice. There is, however, good reason to believe that the passage nonetheless addresses these terms.

---

132 Poirier, *Le Tonnerre intellect parfait*, 147–149. See above for the discussion concerning the identification of the linguistic passages.
The Hearing and the Speech

The female revealer begins by identifying herself with the Hearing (ⲡⲥⲱⲧ︤ⲙ︥). In the text as a whole, the notion of “hearing” plays an essential role, in that the female revealer calls upon her “hearers” from time to time to make them listen to her message: “And you hearers, hear me” (ⲡⲥⲱⲧ︤ⲙ︥ ⲥⲱⲧ︤ⲙ︥ ⲥⲱⲧ︤ⲙ︥ ⲥⲣⲟⲓ) (13:7). Now she is herself that Hearing, but what does she mean? As I see it, there are a couple of possibilities, which are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Firstly, the female revealer may be understood as being the content of her message, that is, she is what the hearers of her manifestation actually hear. The sense of the proclamation would thus be: it is I who am what you hear. This understanding corresponds to the interpretation of the saying in 14:14–15 “It is I who am the utterance of my Name”. This saying shows how the female revealer is heard when she utters her Name and becomes manifest in the visible world, namely, as Thunder. The Thunder is what the hearers hear at first when she enters into the world uttering her Name. This reading sheds light on the present passage, since it underlines the auditory focus of her manifestation. The female revealer as the “Hearing” illustrates that her manifestation is meant for the ear, that is, it is through the sense of hearing that one is made able to comprehend the divine. Furthermore, the fact that the Sound of Thunder is the first thing which is heard of the manifestation of the female revealer makes it clear that this thunder is receivable to everyone, since everyone is able to hear thunder.

Secondly, as the “Hearing” the female revealer may be understood as the one who makes the hearers able to hear. In other words, she provides the hearer with the sense of hearing. If this idea is taken further, one may consider the function of the sense of hearing as the one through which young children learn to speak. They learn to speak their language and thus this language is fashioned. Again, I recall a saying from the first linguistic passage in which the female revealer is identified with Epinoia the Thought: “and the Thought (Epinoia) whose remembrance is great” (14:10–11). In relation to this proclamation, I argued that as Epinoia the female revealer could be understood as the provider of the knowledge of “Good and Evil”, that is, opposites, since she in related texts (especially Ophite material) is presented as the helper of Adam, who, from inside the snake, makes the human being eat from the Tree of Knowledge. The knowledge that they gain is the knowledge of how to conceptualize their world in opposites, in “good and evil”.133 Seen from this perspective, the proclamation about the female revealer being “Hearing” alludes to the

---

133 See above for the discussion.
ability of conceptualizing the world through the language that is heard with
the sense of hearing.

The proclamation continues with what might seem as an opposition to the
first part of the saying. Now, the female revealer is the “Speech that cannot
be grasped”. However, it is easily interpreted when read in relation to the first
linguistic passage, in which “Speech” also figures. Speech is the articulated yet
unintelligible Voice, so it cannot be grasped by the human rational mind.

Poirier has a slightly different understanding of the saying:

... le sens pourrait être que la révélatrice, insaisissable dans son discours,
le devient en se faisant écoute de sa propre parole chez ceux qui sont
destinés à l’entendre. En d’autres termes, on ne peut prétendre saisir sa
parole si l’écoute de cette parole n’est point en même temps accordée par
celle qui parle.134

By stating that the female revealer is insaisissable, Poirier points to the numer-
ous paradoxical self-proclamations adduced by the female revealer throughout
the text. These make her somehow ungraspable because she identifies herself
with opposites, yet she is also graspable, as she makes herself the Hearing of
her Speech.

Even though Poirier’s interpretation seems to encompass both parts of the
saying, I think it makes sense to regard the saying as a continuation of the
linguistic manifestation of the female revealer. The “Hearing” is the female
 revealer as she becomes manifest as the Sound that is receivable to everyone,
but as she begins to speak she is incomprehensible and ungraspable, yet still
hearable. Two of the different levels of intelligibility are alluded to in this say-
ing, which confirms the nature of the saying as a linguistic one.

The Mute and the Speaker
The proclamation that follows continues the oppositional structure of the say-
ings which are so characteristic of Thund. The opposition is of course between
muteness and speech, which are both attributed to the female revealer.135

134 Poirier, Le Tonnerre intellect parfait, 327.
135 Poirier also advocates this understanding. He finds it probable since it underlines the
paradoxical nature of the female revealer, whom he rightly analyses as a kind of sapiential
figure: “En attribuant la loquacité à la locutrice, l’auteur cherche peut-être, par delà le con-
traste entre le mutisme et l’abondance des paroles, à accentuer le caractère paradoxal de
la figure sapientielle qui s’exprime dans Brontè.” Poirier, Le Tonnerre intellect parfait, 310.
However, one might also consider other interpretations than simply an emphasis on paradox. In an article from 1981, J.-P. Mahé addresses the passage in relation to the linguistic theme of the text, especially the passage that I designate as the third linguistic passage (20:28–35). Mahé sees the muteness and the speech of the female revealer as a reference to the physical nature of the writing, that is, specific letters, syllables and so forth. The text as a physical object is referred to in 20:33–35 “It is I who am the sign (sēmeion) of the writing and the manifestation of the division (diairesis).” Although in this later saying there is no mention of the single elements (στοιχεῖα) of writing, that is, the very letters of the alphabet, Mahé sees strong allusions to these elements, simply by the female revealer’s identification with the writing. As the physical text itself, i.e. the actual text on the papyrus, the female revealer, is mute. However, her multitude of speaking is great, as this text is read out loud.

I think, as Mahé, that the saying strongly alludes to the linguistic features of the text and that the self-designation of the female revealer as mute could very well refer to the physical nature of the text. On the other hand, the muteness of the letters is the prerogative of only six letters. We already encountered these in the reading of the Stoic theory of voice, as attested by Diogenes Laertius, in which they were identified as ἄφωνα: β, γ, δ, κ, π, τ. Although this was not the kind of muteness that Mahé was referring to, it is worth mentioning. I assume that the kind of muteness he speaks of is equivalent to the idea we find in Plato’s *Phaedrus* 275d–e where Socrates speaks about writing:

Writing, Phaedrus, has this strange quality, and is very much like painting; for the creatures of painting stand like living beings, but if one asks them a question, they preserve a solemn silence. And so it is with written words; you might think they spoke as if they had intelligence, but if you question them, wishing to know about their sayings, they always say only one and the same thing. And every word, when once it is written, is bandied about, alike among those who understand and those who have no interest in it, and it knows not to whom to speak or not to speak; when ill-treated or unjustly reviled it always needs its father to help it; for it has no power to protect or help itself.

---

137 Loc. cit.
138 See chapter on philosophy.
139 Translation, H. North Fowler, LCL.
A writing stands as it is written. It does not answer when you question it; it remains silent. This may be the best interpretation of the muteness of the female revealer. She is the writing which is silent—in fact, she is herself identified with the Silence (14:9). The saying that follows is naturally in opposition to the preceding one, for even though she is a mute who cannot speak, her multitude of speaking is also great. Continuing the line of thought established by Mahé, one may understand this saying as the writing that, however silent, speaks incessantly. The self-designation of the female revealer as referring to a mute and at the same time as one who speaks, thus emphasizes her linguistic manifestation as Silence and Speech. Meanwhile, this point goes hand in hand with the interpretation of the specific saying as the female revealer becomes manifest in the writing itself.

The context of the passage from Phaedrus is interesting in other respects as well, in that it deals with the function of letters and writings: they weaken one’s memory, since when writings exist, one does not have to memorize everything. A writing makes you remember what you have forgotten about. If the female revealer is to be understood as the writing itself, she is the one who makes the reader/hearer remember. This calls to mind our interpretation of the identification of the female revealer with Epinoia, whose function is to awaken the mind of the human being and make him remember, not only his divine origin but also how the world is conceptualized in opposites. Thus, the female revealer is also the manifestation of the division (diairesis) in 20:35. This saying is found in the third linguistic passage, to which we shall turn before long. However, we shall first investigate the passage that is located in between the second and the third linguistic passages. The location alone shows that this passage is of great importance.

The Knowledge of My Name

The passage may be divided into two (19:25–35 and 20:1–25), of which the first part in a way maintains the linguistic theme; however it is mixed with exhortations to the hearers as well as self-proclamations concerning her descent and her Name.140

\[
\ldots \text{Hear me in gentleness and learn from me in roughness. It is I who cry out}
\]

140 I do not provide the Coptic text for this passage, since it is not one of the linguistic passages and therefore it will not be dealt with in the same careful way.
and it is upon the face 
of the earth that I am cast out. 
It is I who prepare the bread and <…> 
<…> my mind within. It is I who am the 
knowledge of my Name. It is I 
who cry out. And it is I who 
listen.

There is a close connection between this and the foregoing passage, since 
this one takes part in a vocabulary, which, in Poirier’s words, is about “audi-
tion, parole, non-parole, loquacité, écoute, instruction puis cri, écoute, mani-
festation, énoncé, refutation…” In other words, a linguistic vocabulary. 
Nevertheless, the interruption by another saying (19:31–32) disturbs the pro-
gression of the text enough for us to separate the two passages. This does 
not change the fact that the present passage is in many ways of essential 
importance for the linguistic theme in Thund. We shall concentrate on a few of 
the sayings.

The first relevant saying deals with the circumstances concerning the 
descent of the female revealer: “It is I who cry out and it is upon the face of 
the earth that I am cast out.” Firstly, the saying clearly alludes to her lin-
guistic (or in this particular case phonetic) manifestation in the world. Her 
cry corresponds to the sound/voice that she makes as she enters into this 
world. Secondly, the female revealer refers back to the very beginning of the 
monologue, where she proclaimed herself to be “sent forth from the Power” 
(ⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲩⲧⲁⲟⲩⲓ ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ϩ︤ⲛ︥ ⲧ̣ⲟⲙ· (13:2–3).

The saying that follows is somewhat confusing. It does not fit into its context 
and it seems as if the scribe has omitted something. The proclamation is important, since it contains the only occurrence of ⲛⲟⲩⲓ (mind) in Thund., besides the one in the title.

141 Loc. cit.
142 Poirier attaches this passage very closely to the previous (linguistic passage), in that he 
understands the passage as running from 19:20b through 20:5a. Poirier, Le Tonnerre intellect parfait, 309, signified as § 12. See also the structural translation on page 346–347.
143 The manuscript shows that the scribe has deleted three words in line 28–29: ⲛⲧⲕⲁ ⲛⲣⲟ ⲛⲧⲕⲁ ⲛⲣⲟ “upon the face of the earth” by making dots above the letters. The general assump-
tion is that the scribe recognized it as a dittography since the same words appear in line 
309, 311–313.
144 For a discussion of this particular problem, see Poirier, Le Tonnerre intellect parfait, 
313–314.
The second saying that I wish to concentrate on is the one which resumes the notion of the name of the female revealer: “It is I who am the knowledge of my Name” (ἈΝΩ ΤΩ ΤΗΝΩΣΙΣ ὙΠΑΡΧΩν). I have already touched upon the significance of this proclamation in relation to the first linguistic passage, in which the female revealer proclaimed herself to be the utterance of her name (14:14–15). The Name of the female revealer is of essential importance to the overall interpretation of Thund. Throughout this revelatory monologue, the hearers are constantly confronted with the question of the identity of the female revealer. She ceaselessly speaks about herself in ways that make one listen and think. That is the mission of Epinoia: to make human beings reflect upon her and her teaching. This idea was exposed at the very beginning of the text where the female revealer proclaimed: “And it is to those who reflect upon me that I have come” (ΑΥΘΗ ἘΝΑΤΙΕΙ ΜΑΝΕΤΜΕΓΕ ΕΡΟΙ) (13:3–4). Meanwhile, she never reveals her actual Name—only the Sound of it, which is the Thunder, as I argued above. Her divine Name remains unutterable and secret, since it cannot be expressed in human rational language. Recognizing this is the same as knowing about her Name, and therefore she is also the knowledge of her Name. This secrecy of the name recalls the Platonic notion of the name, which I take to be very illuminating for the interpretation of Thund. For even though the Platonic Socrates advocated a natural relation between a name and referent in the Cratylus, his conclusion was that a name does not really capture the true essence of the thing it names. To recognize the true essence of a thing, one has to look into the thing itself. I believe this idea is integrated in Thund. on two levels. Firstly, the Name of the female revealer is never revealed, not only because this Name is holy, but also because it is not through her actual divine Name that the hearers come to know her. In order to know her, they will have to look at her, that is, to listen carefully to her message, and not seek her Name. In this way, her Name is superfluous and the hearers are forced to think about her without it. That is the knowledge of her Name.

Secondly, the Platonic notion of the name also plays a role with regard to the message of the female revealer. What she reveals is, to a high degree, names: names of things, conceptions, human relations and qualities. She reveals them in pairs of opposites, since this is how the human rational language conceptualizes the world. But is she in fact telling the hearers that these conceptions are nothing more than mere conceptions? That these do not reflect the true nature of things and that in order to grasp the essence of reality, one must abandon rational language? The answers to all of these questions are, in my opinion, positive. The Platonic notion of the insufficiency of language in general and names of objects in particular partly form the basis of the language-related speculations that are so fundamental for Thund. Another part is the
Stoic theory of voice. These are the most central issues for my interpretation of Thund., and they will become further developed through the analysis of the third linguistic passage. First, we must look at the second of the two passages that are located in between the last two linguistic passages.

**Judgment and Acquittal**

This passage (20:1–25) addresses the topic of judgment and acquittal. Unfortunately, the top of page 20 is rather fragmentary (as is the case with most of the pages): some words are readable but some are reconstructed. What is of special interest is the first word in line three. MacRae reconstructs ⲥⲫⲁⲅⲓⲥ (“seal”)\(^{145}\) which could imply some kind of baptismal context referring to the baptism of the “Five Seals” of the Classic Gnostic tradition.\(^{146}\) Seen in the context of the topic of judgment, this reconstruction could only make sense if it referred to the judgment of the soul. What could possibly point towards a baptismal scene is the mentioning of the garment (ⲥⲧⲟⲗⲏ) in 20:18–25:

\[
\text{For what is inside of you is what is outside of you,} \\
\text{and the one who shaped you on the outside} \\
\text{has made an impression of it} \\
\text{inside of you. And what} \\
\text{you see outside of you,} \\
\text{you see inside of you;} \\
\text{it is manifest, and it is your garment.}
\]

Garments are a central ingredient in the process of the baptism of the “Five Seals”. However, Trim. Prot. has only one occurrence of ⲥⲧⲟⲗⲏ “garment” (47*:*7) and it is not in connection with the passage on baptism, but in relation to the descent of Protennoia as Logos “wearing everyone’s garment”. Nevertheless, in the passage on baptism (48*:6–35) the Greek term for “garment” occurs, namely στολή (στολή). In Turner’s translation, it is rendered “robes” in 48*:15 and 17, but in 49*:*30 it is rendered “garments”, in spite of a recollection of baptism in the latter passage, which is about the person who has “stripped off the garments of ignorance and put on a shining Light”. Turner thus distinguishes between the old garments that are stripped off, and the new robes that are achieved as one of the Five Seals. Even though some sort of garment is present

---

146 For the most recent study of the baptismal rite of the five seals, see Sevrin, Le Dossier Baptismal Séthien. Études sur la Sacramentaire Gnostique. See also Turner, Sethian Gnosticism and the Platonic Tradition, 238–253.
in the baptismal scene in *Trim. Prot.*, the theme of judgment and acquittal is completely absent.

Poirier does not agree with MacRae about the reconstruction of line three on page 20. He gives Ⲝⲁⲧⲡⲝ as "des énoncés".147 He finds this fitting with his reconstruction of ⲥⲱⲟⲩⲧⲣⲓⲟⲛ as "signe" in the next line. These reconstructions are possible148 and they fit into the context of the linguistic theme from the previous passage. In this way they also point ahead towards the third linguistic passage in which ⲳⲱⲧⲣⲓⲟⲛ is also present. On the other hand, these linguistic terms do not belong to a context of judgment, acquittal and garments, which may be the reason why Poirier does not count the first five lines of page 20 as part of the rest of the page.149

The theme of judgment in combination with that of garments suggests an interpretation which is formulated quite clearly in a passage from the *Sentences of Sextus* (NHC XII,1) 30*:11–17:

Say with [your] mind that the body [is] the garment of your soul; keep it, therefore, pure since it is innocent. Whatever the soul will do while it is in the body, it has as a witness when it goes unto judgement.

On the other hand, the paradoxical presentation of the theme in *Thund.* calls for a slightly different interpretation. As Poirier notes in his analysis of the passage 20:1b–18a, the judge who is referred to in this passage is in fact the judge inside ourselves: “Ce juge n’est autre que le juge intérieur, c’est-à-dire l’intellect ou la conscience des auditeurs.”150 Thus, it is not some exterior, perhaps divine judge who condemns the human being, but the human being himself.

After this, the female revealer calls upon her hearers as an introduction or a “bridge” to the third linguistic passage:

> Hear me, you hearers
> and learn of my words
> you who know me (20:26–28)

---


148 The facsimile edition of codex VI shows only a trace of the letter before "ⲧ", which may possibly be the supra linear stroke over "ⲧ". It seems impossible to read this trace as the upper part of a "ⲧ" as MacRae does, since the visible part of the letter is too high. It follows that the reconstruction by Poirier is the more probable.

149 Poirier, *Le Tonnerre intellect parfait*, 309, which shows that the passage he calls § 12 runs through 20:5.

150 Ibid.: 319.
This short exhortation makes the importance of the third linguistic passage clear, to which we shall now turn.

**The Third Linguistic Passage**

This passage is found towards the end of the text. As the last of the three linguistic passages, it takes up a central position as the last trump which not only emphasizes the message of the two preceding passages, but also gives the reader the actual key to understanding the complexity of the text. Furthermore, the passage also underlines the importance of analysing *Thund.* as a whole in relation to its linguistic focus.

20:28–35

...ΔΗΟΚ ΠΕ
ΠΣΩΤΗ ΕΤΩΜΗ ΨΡΩΒ ΝΗ';
ΔΗΟΚ ΠΕ ΠΟΙΑΕ ΕΤΕΝΑΥ
ΩΑΗΑΡΤΕ ΤΙΝΟΤ' ΔΗΟΚ ΠΕ
ΠΡΑΝ ΥΤΣΗΗ' ΑΥΩ ΤΕΧΝΗ
ΤΙΠΑΝ' ΔΗΟΚ ΠΕ ΠΣΗΗΕΙ
ΟΝ ΥΠΕ'Ρ'ΑΙ' ΑΥΩ ΠΟΥΨΗΕ ΕΒΟΛ
ΤΙΤΑΙΡΕΠΕΙΣ' ΑΥΩ ΔΗΟΚ . . .

...It is I who am
the Hearing that is receivable in everything.
It is I who am the Speech that cannot be
grasped. It is I who am
the Name of the Voice and the Voice
of the Name. It is I who am the sign
of the writing and the manifestation
of the division. And I . . .

Unfortunately, the passage continues into a lacuna. It seems as if the text would have continued along the same lines for a least a few more verses.

The linguistic focus of this passage is apparent, but the interpretation of each verse may contain some difficulties. The text begins almost identically with the preceding linguistic passage, although with a minor variation in that this passage has (ΔΗΟΚ ΠΣΩΤΗ ΕΤΩΜΗ, “it is I who am the Hearing which is
receiveable . . .") ἰγδῳμ ἤμ, “in everything”151 instead of ὑογον ἤμ, “to everyone” as in 19:21–22. The difference between the two passages may not be significant, and Poirier ascribes the variation to an inconsistency on the part of the translator.152 However, the “ὑογον ἤμ” in 19:21–22 refers primarily to persons,153 whereas the “ἰγδῳμ ἤμ” in 20:29 refers to things.154 So, if one chooses to translate the ἗—as “in” (as Poirier does) instead of “to”, it could have the implication that the manifestation of the goddess as the “Hearing” is not only receivable to everyone, i.e. to every human being, but also in everything, i.e. everything belonging to the realm into which she descends. This resembles a passage at the beginning of Trim. Prot. 35*:11–20, where Protennoia proclaims to exist within everything including, for instance, every Power as well as every material soul. Whether the difference between the two linguistic passages is an inconsistency on the part of the translator/copyist or not, the interpretation of the verses remains by and large the same. The female revealer as the Hearing is receivable both to everyone and in everything. The latter I understand as the Sound of the female revealer as she becomes manifest in the visible world. It is a Sound of Thunder that is receivable in everything, that is, she is to be imagined as one who resonates in everything. The numerous examples of the shaking of the foundations as the divine enters into the world are good examples for comparison.155 In Trim. Prot. it even happens by a thundering sound (43*:15).

The following saying is identical to the one found in the second linguistic passage: “It is I who am the Speech that cannot be grasped.” Recalling the analysis of the previous occurrence of this saying, the female revealer is ungraspable as Speech because she has not yet reached down to the level of the rational Logos. Understood in terms of the Stoic sequence of a verbal expression: she is articulate, but still unintelligible.

Once again, Thund. takes up the issue of the name: “It is I who am the Name of the Voice and the Voice of the Name” (Ἀνὸκ πε πραν ἱτχῃν· ἄῳ τεχην 155

---

151 I follow the translation of Poirier, Le Tonnerre intellect parfait, 196–197, “C’est moi qui est recevable en toute chose”, which indicates that he understands the ἗—as the preposition “in”. This corresponds to the translation of Layton, The Gnostic Scriptures, 84, “It is I who am the listening that is acceptable in every matter”. MacRae, “The Thunder: Perfect Mind,” 250–251 on the other hand translates “I am the hearing that is attainable to everything” (my emphasis in all three quotations).
152 Poirier, Le Tonnerre intellect parfait, 326–327.
153 Crum: 482.
154 Crum: 653.
This saying reaffirms my interpretation of the saying in which the female revealer proclaims herself to be the utterance of her Name (14:15). Her manifestation in this world is an act of utterance of the divine Name. This utterance is heard as a thunder. In the present saying the uttering of the Name must be understood as the Voice. It is significant for the saying that it is pronounced both forwards and backwards, so to speak. I understand this as an indication of the identification of the female revealer with her own Name as well as the content of that Name, that is, her own teaching. Poirier supports this as he writes: “En se présentant à la fois comme ‘nom de la voix’ et ‘voix du nom’, la locutrice affirme l’identité et l’interchangeabilité du véhicule (voix) et du contenu (nom) de la révélation qu’elle communique…” Furthermore, Poirier ascribes the saying of the female revealer to the Judeo-Christian tradition of the non-communicative divine name. He mentions as examples the rabbinic tradition of the use of שֵׁם (the name) instead of the tetragram and concludes that the association with this tradition affirms her divine character. I agree with Poirier that Thund. is somehow dependent on the Jewish/Christian tradition concerning the ineffability of the divine name יהוה. This tradition is traceable throughout a wide range of early Jewish and Christian literature beginning with Moses at the burning bush in Exodus 3:13–17 (“… ‘What is his name?’ ‘What shall I say to them?’ God said to Moses, ‘I am who I am’. He said further, ‘I am has sent me to you.’…”). The theme appears throughout the Old Testament; it continues into the Old Testament apocrypha and pseudepigrapha (for instance in Jubilees 36:7 in which even creation is ascribed to the name itself), and is reinterpreted in the New Testament writings (for instance Philippians 2:9–10 and John 12:28). Moreover, it is found in Philo and Augustine, but above all, it is within the Jewish “mysticism”—Kabbala—that we find the most striking parallel to the language philosophical reflections on the divine name in Thund. In Kabbala, as G. Scholem puts it:

…the name of God is the “essential name”, which is the original source of all language. Every other name by which God can be called or invoked, is coincident with a determined activity, as is shown by the etymology of such biblical names; only this one name requires no kind of back-looking activity. For the Kabbalists, this name has no “meaning” in the traditional

156 Poirier, Le Tonnerre intellect parfait, 327.
157 Ibid.: 328. Poirier also points to the following New Testament texts: Ac 5:41; (3 Jn 7 (?)) and Rev 19:3,12.
158 Translation borrowed from NRSV.
159 See above in relation to the first linguistic passage.
understanding of the term. It has no concrete signification. The meaninglessness of the name of God indicates its situation in the very central point of the revelation, at the basis of which it lies. Behind every revelation of a meaning in language, and, as the Kabbalists saw it, by means of the Torah, there exists this element which projects over and beyond meaning, but which in the first instance enables meaning to be given. It is this element which endows every other form of meaning, though it has no meaning itself.  

The divine name “projects over and beyond meaning” at the same time as it is the “essential name” from which every other meaning and essence derives. It is the source of all language, in fact, the creative word of God which is also identical to him—thus, it is his name. In *Thund*, the Name of the female revealer remains unknown, and we might even consider it beyond meaning, although it reveals itself auditively becoming more and more meaningful as it reaches the Logos-level. In this respect, it too provides meaning to the language of the human world. This becomes even clearer when the female revealer proclaims to be the *diairesis*. The fact that the divine name in the Kabbala is the “essential name” recalls the Platonic notion of the name, where the true essence of a thing is not to be found in its name but in the thing itself. In this way, we could regard God’s name in the Kabbala not as a “name” in the normal sense of the word but as the *essence* of God, which one discovers in the pursuit of divine reality that has to move beyond names.

The Kabbala, however, is a much later tradition (ca. 13th century CE), and if one should hypothesize about the pattern of interdependence between *Thund* and Kabbala, we must consider the former the earlier and thus a possible source of influence on the linguistic theory of the Kabbala. However, I shall not go into this otherwise intriguing question in the present study.

On the other hand, part of the theories that eventually evolved into Kabbala are found in *Sefer Yetsira*, a book which possibly dates already from the 2nd century. In that, we find a description of the ten *sefirot*—the ten original numbers—which together with the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet

162 Scholars do not agree on the dating of this book. They range from the 2nd to the 6th century CE. For a recent edition and translation see A. Peter Hayman, *Sefer Yeṣira* (TSAJ 104; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004).
constitute the 32 paths of Wisdom through which God created all things. It is from the 22 letters that all other creation is formed, however, without them being a “divine utterance”.

Even though the parallel is striking, one major difference between the Kabbalistic notion of the divine name and Thund. seems to be the attitude towards language as such. For, in Kabbala, as well as in the earlier Sefer Yetsira, the cosmos is constituted by means of divine language, in that it is made by and through the building-blocks of language: the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Thus, language is thoroughly a positive thing. Thund. does not reflect a linguistic cosmology, in that one of its main features is a skepticism towards language which is much closer to the Greek philosophical tradition. Even though the female revealer becomes manifest through language and as language, the goal for the receiver of her manifestation is to find her in the Silence—beyond language. However, there remains no doubt that Thund. has many traits in common with the Kabbala and the interrelation between them is certainly worth pursuing in further studies. Now we shall return to Stoic and Platonic dialectics, which I believe to be of fundamental importance for the understanding of Thund.

In Stoic terminology, the “Voice/Sound of the Name” is what is heard when the divine Name is uttered in this world: it sounds like thunder (ⲃⲣⲟⲧⲏ). ⲃⲣⲧⲏ may thus be understood as a “sound-word”, an onomatopoeis of the phenomenon of thunder. Therefore, ⲃⲣⲧⲏ, as the word/name of the thunder phenomenon, may be regarded as the “Name of the Voice/Sound”. Therefore, what is in fact at stake in this particular saying is a pun on the onomatopoetic name for thunder. In the article by Mahé from 1981, to which I have already referred, he argues for a language-related understanding of this particular verse. He sees it as alluding to the Semitic writing system, in which different points around the consonants represent the vowels. He writes: “Je suis le nom de la voix (= les consonnes que l’on vocalise) et la voix du nom (= les voyelles qu’on insère entre les consonnes)...”. However intriguing this interpretation may be, it is not a possible interpretation, since the Semitic vowel system is a later invention than the time of composition of the Nag Hammadi codices. Moreover, the Greek relation is emphasized continuously throughout.

---

165 Against the background of this, he suggests that Thund. may be a translation of an original Syrian or Aramaean text. This, however, remains an open question.

Ibid. n. 47.
Thund. and must be considered the main influence on this text with regard to its linguistic features.

If the Stoic line of thought is continued, we may assume that the sound-word, “ⲃⲣⲟⲧⲏ”, has a sensuous effect on the human being. What kind of effect would that be? The fear of a powerful force, awe and wonder? Perhaps, but neither the name “ⲃⲣⲟⲧⲏ” nor the voice/sound it is making when pronounced really capture the essence of the revealer who is signified by this thunder. Therefore, according to Plato’s Socrates, we must look into the things themselves in order to be able to grasp their true essence. For this reason it is important to recall that the female revealer constantly tells her hearers about who she is, that is, she is herself the content of the linguistic manifestation of the divine name.

In this way Thund. guides the reader ahead to the next proclamation that speaks about the meaning of the text and of how we are to understand the female revealer in relation to her numerous antithetical and paradoxical self-proclamations.

Sēmeion and Diairesis

I cannot emphasize enough the importance of the last verse of the third linguistic passage: ἂνοικ πενθείον ὕπερε’λ’ αὐῳ ποιώνῃ ἐβολ ἔταιρεσει “It is I who am the sign of the writing and the manifestation of the division”. Both parts of this verse contain terms that belong within a language philosophical framework that had been developed long before the composition of Thund. The terms are not adopted by Thund. on a “one-to-one” scale, but rather used in a wholly different context. However, this does not change the fact that the central characteristics of these terms are sustained and that they play an essential role in the overall understanding of Thund.

Sēmeion

The meanings of the term σημείον are myriad depending on the context in which it is employed. Of these Poirier prefers the meaning that implies the single letters or characters of the alphabet or the diacritical signs that accompany letters and words. Furthermore, also with regard to the diairesis, he adopts a narrow sense of the term in that he understands it as the act of reading a text composed as scriptio continua. He writes:

---

166 Cf. LSJ 1593.
167 Poirier, Le Tonnerre intellect parfait, 324; 328.
l’acte de lecture n’était rien d’autre qu’une opération ‘discriminante’, une διαίρεσις, et cette operation ne pouvait se réaliser sans une certaine compréhension du texte qui permettait d’opérer des regroupements, c’est-à-dire des passages de la διαίρεσις à la σύνθεσις, laquelle, au-delà des lettres, faisait apparaître des syllabes, puis des mots et enfin des énoncés.\footnote{168} Mahé argues along the same lines, although he speaks about Semitic languages: “…Sēmeion signifie le point qu’on place au-dessus d’une lettre et diairesis peut être un signe de separation entre deux mots.”\footnote{169} The approach of these two scholars focuses on the details of the physical text. The “sign” of the writing thus corresponds to letters or diacritical signs. The female revealer thereby proclaims herself to be the very letters of the writing. In this way, she is regarded as being present in the text itself. As Cox Miller formulated it in 1986: “she is what she speaks …”\footnote{170} Cox Miller’s article is seminal with regard to exploring the language-related speculations within Thund. She employs Thund as her point of departure for an investigation of “a particular … appropriate linguistic response to linguistic reality in certain religious texts from late antiquity.”\footnote{171} These are the so-called “magical” texts in which one finds several examples of linguistic manifestations of the divine. However, the kind of divine language found in these texts is very different from the language of Thund. Cox Miller points to the related Nag Hammadi text the *Holy Book of the Great Invisible Spirit* (*Gospel of the Egyptians*), in which language-related speculations also play an essential role. She quotes for comparison a relevant passage:

And the throne of his (glory) was established (in it, this one) on which his unrevealable name (is inscribed), on the tablet (…) one is the word, the (Father of the light) of everything, he (who came) forth from the silence, while he rests in the silence, he whose name (is) an (invisible) symbol. (A) hidden, (invisible) mystery came forth  

\footnote{168}{Ibid.: 325.} \footnote{169}{Mahé, “Six énigmes arméniennes anciennes sur le mythe de l’homme primordial,” 57 n. 47.} \footnote{170}{Cox Miller, “In Praise of Nonsense,” 482.} \footnote{171}{Loc. cit.}
In this short passage, it is quite clear that the *Holy Book of the Great Invisible Spirit* also operates within a “linguistic-divine” framework. Many of the features that play a central role in the descriptions of the linguistic manifestations in *Thund.* are present: the silence, from which the Father comes forth; the name that is unrevealable; and a strange linguistic manifestation. To Cox Miller the paradoxical self-proclamations by the female revealer of *Thund.* correspond to the vocal manifestation of the Invisible Spirit in the quoted passage, in that both are incomprehensible. She understands the vocal “mysteries” as the *signs* as she writes: “Here is the “sign of the letter” with a vengeance!” Cox Miller makes some important observations which, in my opinion, are right on target. For instance, the manner in which she describes the linguistic manifestation of the divine in the *Holy Book of the Great Invisible Spirit*: “When the God who is ‘an invisible symbol’ breaks into human speech, his sounds are the echoes of the alphabet, the vowels” (my emphasis). Breaking into human speech is exactly what happens when the female revealer and Protennoia in *Trim. Prot.* descend into the human world. Protennoia even descended below the language of the powers. And that the sounds of the God are echoes of the alphabet makes perfect sense if these sounds are understood in terms of the Stoic notion of “primary sounds”, since these are the most original of sounds and thus perhaps closer to the divine. When all this has been said, I think Cox Miller jumps a bit too fast from *Thund.* to the “vocal mysteries”. It is true that the paradoxes in *Thund.* are incomprehensible, but nowhere in *Thund.* do we find the same kind of vocal mysteries as in the *Holy Book of the Great Invisible Spirit* or even in *Trim. Prot.* The words and concepts employed in *Thund.* are in fact comprehensible by the human rational mind, if they are understood separately. What makes them incomprehensible is the fact that they are comprised in a single being—the female revealer. Therefore, in my view, what disconnects

---

173 Loc. cit.
174 Loc. cit.
175 See above for the analysis of this particular verse (41*:26–28).
176 Cf. the chapter on philosophy.
177 There are several examples in the Nag Hammadi collection of “vocal mysteries”, see for instance the *Discourse on the Eighth and Ninth* (*NHC* VI.6) (56:17–22 and 61:10–15); *Zostrianos* (*NHC* VIII.1) (52 and 127); the *Trim. Prot.* (*NHC* XIII.1) (38*:29).
from the texts that communicate the divine through mystical vowel spells, such as the example above, is the fact that the very words employed by Thund. are intelligible and not just nonsense. At the beginning of her article, Cox Miller states that “...from a rational analytical perspective, the structure of her (the female revealer’s) language is nonsense.” I agree that proclaiming to contain opposites like “the whore and the holy one” or “knowledge and ignorance” within one and the same being is certainly paradoxical. Nevertheless, the concepts used are intelligible, contrary to the vowel spells of Trim. Prot. Moreover, the apophatic discourse, which is obviously an essential feature of the Holy Book of the Great Invisible Spirit as well as Trim. Prot., is not present in same manner in Thund. In Thund., we do not find proclamations like “I am the invisible within the Thought of the Invisible one. I am revealed in the immeasurable ineffable (things). I am incomprehensible existing within the incomprehensible” (Trim. Prot. 35*:7–11). The only time the female revealer of Thund. proclaims herself to be incomprehensible is when she is Silence (ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲡⲉ ⲡⲕⲁⲣⲱⲧ ⲉⲧⲉⲙⲁⲩϣⲧⲉⲙⲧⲉ·) (14:10). Only two other instances of “apophatic-like” language are found in the proclamation about the “speech that cannot be grasped” (ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲡⲉ ⲡⲧⲕⲉ ⲡⲧⲉⲙⲁⲩϣⲧⲉ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟⲥ·) (19:22–23; 20:30–31). The notions of Silence and the ungraspable Speech are apophatic features that without doubt link Thund. to these other texts. The topic of the name that is actually never revealed may also be counted among these specific aspects of Thund. However, I still believe that there is something more at issue in Thund. than apophatic thinking alone. In what follows it will become apparent that the key to my understanding of the opposite self-designations of the female revealer lies within her own identification with the meaning of the text. We shall now return to the saying in which the female revealer proclaims herself to be the sign of the writing.

Once again, I find Stoic dialectics to be illuminating for the analysis of the linguistic features of Thund. As I described in the chapter on ancient philosophy of language, the Stoics distinguished between the “things which signify” (σημαίνοντα) and the “things which are signified” (σημαινόμενα). The former referred to the corporeal subjects with regard to language, for instance, sound, writing, verbal expressions and etymology. The latter referred to the incorporeal subjects of language such as the meaning of what is being said, that is, lekta. When this Stoic distinction is taken into consideration in the analysis of the present saying in Thund., it becomes apparent that the female revealer

178 Cox Miller, “In Praise of Nonsense,” 481.
179 See the chapter on philosophy for a more detailed discussion of the two subdivisions of Stoic dialectics.
may in fact be understood as being both that which signifies and that which is signified, showing how tightly these two elements are connected. The female revealer is the *sign* of the writing. From a Stoic perspective this implies that she is that which signifies the writing. This means that she is the *corporeal* subjects of the text. These are the sounds which are hearable when they are uttered and the single words of the text, both as written and as read out loud. In other words: she *is* the text. This further underlines the informative, knowledge-giving and revelatory role of the text, which functions as the medium between the divine and the human world. This interpretation resembles what has already been said by Poirier and Cox Miller,180 with the exception that they understand *sēmeion* as the single letters of the alphabet, which is not the usual sense of the term.181 The Greek terms for “letter” are typically στοιχεῖον or γράμμα.182

Meanwhile, the female revealer is also herself the content of the text. That is what her many self-proclamations are telling the reader/hearer, as in Cox Miller’s words: “she is what she speaks”.183 As I have pointed out several times, the female revealer is to be regarded as being associated with her own teaching. Therefore, I suggest that the proclamation in question may also be read as saying that the female revealer is what is signified by the text. This has in fact already been seen by McGuire: “In identifying the divine as the ‘sign (*sēmeion*) of writing,’ the text reflects back upon itself, identifying the divine with the hidden significance of this text”.184

In Stoic terminology, the female revealer is thus the *incorporeal* meaning of the text, which means that she may be identified with the Stoic *lekton*. It is important to emphasize that *Thund.* does not explicitly say this, nor was it probably the intention of the author to imply this understanding. Nevertheless, the Stoic distinction between σημαίνοντα and σημαινόμενα, which inevitably implies the notion of the *lekton*, is an excellent analytical tool in attempting to understand the close relation between the female revealer and her teaching.

The essence of that teaching is given in the next saying, which I understand as the key to the understanding of the paradoxical self-proclamations of the female revealer of *Thund.*

---

180 See above.
181 Cf. *LSJ* 1593.
182 Cf. *LSJ* 358 and 1647. In the passage from Diogenes Laertius about the Stoic theory of voice that I analysed above, the term στοιχεῖον was employed.
183 Cox Miller, “In Praise of Nonsense,” 482.
Diairesis
The third linguistic passage ends by the female revealer proclaiming herself to be the “manifestation of the division” (ⲡⲟⲩⲛ︤ϩ︥ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲛ̄ⲧⲇⲓϩⲉⲣⲉⲥⲓⲥ). As I have already mentioned above, this saying has been analysed by Poirier and Mahé as constituting a continuation of a specific focus on textuality, in relation to which they also understood ₪ⲧⲇⲓⲧⲏⲓⲟⲛ. As division (diairesis), the female revealer is the division between words, showing the reader how to divide and distinguish between words in a text written in scriptio continua. This interpretation is very plausible and fits well into the linguistic focus of the passage. However, as in the case of sēmeion, I believe that the term diairesis may also be understood on a much broader level, if still a linguistic one. As was shown in my investigation of the term in the chapter on ancient philosophy of language, diairesis was a central topic in Platonic dialectics, distinguishing between concepts in order to achieve a definition. Since it appears in a language-related context in Thund., I suggest that we understand its use against a Platonic background. Before considering the specific use of diairesis in Thund., we shall recall the essence of the notion as it is presented by Plato.

The method of diairesis was a tool of definition employed by the dialectician in order to obtain a precise definition and to grasp the true essence of a given concept through an investigation of its name. This investigation (the diairesis) was carried out through a systematic division of the genus (the concept in question) into subgenera, each of which were again divided into other subgenera until no further division could be made. Then the undividable concept (the infima species) was reached. The divisions were made between dichotomies/opposites. The above analysis of diairesis emphasized the following three things:

1) A diairesis uncovers the complexity of a single concept, in that the method shows how the concept in fact comprises all the different aspects that are encountered during the process. In other words, it is a unity of the many. As the dialectician acknowledges the complexity of the name in question, he recognizes in this diversity the true essence and reality behind that name.

2) Proceeding through a diairesis is a process of remembrance (anamnesis). This means that as one chases the essence of a given name through the various dichotomies, one recalls at the same time all these opposites. They are recalled as forms and recognized as being part of the
name in question. “Knowledge is knowledge of differences” as Minardi concluded. This is connected to the last central issue.

3) The differences between the forms are made known in that they are defined only in relation to one another. That which is to be understood, e.g. “non-being”, may actually be said to exist in relation to “being”. Therefore, opposites exist in inter-dependency.

If these features concerning the method of *diairesis* are taken into consideration in the analysis of the concept in *Thund.*, central aspects of the text are elucidated.

The female revealer of *Thund.* proclaims that she is the manifestation of the division (*diairesis*). In light of the Platonic notion of *diairesis*, I suggest that the saying indicates that she reveals herself as the knowledge of differences. The numerous paradoxical and antithetical self-proclamations in *Thund.*, which are generally understood to signify the transcendence of the female revealer, may in this way be understood as expressions of her own *diairetic* manifestation. This approach provides us with an entirely new understanding of *Thund.*, since it brings the opposite concepts into a new light that makes it possible to understand them as more than mere paradoxes. They may now be seen as concepts of difference, opposites which embrace all facets of human language. It is important to emphasize here that the proclamation is situated within a linguistic framework, a point that makes it even more reasonable to interpret the concepts in terms of a language-related perspective.

If the Platonic perspective is pursued, the notion of *diairesis* in *Thund.* indicates that something is being defined. In this case, it is clear (because of the self-proclamations) that it is the female revealer herself who is under investigation. Throughout *Thund.*, the reader is encountered with a wide range of different self-designations by the female revealer ranging from concepts of female identities (biological and social) over concepts of power and weakness, to concepts relating to judgment and acquittal. It is obvious that *Thund.* does not follow the systematic structure of a traditional *diairetic* definition, since it employs the notion of *diairesis* in a completely different, revelatory kind of framework interwoven with exhortations to the hearers. Nevertheless, many of the same features which are characteristic of the philosophical employment of the notion of *diairesis* are present within *Thund.*.

The numerous self-designating oppositions of the female revealer signify that she embraces all these different concepts in one being, that is, herself. From a philosophical perspective, she is a unity that comprises the many. Even

185 See above.
though the concepts are conflicting and may thus be designated paradoxes (as they are comprised within one being), they must all still be regarded as expressions of the one unity which is the female revealer. Thus, the *diairesis* of *Thund.* is characterized by an enumeration of dichotomies which all share the same essence: the female revealer. It is only through a reflection on all of them together that one might be able to grasp her true identity. She is identical with these differences, showing that one half of the pair cannot exist without the other, since they are interdependent. This makes her the “manifestation” of the division. McGuire seems to support this approach:

> Finally, as ‘the manifestation of difference,’ the text suggests that the speaker’s significance is manifested in the differentiation of features, the distinction of categories, the processes of separation and dissolution, and the multiplicity of expression and interpretation.\(^{186}\)

Through a reflection upon these opposite concepts, the hearer will eventually come closer to her: “It is to those who reflect upon me that I have come” (-Encoding is missing). This is intimately related to the description of the process of a *diairesis* as a process of remembrance. For in her identification with the figure of Epinoia (14:10), the female revealer situates herself within the activity of providing the human being with the ability to reflect upon and know “Good and Evil”, that is, opposites. This understanding of the role of Epinoia/the female spiritual principle is found in the *Hypostasis of the Archons.*\(^{187}\) The opposite concepts are concepts of reality which may be regarded as equivalent to the Platonic forms (εἶδος). So when the female revealer proclaims to be “the word whose form is manifold” (πλογός έτεινως περιέχει) (14:13–14), she refers to the various concepts with which she identifies herself. The concepts of reality are the forms which the human being knew before he was cast into oblivion,\(^{188}\) and which the female revealer now makes him remember through her manifestation. The identification of the female revealer with Epinoia as the provider of the ability for reflection and knowledge is the core of what the female revealer of *Thund.* stands for. She provides the human being with knowledge of how to conceptualize the visible world in opposites. This conceptualization is at the same time understood as an act of

---

187 See the analysis of Epinoia given above.
188 Cf. the above analysis of the identification of the female revealer with Epinoia. The theme of the human being’s oblivion or “sleep” is not explicitly present in *Thund.*, but is appears, for instance, in the *Hypostasis of the Archons* in relation to the theme of remembrance.
remembrance, which is why the female revealer proclaims to be “the Thought (Epinoia) whose remembrance is great” (14:16–17). The human being is given the knowledge that makes him able to recognize and conceptualize the world as “Good and Evil”, that is, in opposite concepts. The female revealer is associated with her own teaching as unifying dichotomies, a fact that makes it possible for her to proclaim herself to be “knowledge and ignorance”, “war and peace”, “strength and fear”, “whore and holy” and “first and last”. These opposites show, as many interpreters have pointed out, that paradox can be comprised within the divine and that the female revealer as such is transcendent.189 With this I agree. However, I think she does more than just tell her hearers that she is transcendent. Her message is directed towards them and their ability to grasp her sayings. She gives them the ability to conceptualize their world, which means that she provides them with language.

According to Turner, we find an employment of the notion of *diairesis* in *Marsanes* (*NHC X*). The passage appears very similar to what we have in *Thund*:

[... ] promise that [the articulation marks (διαιρέσις) will] begin [to separate] them by means of a sign [and] a point, the [uninflected (upright = ·) one] and the [inflected (bent = ,) one. So also [are the images] of being: [they derive from a *joining* of the letters (elements) in [a holy union] according to a [juxtaposition] where they exist independently. . . .190

Turner obviously reconstructs major parts of this passage, a fact that makes his analysis somewhat hypothetical. Nevertheless, I find his analysis very interesting since it points in the direction of the specifically Platonic method of division:

In X 33:16–34, 6 it seems that *Marsanes* understands the divisions or διαιρέσις of speech represented by punctuation to symbolize the “method of division and synthesis” applied by Plato to the study of true reality, which he calls “dialectic”.191

---

189 Cf. the introductory paragraphs to the present chapter, in which I present the different approaches to this question.
190 *Marsanes* 33:16–34:2. I use the translation given by Turner in *Sethian Gnosticism and the Platonic Tradition*, 624–625 since it shows his own reconstructions, on which he bases his analysis.
The context in which Marsanes discusses the issue of diairesis is one of “alpha-numeric speculation” on the soul. This implies long sections in which the text speculates about the relation between the letters of the Greek alphabet and the constitution of the soul, the celestial, angelic powers and the elementary constituents of the sensible world. The phonetic considerations in Marsanes are clearly related to the theories of sound and voice that are found in Trim. Prot. and Thund., but are also different. For instance, Marsanes’s narrative follows a so-called “ascent pattern”, whereas both Trim. Prot. and Thund. follow “descent patterns”. Indeed, the latter texts employ the Stoic sequence of a verbal expression as a scheme of descent into the visible/hearable, that is, sensible world. On the other hand, this does not change the fact that Marsanes makes use of language-related speculation in its description of the divine that may even originate in Platonic dialectics. Moreover, if Turner’s analysis of Marsanes’ use of the notion of diairesis is taken into consideration with regard to Thund., this connection not only establishes yet another link between Thund. and the Classic Gnostic tradition, it also supports my understanding of diairesis in Thund.:

But there exists gentle [discourse] and there exists another discourse [related to] [permanent] substance of this [sort that speaks] of [that which is invisible], and it [manifests] the difference [between the Same] and the [Different and] between the whole and a [part] of an [indivisible] substance …

This passage displays the same kind of reflection as is found in Thund. about the way to express diversity held within a single substance, namely, in the difference between “Same and Different”, that is, between opposite concepts that only exist in interdependency. This discussion derives from the Sophist, in which it is concluded that “non-being” actually exists but only in relation to “being”.

---

192 Ibid.: 632.
193 Thus, Turner, Sethian Gnosticism and the Platonic Tradition, 80–84.
195 See above.
Conclusion

In three passages (14:9–15; 19:20–25 and 20:28–35), which I call the linguistic passages, the female revealer of Thund identifies herself with a number of language-related concepts that are of Platonic and Stoic origin. It is clear that the author of Thund does not use these philosophical features on a one-to-one scale, but rather integrates them into a revelatory framework, thereby giving them a new “flavour”.

Through analysis of the three linguistic passages in Thund, we found that the female revealer employs the same model for her descent into the world as Protennoia does in Trim. Prot. They both employ a sequence quite similar to the Stoic sequence of a verbal expression as a scheme of descent, although beginning from within Silence, moving from the unintelligible and unuttered Thought to the uttered but unintelligible and inarticulate Sound and Voice, and through the articulate yet unintelligible Speech to the intelligible and articulate Logos (word/discourse). In Thund, the movement only appears in the first linguistic passage (14:9–15), and it goes as follows:

\[
\text{ⲟⲧⲧⲱⲟⲩ—ⲧⲟⲩⲧⲩⲧⲣⲟⲟ—ⲧⲟⲩⲧⲱⲧⲣⲟⲟ—ⲟⲧⲧⲩⲧⲩⲧⲣⲟⲟ—ⲟⲧⲧⲱⲧⲩⲧⲣⲟⲟ—ⲟⲧⲧⲩⲧⲩⲧⲣⲟⲟ—}\]
\[
\text{Silence—Thought—(Sound)—Voice—Word/Discourse—Speech/Utterance—(Name)}
\]

This is the linguistic descent of the female revealer of Thund. It shows how the female revealer works on different levels of intelligibility, a fact that is emphasized by the repetition of several of these features in the remaining two linguistic passages.

The linguistic descent of the female revealer of Thund must be understood “upside-down”, as we saw was also the case of Protennoia. The Logos is not the highest semantic level of manifestation of the female revealer, as it is in the Stoic sequence of a verbal expression. Rather, the highest semantic level of the divine lies within Silence. The Silence is therefore seen as the actual goal for the hearers of Thund since their task is to find her. She comes from the Silence, so that is where they must go. Now, for a human being to reach the level of Silence means that one has to abandon language. But how can that be, when Thund is constantly speaking about language?

In her linguistic manifestation, the female revealer of Thund descends into the sensible world of sound and rational language. She descends as Epinoia, in the rumbling of thunder that is ungraspable by the human mind and in Speech that is articulate, although not fully intelligible. Finally, she descends as the Word/Logos in many forms. A sequence similar to the Stoic sequence
of a verbal expression is used to describe the different levels of intelligibility that the female revealer of Thund. passes through during her descent, moving from unintelligibility to intelligibility. In other words, she descends downwards until she reaches the level of the Logos, which is the level of rational discourse. She descends to this level in order to be able to speak to the hearers and to teach them about language. Her task is to reveal the structures of human language by being manifest on the different levels of that language. There are different aspects of this proposal that imply the female revealer’s diverse modes of manifestation:

Firstly, as Epinoia, the female revealer alludes to her role as the provider of knowledge of “Good and Evil”; in other words, she provides human beings with the ability to conceptualize their world in opposites. She gives them language.

Secondly, the notion of the name is important in two ways: 1) It reflects the pondering upon the Name of the female revealer, showing that “Thunder” is only the Sound/Voice of her Name in the sensible world; and 2) against this background, it reflects the Platonic critique of names (words). This is shown by the fact that her true Name is never revealed, but only attainable to a certain extent. It is not through her Name that one will grasp her true essence.

Thirdly, the two former points are connected where the female revealer proclaims that she is the manifestation of the division (diairesis). The Platonic method of diairesis was an attempt to overcome the problem of the insufficiency of names. Through a division of a chosen concept (genus) into a pair of opposite subconcepts (subgenera) that again are divided into other opposites, one will eventually reach an undividable concept (infima species). This is the closest one can get to the essence of the concept in question. An important feature to recall here is that all the subdivisions form part of the name which is being defined. They all contribute aspects of the larger image of the thing in question. Therefore, the numerous self-proclamations may be partly understood as a diairetic investigation of the essence of the female revealer because her own Name, of which only the Voice is revealed, does not sufficiently describe her true essence. All the opposite pairs are thus not only paradoxes but also diairetic descriptions of her. They form the plurality that is united in her as a single being. Moreover, the opposite concepts are also the teaching of Epinoia, as she reveals the knowledge of how to conceptualize the world and speak about it, while at the same time being associated with that teaching herself. She reveals language by being language.

The hearers’ task is to find the female revealer in all these sayings, so she provides them with essential concepts such as “knowledge and ignorance”. These concepts make it possible for the hearers to obtain a more complex and
detailed knowledge of her because, as in a *diairesis*, the many different concepts all form part of the thing in question, in this case the female revealer.

Now, through a reflection upon the language that they are being given, the hearers approach the female revealer. However, as they become acquainted with the structures of this language, they also discover its insufficiency, since, according to Plato, a thing's name cannot capture the true essence of the thing. In order to grasp the reality of something one would rather have to look at the thing itself. Understood in this manner, the numerous self-designating concepts that are pronounced by the female revealer do not describe her properly. In order to grasp her fully, the hearers must gaze at the revealer herself, that is, they must reach the level of intelligibility from which she came: the Silence. This means abandoning rational discourse and venturing beyond the level of Logos. Then the hearer will become sober, find her, find his resting place and thus he will not die again (_Componente_ ἔρραὶ ἐπούκυκληθηντιον ἀρχὴν ἑις ἀνὴ ἐθήμαξ ἔκειται ἄρχῳ ἔκειται ἔμοι:) (21:27–32).

It has become clear that *Thund.* is a text in which Platonic and Stoic dialectics and philosophy of language simultaneously play a decisive role in the descriptions of the divine descent. These philosophical schools, which traditionally have been seen almost as opposites, are united in *Thund.*'s revelatory framework. This bears witness to *Thund.*'s free integration of different traditions for its own purpose. The tradition of Greek dialectic is thus combined especially with themes that belong to Jewish Wisdom-Speculation which adds one more, and a very important, feature, not least with respect to several of the self-proclamations, to a picture that is in itself already quite rich.196

---

Epilogue

This study investigates the use of language-related terminology in the two Nag Hammadi texts the *Trimorphic Protennoia* and the *Thunder: Perfect Mind*. This is done against the background of ancient philosophy of language as it appears in Platonic and Stoic dialectics. It has not been the aim to suggest either a Stoic or Platonic reading of the texts, but rather to show how the ancient Greek material is present as an underlying matrix in the two texts. Both Nag Hammadi texts employ a sequence similar to the Stoic sequence of a verbal expression to describe the progressive linguistic manifestations of the divine Thought. In this way, the Stoic theory has been integrated into revelatory frameworks of Late Antiquity and thus given a wholly new sense. In *Thund.*, certain features originating in Platonic philosophy of language also play a central role for the text’s overall conception of human language. Thus, *Thund.* provides an example of a free interplay between notions developed in two philosophical schools of thought which are traditionally understood as incompatible.

The Stoic sequence of a verbal expression is contained in the part of their dialectics called “that which signifies”/on voice, which deals with the corporeal aspects of language. It is summarized by Diogenes Laertius and through a close reading of his presentation of it, it became clear that the Stoics understood a verbal expression as a division of voice (φωνή) into different levels of intelligibility, from inarticulate sound/voice (φωνή) over articulate but unintelligible speech (λέξις) to the fully articulate and intelligible sentence/word (λόγος). The Stoic focus is directed towards the logos as the highest semantic level of the sequence. *Trim. Prot.* and *Thund.* adopt this specific Stoic cluster of linguistic terms in their respective descriptions of the descent of divine Thought but, at the same time, they turn the Stoic sequence “upside-down” with regard to the semantic content of the different levels.

In *Trim. Prot.*, the divine First Thought of the Father, Protennoia/Barbelo, descends three times into the sensible world, as Sound (ὁροογ), Voice (σμή) and Word (λογος) respectively. This line of manifestation follows the Stoic sequence, so that Protennoia becomes increasingly perceptible to the human mind with each descent she makes. She descends from within Silence (καρωφ) to recollect the “part” that was stolen by Yaltabaoth from the Innocent One, that is, Sophia. The missing part of Protennoia, which is referred to as “Epinoia” or the Spirit (breath), now resides within the soul of human beings. Protennoia leads the initiate to recollection and ultimate knowledge through the baptism of the Five Seals, stripping him of ignorance and placing him within the Silence whence she first descended. Protennoia descends progressively down to the
level of rational discourse (Logos) which, according to the Stoic model, is a mode of communication that is fully articulate and intelligible. At this level, she is able to reach and awaken the faculty of reflection within the human soul, namely the part of Protennoia called Epinoia. From the level of logos she re-ascends together with the enlightened person, and thus, the Stoic sequence is turned “upside-down” in that the highest semantic level in the “dialectic cosmology” of Trim. Prot. lies within the Thought of the incomprehensible Silence.

From this follows, that the manifestation must be linguistic in order that for Protennoia to liberate her stolen part, which constitutes the human rational faculty and its ability for reflection, she must be able to communicate with that rational faculty.

In Thund., we saw that the female revealer uses the same cluster of linguistic terms for the description of her manifestation. Thus, in the first of the three passages that I have called the linguistic passages, the female revealer identifies herself with Voice (ⲥⲙⲏ) (and Sound (ϩⲣⲟⲟⲩ)), Word (ⲗⲟⲅⲟⲥ) and Speech (ⲟⲓⲓⲣⲟⲩ). As Protennoia descended from Silence, so the female revealer in Thund. also begins her linguistic manifestation by claiming to be the incomprehensible Silence. It is clear enough that this sequence differs slightly from the one identified in Trim. Prot., but it is important to acknowledge that we are dealing with a cluster of terms, which clearly plays a central role especially in these two Nag Hammadi texts and which originates in Stoic dialectics. Due to the monotonous “I am”-style of Thund., there is no narrative which provides the reader with an apparent idea of the aim of the manifestation. However, the linguistic manifestation of the female revealer is, in fact, about language. Besides the use of Stoic dialectics, this suggestion is grounded on a number of facts that are related partly to Thund.'s implementation of Platonic philosophy of language, partly to its affiliations with the Barbeloite and Ophite traditions. This interpretation offers entirely new insights for the study of Thund.. In Thund., the use of the Stoic sequence of a verbal expression is combined with the pondering on the Name of the female revealer.

In the Platonic dialogue, Cratylus, we meet the, to our knowledge, earliest instance of Greek language-related speculation. The question dealt with is that of the correctness of names. In this dialogue, even though Socrates holds a naturalistic position towards naming, that is, to understand the relation between a name and its referent as one of natural correspondence, he acknowledges that names may sometimes be misleading. Therefore, Plato ends his Cratylus by letting Socrates emphasize that in order to grasp the true essence of a thing one must look at the thing itself and not its name.

Against the background of Platonic critique of names (words) and the Stoic notion of “primary sounds”, it was shown how the Name of the female revealer,
when uttered in the sensible world, sounds like the rumbling of thunder, even though her actual Name is never revealed. In Plato, the reflection on the insufficiency of names led to an attempt to solve it by the method of definition by division—*diairesis*. Through a division of a chosen concept into opposite sub-concepts, which are then divided again and again until the final undividable concept is reached, the dialectician would eventually uncover at least part of the essence of the concept in question. All concepts encountered during the division form part of that essence, so that the final outcome may be considered a unity of many concepts. The process of a *diairesis* can be regarded as a process of remembrance, namely, the remembrance of the differences between the various aspects contained in the concept. Therefore, recognizing the differences that the opposite sub-concepts show is the same as obtaining knowledge about these differences. With this in mind, it is striking that the female revealer in *Thund.* proclaims to be “the manifestation of the *diairesis*” presenting one pair of opposites after the other, at the same time as she is manifest as the “Thought (Epinoia) whose remembrance is great”. Thus, I suggest that we should understand the opposite concepts contained in a single being, the female revealer, not only as mere paradoxes, but rather as *diairetic* descriptions of her.

Moreover, I have put much weight on the fact that the female revealer identifies herself with Epinoia. I understand this identification against the background of the Ophite myth exemplified by the narrative found in the *Hypostasis of the Archons* and of the Barbeloite account found in the *Apocryphon of John* regarding the role of the female spiritual principle/Epinoia as the provider of knowledge of “Good and Evil”. As was also the case in *Trim. Prot.*, Epinoia is in these two other Nag Hammadi texts the aspect of the divine Thought which provides human beings with the ability for reflection and conceptualization, in other words: language. As she appears specifically in the story of the eating of the Tree of Knowledge, the knowledge she gives to human beings is the knowledge of “Good and Evil”; that is, of opposite concepts; a knowledge that makes them able to recognize and conceptualize the visible world according to that principle. Therefore, when the female revealer proclaims to be Epinoia, *Thund.* not only alludes strongly to these Classic Gnostic traditions regarding the figure of Epinoia, it also explains what the text is all about, namely the recognition of the conceptualization of language in opposites. The female revealer is herself associated with her own teaching, which makes it possible to see her as revealing language by being language. The readers of *Thund.* will thus become aware of the structure of their own language, but at the same time they will also acknowledge the limits of that language. So, in order to fully comprehend the essence of the female revealer they must ascend with
her into Silence. In this way, the Stoic sequence of a verbal expression is turned “upside-down” also in Thund.

The use of ancient philosophy of language in Trim. Prot. and Thund. may be regarded as a development or expansion of the widespread phenomenon of the manifestation of the divine as a φωνὴ θεοῦ, a voice of God, often experienced as a clap of thunder. This is combined with Jewish Wisdom traditions on the creative and simultaneously saving Thought of the Father, the mediating and female aspect of God, who descends to enlighten humankind. The two Nag Hammadi texts thus use philosophical reflection on verbal expressions as a perceptible, outward progression of thought to describe the process of the manifestation of the divine Thought in the sensible world, which at first is heard as a thundering sound, but which is further comprehended as it reaches the level of rational discourse—the Logos. In this way, our two Nag Hammadi texts manage to unite several ancient traditions in a highly speculative and subtle way.

Against the background of ancient philosophy of language, the analysis of the two Nag Hammadi texts has provided new focus and insights of the linguistic reflections in the texts. In my opinion, many aspects of this topic have been overlooked by previous scholarship, which has concentrated on other important matters on which this study is built. The language-related approach will, hopefully, inspire others to proceed with the investigation of linguistic themes in other ancient literature. In further studies, one might wish, for instance, to include especially the works of Philo, Plotinus and Augustine. With this, it might be desirable to consider other Classic Gnostic and Valentinian sources in more detail as well.

At the very core of Trim. Prot. and Thund. lies a fundamental distrust in the capacity of language, human language that is, to speak about the divine. It is most probably linked to the fact that in these and related texts, the divine is described in apophatic terms as incomprehensible, ineffable, etc. On the other hand, we have seen that the burning interest of the writers of these texts is exactly language and its relation to both human and divine reality. Thus, despite the fundamental skepticism towards language the texts communicate a message that focuses on language as the means by which one may approach the divine. The specific language philosophical approach to understanding this focus has been fruitful especially with respect to clarifying the relations between the different levels of intelligibility about which both texts speak. Moreover, the Stoic insight that speech is issued from thought binds any form of sound (noise, sound, voice, word) inseparately to its opposite: silence; the one thing that especially characterizes a thought.
The authors of *Thund.* and *Trim. Prot.* agree with Plato and the Stoics that thoughts are expressed in speech, nevertheless, our two Nag Hammadi texts leave us no doubt that their attention lies with the source of any sound which is the silent thinking. The silence and the thought of the perfect mind is what must be strived for. Is language thus reduced to being a mere instrument for transcendence or perhaps even superfluous? The answer is two-sided, for to transcend language one will have to employ and understand the structures of that very same language. However, in the end the ultimate goal remains the perfect Silence.
Bibliography of Ancient Sources


Bibliography


Bibliography


# Index of Ancient Sources

## Hebrew Bible

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Book</th>
<th>Chapter(s)</th>
<th>Reference(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Genesis</td>
<td>1–6</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exodus</td>
<td>3:13–17</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isaiah</td>
<td>44:6</td>
<td>77n2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>45:3–6</td>
<td>77n2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>46:9</td>
<td>77n2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proverbs</td>
<td>7:24</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>61, 106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8:22–23</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8:27–31</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8:32–36</td>
<td>49–50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genesis</td>
<td>8:12</td>
<td>106n1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8:40–47</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11:43</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12:28</td>
<td>53, 150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12:28–30</td>
<td>127n5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12:29</td>
<td>125n1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippians</td>
<td>2:9–10</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revelation</td>
<td>10:3–4</td>
<td>125n1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Nag Hammadi Texts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Allogenes</em> (XI,3)</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Apocryphon of John</em> (I1,1)</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5:6–9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5:7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7:32–8:21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9:25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11:19–21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20:19–20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>21:21–24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>22:4–6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>22:25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>23:8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>23:27–28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>28:1–2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>30:39–20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>30:30–31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Other Early Jewish Texts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Jubilees</em></td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36:7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Sirach</em></td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Wisdom of Solomon</em></td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:24</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## New Testament

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Gospel of John</em></td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:4</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:5</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:6</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:23</td>
<td>52, 60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:8</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:25</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Discourse on the Eighth and the Ninth</em> (VI,6)</td>
<td>155n6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56:17–22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61:10–15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Holy Book of the Great Invisible Spirit</em> (XI,1)</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42:21–43:1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43:18–44:13</td>
<td>154–155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49:1–16</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56:22–24</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Index

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Reference(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>67</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53, 150</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>127n5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>125n1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>150</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>125n1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>117</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>73</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75n5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>76n</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61, 106</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49–50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>87</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>150</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>118</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>118</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>118</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>118</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>119</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>118</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>119</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>119</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>118</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>118</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>118</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>149</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>89</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>155n6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>155n6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>116</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>154–155</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>155</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>118</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>118</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>118</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>149</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source</td>
<td>Pages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypostasis of the Archons (II,4)</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>89:11–17</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>89:14–15</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>89:16–17</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>89:25</td>
<td>119n1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>89:31–90:12</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>91:7–11</td>
<td>119n1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marsanes (X)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43:19–24</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33:16–34:2</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35:20–36:2</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sentences of Sextus (XII,1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30*:11–17</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three Steles of Seth (VII,5)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>119:11–12</td>
<td>75n2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thunder: Perfect Mind (VI,2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>131–2</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>131–14:35</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>132–3</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>133–4</td>
<td>145, 160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>134</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>135</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>137</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>139–20</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>139–14:9</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>149–15</td>
<td>112–139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1410–11</td>
<td>140, 156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1411</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1412–13</td>
<td>84, 127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1413–14</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1414–15</td>
<td>130, 140, 145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1415</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1415–18:8</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1416–17</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1426–27</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1431–32</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>163–5</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1626</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1631</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>189</td>
<td>126, 128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>189–19:20</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910–11</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910–12</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920–25</td>
<td>112, 139–143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treatise without Title (On the Origin of the World) (II,5)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>114:4–15</td>
<td>121n1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>114:6–15</td>
<td>45n4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>114:7–15</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trimorphic Protennoia (XII,1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35*:1–36*:3</td>
<td>63–64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35*:1–36*:27</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35*:7–11</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35*:8–9</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35*:11–12</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35*:11–20</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35*:12–13</td>
<td>51, 62, 92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35*:24</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35*:31</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36*:4–9</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36*:9–27</td>
<td>65–66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36*:12–14</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36*:27–33</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36*:33–37*:3</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37*:3–13</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37*:7–8</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37*:13–14</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37*:20–30</td>
<td>70–74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37*:21–22</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37*:33</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38*:7–16</td>
<td>74–76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38*:9</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38*:11</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38*:16–39*:13</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page</td>
<td>Reference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38*:22</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38*:29</td>
<td>155n6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39*:23–40*:7</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39*:17–19</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39*:19</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39*:28–29</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39*:28–32</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39*:30</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39*:32</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40*:4–8</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40*:8–42*:2</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40*:15</td>
<td>77–78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40*:15–16</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41*:20–29</td>
<td>80–82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41*:26–28</td>
<td>155n4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42*:4–5</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42*:4–18</td>
<td>82–85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42*:4–25</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42*:14–17</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42*:15–16</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42*:26–27</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43*:4–44*:29</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43*:33–44*:11</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44*:2–12</td>
<td>82, 86–87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44*:27–29</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44*:29–32</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45*:29–45*:2</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45*:2–12</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45*:9</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45*:11–12</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45*:12–20</td>
<td>88–89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45*:12ff</td>
<td>65n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45*:29</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ancient Source</td>
<td>Page Numbers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irenaeus of Lyon</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Adversus haereses</em></td>
<td>I 29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Origen</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Contra Celsum</em></td>
<td>I 24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>In Iohannem</em></td>
<td>IV 108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philo</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>De vita Mosis</em></td>
<td>II 127–129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plato</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Cratylus</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>348d</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>386e–390a</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>391b–420e</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>411b–c</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>421a–427d</td>
<td>15, 33n7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>426c–427d</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>429a–431e</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>434c</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>434d–435a</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>435d–439b</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>439c–440e</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Phaedrus</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>265d–266c</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>265e</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>266a</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>275d–e</td>
<td>142–143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Seventh Letter</em></td>
<td>342a6–b2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Sophist</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>235b–c</td>
<td>21, 129n2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>253d</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>263e</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>268c</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Statesman</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>285b</td>
<td>129n2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Theaetetus</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>208d–210a</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Sextus Empiricus</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Against the Professors</em></td>
<td>2, 166</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Index of Names and Subjects

Aeon/Aeons  47, 74, 76, 79, 85–87
   Four Light Aeons (Armozel, Oroiael, Daveithai, Eleleth)  74, 76–78
Angels  94–95
Antithesis  107n1, 109–112, 124, 153, 159
Apocryphon of John  89, 101, 118–122, 149n5
Apophatic discourse  76, 112, 117, 156, 169
Archons  81–82, 86
Audition (audibility)  72, 86, 140, 151
Augustine  137–138
Baptism (incl. of the Five Seals)  48, 82, 88–89, 92, 94–95, 137, 146
Barbelo  47, 62, 68, 73–76, 118–122
Barbeloite (tradition)  54, 61
Being – non-being  20, 24, 159
Berliner Koptische Buch  5–6
Christ  51–52, 74, 76, 95, 119–120
Classic Gnostic  9–10, 50–51, 54, 63, 75–76, 106n3, 113, 118, 121–122, 146, 162
Codex VI  42–45, 98–99
Codex XIII  41–45, 54, 99
Collection (συναγωγή), method of  18–19
Conventionalism  14–16, 34
Creation  65, 68, 74, 76–77, 92, 150
Descent  72, 79, 84, 93, 121, 125, 129, 136, 144, 162
   First descent of Protennoia  63, 65, 80, 93
   Second descent of Protennoia  83–85
   Third descent of Protennoia  94–95
Division (διίζοςίκος)  57, 84, 124, 129, 138, 142–143, 148, 153–154, 158–162
   Method of definition by  17–25, 27, 30–31, 123, 161
Dialectics  see Stoic dialectics and Platonic dialectics
Diairetic manifestation  159
Dichotomy  see Opposite concepts
Ennoia  41, 118–120
Eve  108–109, 120–122, 139
Fate  82, 85
Female Spiritual Principle  62, 109, 118–122, 160
Forms (εἶδος)  15, 17–18, 123, 129, 135, 158–160
Genus  20–21, 158
   Subgenera  20–21, 158
   Infima species/definiendum  20–21, 31, 158
Ginza, the Mandean  109
Gnosis  65–66, 92, 118, see also Knowledge
Gnostic  50–51, 101, 120, 137
Gnosticism  9–10
Good and Evil  63, 118–119, 122–123, 140, 160–161
Gospel of Eve  108–109, 121
Gospel of John  51–52, 70, 101
Gospel of Judas  51
Gospel of the Egyptians  see Holy Book of the Great Invisible Spirit
Gospel of Truth  132
Hearing  139–141, 148–149
Holy Book of the Great Invisible Spirit  76–77, 154–155
Hypostasis of the Archons  108–109, 118–119, 121, 160
"I am"-proclamations  49–53, 61, 80, 100–102, 106–109, 137
Isis (aretalogies)  53, 100, 107–108, 121
Jesus  48, 67, 95
Johannine Logos-Christ  50–52, 69, 138
Johannine prologue  50–51, 120
Kabbala  150–152
Language  27, 33, 81, 112, 115, 130–135, 137, 140–141, 150–152, 159–161
   Philosophy of  11–40, 106, 123, 133–135, 156
Lekton (λεκτόν) 26, 35–38, 156–157
Letter 134, 142, 151–153, 157, 162
Lexis (λέξις) 27–31, 84, 131
Light 69, 82, 88–93
Logos (λόγος) 26, 69, 77–78, 89–95, 113–116, 128–130, 133, see also Word
Logos endiathetos (λόγος ἐνδιάθετος) 32, 72
Logos prophorikos (λόγος προφορικός) 32, 72
Linguistic manifestation 41, 54–95, 61, 63, 69, 81–84, 86, 94–95, 112–162, 132, 153, 155
Linguistic passages 98, 104–105, 112–113, 123–124, 132, 137–139
Marsanes 116, 161–162
Meirothea 47, 75, 88
Mind (διανοία/ⲛⲟⲩⲥ) 81, 93–94, 128, 144, see also Perfect Mind
Mystery 68, 80–82, 85, 93
Correctness of names 13–17, 145
Theory of names 133–135, 145, 151
Naturalism 14–17, 34, 38, 134
Formal naturalism 34, 38, 135

On the Origin of the World
see Treatise without Title

Ophite 9–10, 54, 62, 108, 118, 140

Paradox 100, 102, 110–112, 124, 141–142, 153, 155–156, 159–161
Perception 58, 65–68, 91, 119, 122–123
Perfect Mind 93–94, 105, 125–129, 132
Permanences, three 70–71, 73, 91–92
Phaedrus 18–21, 142–143
Plato 13–25, 133–136, 142
Platonic dialectics 13–25, 152–153, 158–159, 162
Pleroma 123
Pronoia 54, 62, 68, 73, 108, 118–122
Pronoia hymn 43, 53–54, 89, 101, 108, 123
Protennoia 41, 45, 108, 116, 119–121, 124, 149, 155
Proverbs 49, 61, 87, 106–109

Reality 17, 27, 32, 145, 151, 158, 160–161
Recognition 67, 78, 118, 123, 133, 158
Reflection 62, 68, 78, 81, 94, 160
Remembrance 23, 118, 122–123, 133, 140, 143, 158, 160–161

Sefer Yetzira 151–152
Sethianism 5–9
Sethian 5–9, 50, 120
Sethite 9–10, 54
Sign (σημεῖον) 142, 147–148, 153–157
Silence 48, 58, 63–64, 90–93, 113–117, 128–130, 143, 152, 156
Sirach 49, 106
Son 68–69, 74, 76, 132
Son of Man 93n, 95
Sons of Light 45, 69, 71, 80–85, 87, 93–94
Sons of Man 93–95
Sons of Thought 45, 87
Sophia 49, 63, 76–80, 106, 118, 120–121
Sophist 20–25
Soul (ψυχή) 80–82
Primary sounds 33, 38, 134, 155
Sound-word 34, 134–135, 152–153
Speech 14, 55–57, 114, 130–131, 139–141, 148–149, 156
Spirit (πνεῦμα) 78n, 80–81, 94
Holy Spirit 81, 88–89, 191n
Invisible Spirit 49, 81, 94, 120, 155
Stoics, the 57, 81, 93
Stoic etymology 32, 33–35, 38, 133–135
Stoic sequence of a verbal expression 27, 41, 56–57, 68, 71, 84, 92–93, 95, 114, 124, 129–131, 149
Stoic theory of voice (τέχνη περιφωνής) 27, 57, 135

Things which are signified (σημαινόμενα) 26, 156–157
Things which signify (σημαίνοντα) 26, 156–157
Thought (διανοια/ⲙⲉⲉⲩⲉ) 41, 58, 64ff, 113–115, 117–124, 130, see also Epinoia
Index Of Names And Subjects

Thunder: Perfect Mind  84–86, 93, 98–165
Treatise without Title  42–43, 108–109, 121
Tree of Knowledge  63, 118–119, 122–123, 140
Triads  73–74, 74n2
see also Permanences, three
Father-Mother-Son  70–74, 92
Sound-Voice-Word (linguistic triad)  69, 72–73, 92
Tripartite Tractate  137
Utterance  26, 57, 114, 130–131

Verbal expression  27–31, 115, see also Stoic sequence of a verbal expression
Water  65n, 68, 80–81, 91–92
see also Baptism
Wisdom, Jewish  49–50, 61, 87, 100, 106, 108, 120–121, 152
Wisdom of Solomon  61, 106
Yaltabaoth (Archigenitor)  47, 61, 77–81, 86–87, 95, 119