

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

Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies

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

*Analysed against the Background of Platonic and
Stoic Dialectics*

By

Tilde Bak Halvgaard



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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.

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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

BASP	<i>Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists</i>
BCNH.C	Bibliothèque copte de Nag Hammadi, section “Concordances”
BCNH.É	Bibliothèque copte de Nag Hammadi, section “Études”
BCNH.T	Bibliothèque copte de Nag Hammadi, section “Textes”
CNRS	Éditions du Centre Nationale de la Recherche Scientifique
CSCO	Corpus scriptorum christianorum orientalium. Edited by I.B. Chabot et al. Paris, 1903–
D.L.	<i>Diogenes Laertius</i>
FDS	<i>Die Fragmente zur Dialektik der Stoiker</i>
HR	<i>History of Religions</i>
HTR	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament: Supplement Series
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
JAC	Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum
JHS	<i>Journal of Hellenic Studies</i>
LSJ	<i>Liddell, Scott, Jones</i>
Mn	Mnemosyne
Mus	<i>Muséon: Revue d'études orientales</i>
NHC	Nag Hammadi Codices
NHS	Nag Hammadi Studies
NHMS	Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies
NovT	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
NTOA	Novum Testamentum et Orbis Antiquus
NTS	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
OrChr	<i>Oriens christianus</i>
Phron	Phronesis
PTS	Patristische Texte und Studien
REArm	Revue des études arméniennes
REg	<i>Revue d'égyptologie</i>
SBLSP	Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers
SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology
ScEs	Science et Esprit
StOR	Studies in Oriental Religions
SVF	<i>Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta</i> . H. von Arnim. 4. Vols. Leipzig, 1903–1924
Tem	Temenos

Teubner	Bibliotheca scriptorum graecorum et romanum teubneriana
<i>TLZ</i>	<i>Theologische Literaturzeitung</i>
TRAPA	Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association
TSAJ	Texte und Studien zum antiken Judentum
<i>VC</i>	<i>Vigiliae Christianae</i>

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 (φωνή 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.¹

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 aretological style by employing “I am”-proclamations (ΔΝΟΚ ΤΕ/ΠΕ) 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

1 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.

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 aretalogical 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.*² remains the only commentary to date, and the one on *Trim. Prot.*³ is the newest and most exhaustive of the three that are available.⁴ 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

2 Paul-Hubert Poirier, *Le Tonnerre intellect parfait* (NH VI,2) (BCNH.T 22; Québec: Université Laval/ Louvain: Éditions Peeters, 1995).

3 Paul-Hubert Poirier, *La Pensée Première à la triple forme* (NH XIII,1) (BCNH.T 32; Québec: Université Laval/ Louvain: Éditions Peeters, 2006).

4 The other two are Yvonne Janssens, “Le Codex XIII 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.⁵ Furthermore, articles by Anne McGuire⁶ and Bentley Layton⁷ 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 ($\phi\omega\eta$) through articulate but unintelligible speech ($\lambda\acute{\epsilon}\xi\varsigma$) and ending in the fully articulate and intelligible word/sentence ($\lambda\acute{o}\gamma\omicron\varsigma$). 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 ($\lambda\acute{o}\gamma\omicron\varsigma$), 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,

5 John D. Turner, *Sethian Gnosticism and the Platonic Tradition* (BCNH.É 6; Québec: Université Laval/ Louvain: Éditions Peeters, 2001).

6 Anne McGuire, “Thunder, Perfect Mind,” in *Searching the Scriptures* (ed. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza; vol. 2 of *A Feminist Commentary*; New York: Crossroad, 1994), 37–54.

7 Bentley Layton, “The Riddle of the Thunder (NHC VI,2). The Function of Paradox in a Gnostic Text from Nag Hammadi” in *Nag Hammadi, Gnosticism and Early Christianity* (ed. Charles W. Hedrick and Robert Hodgson Jr.; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1986), 37–54.

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".⁸ 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),⁹ the term "Sethian" seems to derive from the heresiological writings since the first

8 For a recent introduction to "Sethianism" see Michael A. Williams, "Sethianism" in *A Companion to Second-Century Christian 'Heretics'* (ed. Antti Marjanen and Petri Luomanen; Leiden: Brill, 2008), 32–63.

9 Gesine Schenke Robinson, *Das Berliner "Koptische Buch" (P20915). Eine wiederhergestellte frühchristlich-theologische Abhandlung* (CSCO 610, *Scriptores coptici*, T 49; Louvain: Éditions Peeters, 2004), pl. 128. Despite the fragmented state of the manuscript it is possible to detect a mention of a great archon who creates man and who is called Yaldabaoth. Together with him are mentioned his companions: Sabaoth, Adonaios, Jaoth, Eloaios, Oraios and Astaphaios who all take part in that creation. All this according to the opinion of the *Sethians* (ⲧⲁⲓ [ⲉⲉ ⲧⲉ ⲧⲉⲖⲛⲟ]ⲙⲏ ⲛ̅ⲏⲥⲏⲟⲓⲁⲛⲟⲥ). Although the *Berliner Koptische Buch* is not a product of the Sethians themselves, the reference might indicate that there in fact was a group of people who called themselves Sethians. However, if we take the dating of the manuscript into consideration (first half of the fourth century CE, cf. Schenke Robinson, *Das Berliner "Koptische Buch"*, xxxv), the text still does not provide us with the proof needed for a definitive determination of a social group, since the earliest witness to the term remains Hippolytus. For a more thorough analysis of the cosmological reflections which are found in the *Berliner*

witness to the term is found in Hippolytus' *Refutatio*.¹⁰ 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.¹¹ 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.¹²

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* (III,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

Koptische Buch, see Gesine Schenke Robinson "Sethianism and the Doctrine of Creation in a Partially Restored Coptic Codex (Papyrus Berolinensis 20915)," *Mus* 113 (2000): 239–262.

- 10 Hippolytus. *Haer.* v,19,1–22.1 (Miroslav Marcovich, ed. *Refutatio Omnium Haeresium*. PTS 25. Berlin: Walter De Gruyter, 1986). The use of the term "Sethian" is followed up by Epiphanius. *Pan. sect.* III, 39.1.1–10.7 (Frank Williams, ed. *The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis. Book I (Sects 1–46)*. NHMS 63. Leiden: Brill, 2009).
- 11 Irenaeus. *Adv. haer.* 1.29 (Norbert Brox, ed. *Adversus Haereses I*. Fontes Christiani. Freiburg: Herder, 1993). It is, however, debated whether Irenaeus himself actually used the term or it is a later addition.
- 12 Turner, *Sethian Gnosticism and the Platonic Tradition*, 59. Similarly, Hans-Martin Schenke, "The Phenomenon and Significance of Gnostic Sethianism," in *Sethian Gnosticism* (ed. Bentley Layton; vol. II of *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism. Proceedings of the Conference at Yale March 1978*: Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1981), 590–91, "what the antiheretical writers of the church said about Sethianism and Sethians is entirely inadequate for distinguishing meaningfully and unambiguously, which Gnostic texts are Sethian".

Untitled Treatise of Codex Brucianus, and the descriptions of the “Gnostics”, “Sethians” and “Archontics” of Epiphanius, *Panarion*.¹³ 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:¹⁴ (1) the self-designation of the “we” in the texts as the “seed of Seth” or the like,¹⁵ 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,¹⁶ 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.¹⁷ 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”.¹⁸ 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 “Sethoitaie” 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.¹⁹ 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.²⁰ 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”.²¹ 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”.²² Thus, he pleads against the assumption that there was a sectarian group of “Sethians” behind these texts.²³

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- 19 Karen L. King, *What is Gnosticism?* (Cambridge Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003), 158 and note 28, where she underlines that her own work “shows increasing rather than decreasing conformity to other Christian works, such as the Gospel of John”, in contrast to Turner’s hypothesis, cf. Karen L. King, “Approaching the variants of the Apocryphon of John”, in *The Nag Hammadi Library after Fifty Years: Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Literature Commemoration, November 17–22, 1995* (ed. John D. Turner and Anne McGuire; NHMS 44; Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1997).
- 20 Jean Doresse, *Les livres secrets des gnostiques d’Égypte. Introduction aux écrits gnostiques coptes découverts à Khénoboskion* (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1958), 281–282.
- 21 Frederik Wisse, “Stalking Those Elusive Sethians,” in *Sethian Gnosticism* (ed. Bentley Layton; vol. II of *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism. Proceedings of the Conference at Yale March 1978*; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1981), 575.
- 22 *Ibid.*: 575–576.
- 23 Also Gedaliahu Stroumsa sees reason to avoid the term “Sethianism”: “Sethianism . . . remains a category postulated for the sake of convenience. The obvious danger, in other words, lies in hypostasizing Sethianism, taking, in the Heresiologists’ fashion, various mythical elements as evidence of a single and rigid system of thought, indicating a precise sociological reality—a sect.” Gedaliahu A.G. Stroumsa, *Another Seed: Studies in Gnostic Mythology* (NHS 24; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1984), 6–7.

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.

26 Michael A. Williams, *The Immovable Race. A Gnostic Designation and the Theme of Stability in Late Antiquity* (NHS 29; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1985), 186–188.

27 Tuomas Rasimus, *Paradise Reconsidered in Gnostic Mythmaking. Rethinking Sethianism in Light of the Ophite Evidence* (NHMS 68; Leiden: Brill, 2009), 59.

28 *Ibid.*: 62, figure 4.

29 For a recent contribution to the study of “Sethianism”, see Dylan Michael Burns, *Apocalypse of the Alien God: Platonism and the Exile of Sethian Gnosticism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014). In this work, Burns places the “Sethian Gnostic” apocalypses in a Christian Gnostic milieu, despite their obvious Neoplatonic metaphysics.

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.

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. Rasmus, T. Engberg-Pedersen and I. Dunderberg.⁴

¹ For a discussion of the dating of the Nag Hammadi manuscripts, see chapters three and four.

² In her article: "On the Origin of the World (CG II,5): A Gnostic Physics," *VC* 34:1 (1980): 36–46, PHEME PERKINS shows how the author of *Orig. World* was familiar with both Platonic and Stoic thinking using elements from both traditions in his cosmological account.

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 Rasmus, 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,⁵ 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).

5 In its present use the term seems to derive from 20th century contemporary philosophy. For an overview of the “history of the philosophy of language” and the “problems of the philosophy of language”, see the two articles by Simon W. Blackburn, “History of the Philosophy of Language,” in *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy* (ed. Ted Honderich; Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 454–458; and Simon W. Blackburn, “Problems of the Philosophy of Language,” in *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy* (ed. Ted Honderich; Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 458–461.

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*/διαιρέσις), 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

6 For the presentation of the *Cratylus*, I rely primarily on work of the following scholars: Steffen Lund Jørgensen and Christian Gorm Tortzen, “Kratylos. Indledning og oversættelse,” in *Platon I. Samlede værker i ny oversættelse* (ed. Jørgen Mejer and Christian Gorm Torzen; Copenhagen: Gyldendal 2010), 239–327; Robert M. Van den Berg, *Proclus’ Commentary on the Cratylus in Context. Ancient Theories on Language and Naming* (Philosophia Antiqua. A Series of Studies on Ancient Philosophy 112; Leiden: Brill, 2008); David Sedley, *Plato’s Cratylus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) and David Sedley, “The Etymologies in Plato’s *Cratylus*” *JHS* 118 (1998): 140–154; Simon Keller, “An Interpretation of Plato’s *Cratylus*,” *Phron.* XLV:4 (2000): 284–305; Tilman Borsche, “Platon,” in *Sprachtheorien der abenländischen Antike* (ed. P. Schmitter; vol. 2 of *Geschichte der Sprachtheorie*; Tübingen: Gunter Narr, 1996), 140–169; Timothy M. S. Baxter, *The Cratylus. Plato’s Critique of Naming* (Philosophia Antiqua, A Series of Studies on Ancient Philosophy 58; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1992). For the *Phaedrus*, the *Sophist* and the notion of *diairesis*: Fritz S. Pedersen, “Sofisten. Indledning og oversættelse,” in *Platon I. Samlede værker i ny oversættelse* (ed. Jørgen Mejer and Christian Gorm Torzen; Copenhagen: Gyldendal 2010), 455–551; Karsten Friis Johansen, *A History of Ancient Philosophy. From the Beginnings to Augustine* (trans. H. Rosenmeier; London: Routledge, 1999); Stanley Rosen, *Plato’s Sophist. The Drama of Original and Image* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983);

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

Stefano Minardi, "On Some Aspects of Platonic Division" *Mind*, New Series 92, no. 367 (1983): 417–423; J. M. E. Moravcsik, "The Anatomy of Plato's Divisions," in *Exegesis and Argument. Studies in Greek Philosophy Presented to Gregory Vlastos* (ed. E. N. Lee, A. P. D. Mourelatos and R. M. Rorty; Phron. A Journal for Ancient Philosophy, Supplementary 1; Assen: Van Gorcum & Comp. B. V., 1973), 324–348 and J. M. E. Moravcsik, "Plato's Method of Division," in *Patterns of Plato's Thought. Papers arising out of the 1971 West Coast Greek Philosophy Conference* (ed. J. M. E. Moravcsik; Dordrecht: Reidel, 1973), 158–180; Ian M. Crombie, *An Examination of Plato's Doctrines* (vol. 2 of *Plato on Knowledge and Reality*; 3rd impr., London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971); James A. Philip, "Platonic Diairesis," *TRAPA* 97 (1966): 335–358.

7 Borsche, "Platon," 140; Lund Jørgensen and Gorm Tortzen, "Kratylos," in *Platon I.* (ed. Mejer and Gorm Torzen), 241.

8 I follow the division of the different parts of the dialogue made in Lund Jørgensen and Gorm Tortzen, "Kratylos," in *Platon I.* (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.

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).¹⁰

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.¹¹

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 *rho* is a tool to express change since pronouncing rho makes the tongue vibrate. Therefore it is contained in names for change and movement such as *ῥεῖν*, *ῥοῆ*, *τρόμος*, 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

10 Lund Jørgensen and Gorm Tortzen, “Kratylos,” in *Platon 1*. (ed. Mejer and Gorm Tortzen), 243–244.

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.*

17 Moravcsik, "The Anatomy of Plato's Divisions," 333.

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.¹⁸ 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”.¹⁹

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.²⁰ The latter divides a given kind/form (εἶδος) into two classes. In this way these methods help thought and

18 Philip, “Platonic Diairesis,” 335, 338–342; Moravcsik, “The Anatomy of Plato’s Divisions,” 326–327; Crombie, *An Examination*, 368–374.

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]).

20 Crombie, *An Examination*, 368–370.

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*²¹ can begin. Philip does not think this is the case, since “the role of collection in the choice of *summum genus* is not exemplified . . .”²² *Collection* is rather a survey of the extension of the different classes which are implicated in the *diairesis*.²³ 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.²⁴

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,²⁵ 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.²⁶

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.

26 Pedersen, “Sofisten,” in *Platon I.* (ed. Mejer and Gorm Torzen), 457; Friis Johansen, *A History of Ancient Philosophy*, 241.

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*.²⁹ 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).³⁰

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”.³¹ 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

29 Philip, “Platonic *Diairesis*,” 345.

30 Friis Johansen, *A History of Ancient Philosophy*, 241.

31 Philip, “Platonic *Diairesis*,” 348.

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”.³² 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 Johansen³³ 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.³⁴

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

32 Moravcsik, “The Anatomy of Plato’s Divisions,” 330.

33 Moravcsik, “The Anatomy of Plato’s Divisions,” 331–332; Friis Johansen, *A History of Ancient Philosophy*, 241.

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

35 Minardi, “On Some Aspects of Platonic Division,” 418.

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 Aristotle⁴² 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).

39 Friis Johansen, *A History of Ancient Philosophy*, 241.

40 *Ibid.*: 243–244; Rosen, *Plato’s Sophist*, 277.

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).

43 Anthony A. Long, *Hellenistic Philosophy. Stoics, Epicureans, Sceptics* (2nd ed.; Berkeley: University of California Press 1986), 131.

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

Stoic Dialectics⁴⁵

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

44 For instance, the grammarian Dionysius Thrax (second century BC) was deeply influenced by the Stoics. Cf. Long, *Hellenistic Philosophy*, 131. For a translation of the grammar of Dionysius Thrax see: Jean Lallot, *La Grammaire de Denys Thrace. Traduite et annotée par Jean Lallot* (Sciences du Langage; Paris: CNRS, 1998).

45 For the presentation of Stoic dialectics I rely on the work of the following scholars: Anthony A. Long, “Stoic Linguistics, Plato's *Cratylus*, and Augustine's *De dialectica*,” in *Language and Learning. Philosophy of Language in the Hellenistic Age* (ed. Dorothea Frede and Brad Inwood; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 36–55; Long, *Hellenistic Philosophy* and Anthony A. Long, “Language and Thought in Stoicism,” in *Problems in Stoicism* (ed. Anthony A. Long; London: Athlone Press, 1971), 75–113; Anthony A. Long and David N. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers, vol. 1: Translations and Commentary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Anthony A. Long and David N. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers, vol. 11: Texts with notes and bibliography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Wolfram Ax, *Laut, Stimme und Sprache. Studien zu drei Grundbegriffen der antiken Sprachtheorie* (Hypomnemata, Untersuchungen zur antiken und zu ihrem Nachleben, 84; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986); F. H. Sandbach, *The Stoics* (2nd ed.; London: Gerald Duckworth & Co. Ltd./Indianapolis: Hackett, 1989); Karlheinz Hülsler, “Expression and Content in Stoic Linguistic Theory,” in *Semantics from Different Points of View* (ed. Rainer Bäuerle, Urs Egli, and Arnim von Stechow; Berlin: Springer-Verlag, 1979); Lloyd 1971.

46 Long, “Language and Thought in Stoicism,” 75.

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 *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

49 Long, *Hellenistic Philosophy*, 121. Attested by Diogenes Laertius VII, 41. Cf. *FDS*: 40–41 (fragment 33). According to Hülser, “Expression and Content in Stoic Linguistic Theory,” 290, the Stoics took over the division of logic into dialectics and rhetoric from Xenocrates (Sextus Empiricus, *Adv. Math.* 2, 6f).

50 Long, *Hellenistic Philosophy*, 123.

51 D.L. VII, 62: Διαλεκτική δέ ἐστίν, ὡς φησι Ποσειδώνιος, ἐπιστήμη ἀληθῶν καὶ ψευδῶν καὶ οὐθετέρων, τυγχάνει δ' αὐτῆ, ὡς ὁ Χρύσιππος φησι, περὶ σημαίνοντα καὶ σημαινόμενα. Ἐν μὲν οὖν τῇ περὶ φωνῆς θεωρίᾳ τοιαῦτα λέγεται τοῖς Στωϊκοῖς.

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.

53 Hülser, “Expression and Content in Stoic Linguistic Theory,” 285–286.

54 Sandbach, *The Stoics*, 95.

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)

τέχνη περι φωνῆς

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 περι 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 περι 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 περι φωνῆς ἐνάρχεσθαι τόπου. Ἔστι δὲ φωνὴ ἀήρ πεπληγμένος, ἢ τὸ ἴδιον αἰσθητὸν ἀκοῆς, ὡς φησι Διογένης ὁ Βαβυλώνιος ἐν τῇ Περι φωνῆς τέχνῃ. Ζώου μὲν ἐστι φωνὴ ἀήρ ὑπὸ ὀρμῆς πεπληγμένος, ἀνθρώπου δὲ ἐστὶν ἔναρθρος καὶ ἀπὸ διανοίας ἐκπεμπομένη, ὡς ὁ Διογένης φησὶν, ἥτις ἀπὸ δεκατεσσάρων ἐτών

55 Ax, *Laut, Stimme und Sprache*, 138–139, 141. The analysis of the Stoic τέχνη περι 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.

τελειούται. Καὶ σῶμα δ' ἐστὶν ἡ φωνὴ κατὰ τοὺς Στωϊκοὺς, ὡς φησὶν Ἀρχέδημος τε ἐν τῇ Περὶ φωνῆς καὶ Διογένης καὶ Ἀντίπατρος καὶ Χρύσιππος ἐν τῇ δευτέρῃ τῶν Φυσικῶν. (56) Πᾶν γὰρ τὸ ποιοῦν σῶμά ἐστι, ποιεῖ δὲ ἡ φωνὴ προσιούσα τοῖς ἀκούουσιν ἀπὸ τῶν φωνούντων.

Λέξις δὲ ἐστὶν κατὰ τοὺς Στωϊκοὺς, ὡς φησὶ ὁ Διογένης, φωνὴ ἐγγράμματος, οἷον Ἡμέρα [ἐστὶ]. Λόγος δὲ ἐστὶ φωνὴ σημαντικὴ ἀπὸ διανοίας ἐκπεμπομένη, <οἷον Ἡμέρα ἐστὶ>. Διάλεκτος δὲ ἐστὶ λέξις κεχαραγμένη ἐθνικῶς τε καὶ Ἑλληνικῶς, ἢ λέξις ποταπῆ, τουτέστι ποιά κατὰ διάλεκτον, οἷον κατὰ μὲν τὴν Ἀτθίδα Θάλαττα, κατὰ δὲ τὴν Ἰάδα Ἡμέρη.

Τῆς δὲ λέξεως στοιχεῖά ἐστί τὰ εἰκοσιτέσσαρα γράμματα. Τριχῶς δὲ λέγεται τὸ γράμμα, <τὸ τε στοιχεῖον> ὃ τε χαρακτήρ τοῦ στοιχείου καὶ τὸ ὄνομα, οἷον Ἄλφα. (57) Φωνήεντα δὲ ἐστί τῶν στοιχείων ἑπτὰ, α, ε, η, ι, ο, υ, ω, ἄφωνα δὲ ἕξι, β, γ, δ, κ, π, τ. Διαφέρει δὲ φωνὴ καὶ λέξις, ὅτι φωνὴ μὲν καὶ ὁ ἦχος ἐστὶ, λέξις δὲ τὸ ἔναρθρον μόνον. Λέξις δὲ λόγου διαφέρει, ὅτι λόγος <μὲν> αἰεὶ σημαντικός ἐστι, λέξις δὲ καὶ ἀσήμαντος γίνεται, ὡς ἡ Βλίτυρι [λόγος δὲ οὐδαμῶς]. Διαφέρει δὲ καὶ τὸ λέγειν τοῦ προφέρεσθαι, προφέρονται μὲν γὰρ αἱ φωναί, λέγεται δὲ τὰ πράγματα, ἃ δὴ 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)⁵⁸ element>, the graphic form of the element, and the name, such as “Alpha”. (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”.⁵⁹ Similarly, it is emphasized by W. Ax, that “φωνή... ist für Diogenes primär die Stimme in ihrer physiologischen proprie-Bedeutung.”⁶⁰ This means that the interest lies with the physicality of the voice as is shown by the immediate description of it as “ἀήρ 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’ ἐστὶν ἡ φωνή). It is material since it has an effect on the ear by being hearable: Πάν γὰρ τὸ ποιοῦν σῶμά ἐστι, ποιεῖ δὲ ἡ φωνή προσιοῦσα τοῖς ἀκούουσιν ἀπὸ τῶν φωνούντων (“For all that is effective is a body; and the voice is effective as proceeding from

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

59 FDS: 522–523.

60 Ax, *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 ἦχος, 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 (ἡ τὸ 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 ὀρμῆς πεπληγμένος" (being struck by impulse), human voice is "ἔναρθρος 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 ἔναρθρος.⁶¹ Firstly, λέξις is understood as a written voice (φωνή 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 φωνή and λέξις is explained further: Διαφέρει δὲ φωνή καὶ λέξις, ὅτι φωνή μὲν καὶ ὁ ἦχος ἐστὶ, 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 φωνή when it is a mere sound (ἦχος). The *diairesis* lies here, in fact, between the articulated voice (λέξις) and the unarticulated sound (ἦχος) which is also a voice.

The third distinction is that between λέξις and λόγος. Already in paragraph 56 it was asserted that: Λόγος δὲ ἐστὶ φωνή σημαντική ἀπὸ διανοίας ἐκπεμπομένη ("A sentence (logos) is a signifying/intelligible voice, issued from thought"). So what differentiates λόγος from both φωνή and λέξις is that it is an intelligible voice (φωνή σημαντική). 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.

62 Cf. Ax, *Laut, Stimme und Sprache*, 199–200.

which is both pronounceable and writable, but it is at the same time completely without meaning.⁶³

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 ἤχος-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 *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 *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 *diairesis* is not only focused on its goal, forgetting about the earlier steps towards the *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 *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 *diairesis* of voice, the relation between thought and language is explained. It is now clear that, according to the Stoics, “Λόγος δέ ἐστι φωνή σημαντική 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.

63 For a thorough investigation of the “Sprachphänomen” βλ. τὸ βιβλίο, see Ax, *Laut, Stimme und Sprache*, 195–199.

The idea that voice is uttered from thought is furthermore closely related to the famous Stoic notion of λόγος ἐνδιάθετος and λόγος προφορικός.⁶⁴ The notion that thought is inner discourse and discourse is articulated thought is found already in Plato's *Sophist* (263e):⁶⁵

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.⁶⁶

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.⁶⁷ 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*.

64 Attested by Philo: *De vita Mosis* II § 127–129, Vol. 4 p. 229 sq. C-W. Cf. *FDS* 531.

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 Aristotle⁶⁸ 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."⁶⁹ This passage comprises two elements which Long enumerates as points of similarity between Stoicism and the *Cratylus*: (1) etymology and (2) primary sounds.⁷⁰ The passage shows how the two are linked together, in that the primary sound, as a sort of onomatopoeia, 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".⁷¹

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*,⁷² but he also argues that parts of the Stoic "linguistic theory can be interpreted as a revisionary reading of the *Cratylus*."⁷³ 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 *iōta*, *rhō*, etc. should signify "motion".⁷⁴

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 "tōn protōn onomatōn". It cannot be the intention to confuse "sound" with "name", since the idea is that the name is made out of primary sounds.

70 Long, "Stoic Linguistics, Plato's *Cratylus*, and Augustine's *De dialectica*," 36–37.

71 James Allen, "The Stoics on the Origin of Language and the Foundation of Etymology," in *Language and Learning. Philosophy of Language in the Hellenistic Age* (ed. Dorothea Frede and Brad Inwood; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 15.

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.⁸⁰ What are our words a sign for? What do they signify? They signify what the Stoics called a *lekton*, to which we shall now turn, thus leaving the *Cratylus* for a while.

What is Signified (σημαινόμενα)

Περὶ λεκτόν

The *λεκτόν* (*lekton*) is the second part of Stoic dialectics. It is usually characterized either as the “meaning of an utterance”⁸¹ or as “what is said”.⁸² It is, furthermore, considered *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 *σημαίνοντα* deals with the physical/corporeal aspect of language, that of *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, *Against the Professors* (*SVF* 2.166):⁸³

(1) ἦν δὲ καὶ ἄλλη τις παρὰ τούτοις διάστασις, καθ’ ἣν οἱ μὲν περὶ τῷ σημαινομένῳ τὸ ἀληθές τε καὶ ψεῦδος ὑπεστήσαντο, οἱ δὲ περὶ τῆ φωνῆ, οἱ δὲ περὶ τῆ κινήσει τῆς διανοίας. (2) καὶ δὴ τῆς μὲν πρώτης δόξης προεστήκασιν οἱ ἀπὸ τῆς Στοᾶς τρία φάμενοι συζυγεῖν ἀλλήλοις, τό τε σημαινόμενον καὶ τὸ σημαῖνον καὶ τὸ τυγχάνον, ὧν σημαῖνον μὲν εἶναι τὴν φωνήν, οἷον τὴν Δίῳ, σημαινόμενον δὲ αὐτὸ τὸ πρᾶγμα τὸ ὑπ’ αὐτῆς δηλούμενον καὶ οὐ ἡμεῖς μὲν ἀντιλαμβάνομεθα τῆ ἡμετέρα παρυφισταμένου διανοία, οἱ δὲ βάρβαροι οὐκ ἐπαίουσι καίπερ τῆς φωνῆς ἀκούοντες, τυγχάνον δὲ τὸ ἐκτὸς ὑποκείμενον, ὥσπερ αὐτὸς ὁ Δίῳ. (3) τούτων δὲ δύο μὲν εἶναι σώματα, καθάπερ τὴν φωνήν καὶ τὸ τυγχάνον, ἓν δὲ ἀσώματον, ὥσπερ τὸ σημαινόμενον πρᾶγμα, καὶ λεκτόν, ὅπερ ἀληθές τε γίνεται ἢ ψεῦδος.

80 *Loc. cit.*

81 Cf. Sandbach, *The Stoics*, 96.

82 Cf. Long, “Language and Thought in Stoicism,” see discussion below.

83 The passage is frequently cited and must be considered the “classic” example of a clear description of the Stoic differentiation between *σημαίνοντα*, *σημαινόμενα*, and *τυγχάνον*. For instance: Long and Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers vol. 1/11*, § 33B; Dirk M. Schenkeveld and Jonathan Barnes, “Language,” in *Cambridge History of Hellenistic Philosophy* (ed. Keimpe Algra et al.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 193–194; Long, “Language and Thought in Stoicism,” 76–77.

Translation:⁸⁴

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”.⁸⁵ 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 σημαίνον, 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 σημαίνον, is described as being the “specific state of affairs” (τὸ πράγμα), 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

84 The translation is my own.

85 Long, “Language and Thought in Stoicism,” 76.

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 (προφέρεισθαι): “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.

88 Long, “Language and Thought in Stoicism,” 77.

89 Long, “Stoic Linguistics, Plato’s *Cratylus*, and Augustine’s *De dialectica*,” 46 n. 23.

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 λεκτόν 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

91 Long, “Stoic Linguistics, Plato’s *Cratylus*, and Augustine’s *De dialectica*,” 37.

92 See, for instance, Mortley, *From Word to Silence. I*, 124–125.

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 (*anamnesis*). 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.*

The Trimorphic Protennoia

ΠΡΩΤΕΝΝΟΙΑ ΤΡΙΜΟΡΦΟΣ Ἦ
 ΛΓΙΑ ΓΡΑΦΗ ΠΑΤΡΟΓΡΑΦΟΣ ΕΝ ΓΝΩΣΕΙ ΤΕΛΕΙΑ

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-ΕΝΝΟΙΑ).

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

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- 1 James M. Robinson, "Preface," in *The Facsimile Edition of the Nag Hammadi Codices. Codex VI*, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 3.
 - 2 Jean Doresse, "Les reliures des manuscrits gnostique copte découverts à Khénoboskion [planches 3–6]," in *REg* 13 (1961): pl. 4.
 - 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.
 - 4 James M. Robinson, "Inside the Front Cover of Codex VI," in *Essays on the Nag Hammadi Texts in Honour of Alexander Böhlig* (ed. Martin Krause; NHS III; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1972), 78–79.
 - 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 “ετε παϊ πε” (“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 aréalogique 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

Codex XIII,” in Nag Hammadi Codices XI, XII, XIII (ed. Charles W. Hedrick; NHTS 28; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1990), 359.

7 Krause and Labib, *Gnostische und Hermetische Schriften*, 14; Turner, “Introduction to Codex XIII,” 359–361; Poirier, *La Pensée Première à la triple forme*, 3, note 23.

8 Poirier, *La Pensée Première à la triple forme*, 11–13.

9 Janssens, “Le Codex XIII de Nag Hammadi,” 342 and Janssens, *La Prôtennoia trimorphe*, 2.

10 Poirier, *La Pensée Première à la triple forme*, 12.

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.

15 Michael A. Williams and Lance Jenott, “Inside the Covers of Codex VI,” in *Coptica—Gnostica—Manichaica. Mélanges offerts à Wolf-Peter Funk* (ed. Louis Painchaud and Paul-Hubert Poirier; BCH.É 7; Québec: Les Presses de l’Université Laval/Louvain: Éditions Peeters 2006), 1045.

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 (ΠΡΩΤΕΝΝΟΙΑ). It is one of the most poetic tractates in the Nag Hammadi collection due to its characteristic and extensive use of “I am”-sayings (ΔΝΟΚ ΠΕ/ΤΕ) and first-person narrative. Only the *Thunder: Perfect Mind* and the “Pronoia-hymn” in the long recension of the *Apocryphon of John* (ΝΗC 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 (ΔΜΗΤΕ). She descends as Sound (ΞΡΟΥΥ), Voice (CΜΗ), 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.

17 Nicola F. Denzey, “What did the Montanists read?” in *HTR* 94:4 (2001).

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)* (ΝΗC 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” ([ΔΝΟΚ] ΤΕ ΤΙΠΩ[ΤΕΝΝΟΙΑ]). Thus begins the manifestation of the First Thought of the Father.

35*1–36*:27	“I am”-proclamations.
35*1–32	Thorough description of Protennoia and her relation to every level in the world.
35*:32–36*:27	Protennoia as Sound. First mention of her descent into the Underworld as Sound.
36*:27–33	Third-person narrative concerning the mystery.
36*:33–37*:3	First-person (pl.) narrative. Inclusion of the readers in the text.
37*:3–20	Third-person narrative about the Son who, as the Word, originates through the Sound. He reveals the everlasting and hidden things, as well as the things that are difficult to interpret.

21 Jean-Marie Sevrin, *Le Dossier Baptismal Séthien. Études sur la Sacramentaire Gnostique* (BCNH.É 2; Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1986), 51; Poirier, *La Pensée Première à la triple forme*, 14–15. However, as Poirier notes (*ibid.*, n. 78) already Y. Janssens saw *Trim. Prot.* as “un hymne de révélation” cf. Janssens, *La Prôtennoia trimorphe*, 2.

- 37*:20–38*:16 First and third-person narratives and “I am”-proclamations.
 37*:20–38*:6 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.
 38*:7–16 “I am”-proclamations by Protennoia. She is Barbelo, the Mother, the Light as well as Meirothea.
 38*:16–39*:13 Third-person narrative about the Son who glorifies and establishes his Aeons and is glorified by them.
 39*:13–40*:7 Third-person narrative concerning the great Demon Yaltabaoth and the Epinoia of the Light. Yaltabaoth creates the lower aeons by his own power.
 40*:8–42*:2 First and third-person narratives and “I am”-proclamations.
 40*:8–29 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.
 40*:29–42*:2 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.
 42*:3 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.

- 42*:4–17 “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.
 42*:17–43*:4 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.
 43*:4–44*:29 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.
 44*:29–45*:2 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 Androgynous 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 [*] :lacuna-29	First-person narrative. Reminder of the first and second descents. Description of the third descent of Protennoia as Word.
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.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 *Trim. Prot.* does not follow a logical scheme, which would have been convenient for the analysis of the text. On the other hand, *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 *Trim. Prot.*: the “I am”-proclamations, including a consideration of its literary parallels.

“I am”-Proclamations and Trim. Prot.’s Literary Parallels

Protennoia’s revelation discourse is characterized by the numerous “I am”-proclamations (ἄνοκ πᾶ/τῆ) of the goddess. This distinctive literary feature is known from a relatively limited amount of sources from *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 *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).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

23 Janssens, “Le Codex XIII de Nag Hammadi,” 343 and Poirier, *La Pensée Première à la triple forme*, 15.

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.*

26 Turner, *Sethian Gnosticism and the Platonic Tradition*, 221–230.

27 MacRae, "The Jewish Background of the Gnostic Sophia Myth," in *NovT XIII* (1970), 88–89.

28 Turner, *Sethian Gnosticism and the Platonic Tradition*, 223.

29 See for instance Martin Scott, *Sophia and the Johannine Jesus* (JSNTSup 71; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992).

30 This obligation has been seen since the beginning of *Trim. Prot.*'s research history as supported by Turner, "Introduction to Codex XIII," 375. For discussions concerning the relationship between *Trim. Prot.* and the Johannine prologue see, for instance, Carsten Colpe, "Heidnische, jüdische und christliche Überlieferung in den Schriften aus Nag Hammadi III," in *JAC* 17 (1974): 109–125; Yvonne Janssens, "The Trimorphic Protennoia and the Fourth Gospel," in *The New Testament and Gnosis: Essays in honour of Robert McL. Wilson* (ed. A. H. B. Logan and A. J. M. Wedderburn; Edinburgh: T&T Clark Limited, 1983), 229–244; James M. Robinson, "Sethians and the Johannine Thought. The Trimorphic Protennoia and the Prologue of the Gospel of John," in *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism. Proceedings of the Conference at Yale March 1978, Vol. II, Sethian Gnosticism* (ed. Bentley Layton; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1981), 643–662; Nicola F. Denzey, "Genesis Traditions in Conflict?: The Use of some Exegetical Traditions in the Trimorphic Protennoia and the Johannine Prologue," in *VC* 55 (2001): 20–44; Poirier, *La Pensée Première à la triple forme*, 98–105

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 (λογος). The numerous parallels between the two texts are listed by Poirier together with several other Jewish and Christian parallels.³¹ 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”.³² 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.”³³ 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

and Paul-Hubert 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.

31 Poirier, *La Pensée Première à la triple forme*, 83–105.

32 Poirier, “The Trimorphic Protennoia (NHC XIII,1) and the Johannine Prologue: A Reconsideration,” 102.

33 *Ibid.*: 101.

stories to work out a subtle exegesis.³⁴ 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 1–6.³⁵

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 φωνῆ βοῶντος ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ. εὐθύνετε 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

34 For a recent and thorough study on the *Gospel of Judas*, cf. Lance Jenott, *The Gospel of Judas* (Studien und Texte zu Antike und Christentum 64; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011).

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’ApocrJn comme une illustration ou un développement hymnique ou aréalogique 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.

38 Berliner Arbeitskreis für Koptische-Gnostische Schriften, “Die Bedeutung der Texte von Nag Hammadi für die moderne Gnosisforschung,” in *Gnosis und Neues Testament: Studien aus Religionswissenschaft und Theologie* (ed. Karl-Wolfgang Tröger; Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1973), 74. Cf. Poirier, *La Pensée Première à la triple forme*, 68.

39 Janssens, “Le Codex XIII de Nag Hammadi,” 341 and 348–352.

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:

... la Προτέννοια n'était-elle pas la Πρόνοια 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, le Πνεύμα, l'Ἐπίνοια, l'androgyne; mais aussi Ialdabaoth-Saclas et ses archontes... 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 mythologoumena 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 (ἤχος), Voice (φωνή) and Word (λόγος). These

40 Janssens, *La Prôtennoia trimorphe*, 2 and Poirier, *La Pensée Première à la triple forme*, 11–13.

41 Poirier, *La Pensée Première à la triple forme*, 68–81, where he deals with the topic in detail.

42 Janssens, "Le Codex XIII de Nag Hammadi," 341.

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.

ἤΡΟΟΥ, ΣΜΗ 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 ἤΡΟΟΥ, ΣΜΗ 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 ἤΡΟΟΥ, ΣΜΗ 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 ἤΡΟΟΥ and ΣΜΗ the difficulties lie in the fact that the terms are often

43 The content of which is summarized in John D. Turner, "Introduction, NHC XIII,1*: Trimorphic Protennoia 35*, 1–50*, 24," in *Nag Hammadi Codices XI, XII, XIII* (ed. Charles W. Hedrick; NHC 28; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1990), 383.

44 Poirier, *La Pensée Première à la triple forme*. See also Gesine Schenke, *Die Dreigestaltige Protennoia (Nag-Hammadi-Codex XIII)*, Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1984 who translates "Ruf-Stimme-Logos"; Janssens, *La Prôtennoia trimorphe*: "son-voix-Logos"; Bentley Layton, *The Gnostic Scriptures* (New York: Doubleday, 1987): "sound-voice-word/verbal expression".

45 Turner, "Introduction, NHC XIII,1*: Trimorphic Protennoia 35*, 1–50*, 24".

used interchangeably meaning either sound or voice.⁴⁶ 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 ζPOOY (masc. "Voice"), CMH ("fem. articulate sound, "Speech") and LOOC (masc. "Word") in the Sahidic NT suggests that ζPOOY refers to sound in general whether articulate or not, while CMH generally refers to articulate sound or speech . . .⁴⁷

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".⁴⁸ Poirier specifies the reading of Emmel:

. . . ζPOOY écrit-il, est utilisé en référence à des sons non humains ($\eta\chi\epsilon\acute{\iota}\nu$, $\eta\chi\omicron\varsigma$ et $\phi\theta\acute{o}\gamma\gamma\omicron\varsigma$ en 1 Co 14, 7) ou à des sons humains non spécifiques ou inarticulés ($\acute{\alpha}\kappa\omicron\eta$, $\acute{\alpha}\lambda\alpha\lambda\acute{\alpha}\zeta\epsilon\iota\nu$, $\acute{\alpha}\nu\alpha\phi\omega\nu\acute{\epsilon}\omega$ et $\phi\theta\acute{o}\gamma\gamma\omicron\varsigma$ en Rm 10, 18 [=Ps 18LXX, 5]). [. . .] CMH , d'autre côté, est utilisé en référence à des sons humains articulés ($\acute{\alpha}\kappa\omicron\upsilon\epsilon\iota\nu$ en Ac 15, 12, $\acute{\alpha}\phi\omega\nu\omicron\varsigma$, $\acute{\epsilon}\nu\omega\tau\acute{\iota}\zeta\epsilon\sigma\theta\alpha\iota$, $\kappa\epsilon\nu\omicron\phi\omega\nu\acute{\iota}\alpha$ et $\kappa\rho\alpha\upsilon\gamma\eta$ en Mt 25, 6 et Lc 1, 42).⁴⁹

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 ζPOOY may be a translation of the Greek $\phi\theta\acute{o}\gamma\gamma\omicron\varsigma$ and that CMH may be a translation of $\phi\omega\nu\eta$.⁵⁰ One would therefore expect that they actually agreed on translating the triad as "sound-voice-word" based on the supposed Greek equivalent " $\phi\theta\acute{o}\gamma\gamma\omicron\varsigma$, $\phi\omega\nu\eta$, $\lambda\omicron\gamma\acute{o}\varsigma$ ". However, that is not the case, for even the Greek terms have different

46 Crum 704–705 and 334–335. See also Poirier, *La Pensée Première à la triple forme*, 106 and Paul-Hubert Poirier, "La triade son—voix—parole/discours dans la Prôtennoia Trimorphe (NH XIII,1) et ses sources," in *Gnose et Philosophie, Études en Homage à Pierre Hadot* (ed. Paul-Hubert Poirier and Jean-Marc Narbonne; Collection Zétésis, Série "Textes et essais"; Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin/Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 2009), 112.

47 Turner, "Introduction, NH C XIII,1^* : Trimorphic Proténnoia 35*, 1–50*, 24," 383.

48 *Loc. cit.*

49 Poirier, *La Pensée Première à la triple forme*, 106–107.

50 Turner, "Introduction, NH C XIII,1^* : Trimorphic Proténnoia 35*, 1–50*, 24," 384; Poirier, *La Pensée Première à la triple forme*, 107–108.

meanings. Thus, φθόγγος may mean *sound, voice, speech, utterance* or *saying*. However, the most common sense seems to be *sound*.⁵¹ The meaning of φωνή differs between *sound, voice, tone, sound of voice, speech* and *utterance*.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.⁵³ Here, we have the understanding of φωνή as *sound*. Part of the difficulty of translating φωνή and CMI 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: ρροϋγ is the inarticulate sound, which first comes forth. CMI is the articulate sound, which is heard as a voice; in other words, CMI is a φωνή with the specific meaning of human, articulate sound. In the Stoic sequence, this level corresponds to that of λέξις. At last λογος comes forth as the articulate, intelligible, rational discourse.

51 *LSJ*: 1929.

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

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 *Proténnoia* are issued from within Thought (*διανοία/μέεγε* or *πρωτέννοια/επινοία*).⁵⁵ Inspired by Poirier, who has helpfully sketched out the sequence of manifestation in *Trim. Prot.*,⁵⁶ I render it as follows:

ΚΑΡΩϞ—ΜΕΕΓΕ—ΞΡΟΥϞ—CΜΗ—ΛΟΓΟC
 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 *Proténnoia*. 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 “ΞΡΟΥϞ—CΜΗ—ΛΟΓΟC”. 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: ΜΕΕΓΕ—(ΔΙCΘΗCΙC/COOΓΝ)—ΞΡΟΥϞ—CΜΗ—ΛΟΓΟC.

57 Poirier, “La triade son—voix—parole/discours dans la *Prótennoia Trimorphe* (NH XII,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*.⁵⁹ 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:⁶⁰ ὁ λόγος μὲν ὁ σωτὴρ ἐστίν, φωνὴ δὲ ἢ ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ ἢ διὰ Ἰωάννου διανοουμένη, ἦχος δὲ πᾶσα προφητικὴ τάξις ("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,⁶¹ 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 contextes différents. Dans le cas de la PrôTri, ce context est philosophique et non prophétologique ou christologique.⁶²

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 ζῆσος to be a translation of ἦχος rather than φθόγγος. Luisier bases his argument

59 Poirier, *La Pensée Première à la triple forme*, 109 and Poirier, "La triade son—voix—parole/discours dans la Prôtennoia Trimorphe (NH XIII,1) et ses sources," 115–116.

60 Fragment 5, Origen, *In Iohannem* IV, 108. The passage is also brought in Poirier, *La Pensée Première à la triple forme*, 109 and in Philippe Luisier, "De Philon d'Alexandrie à la Prôtennoia Trimorphe. Variations sur un thème de grammaire grecque," in *Coptica—Gnostica—Manichaica. Mélanges offerts à Wolf-Peter Funk* (ed. Louis Painchaud and Paul-Hubert Poirier; BCNH.É 7; Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval/Louvain: Éditions Peeters, 2006), 537.

61 Poirier, *La Pensée Première à la triple forme*, 110–111 and Poirier, "La triade son—voix—parole/discours dans la Prôtennoia Trimorphe (NH XIII,1) et ses sources," 116–118.

62 Poirier, *La Pensée Première à la triple forme*, 110 and Poirier, "La triade son—voix—parole/discours dans la Prôtennoia Trimorphe (NH XIII,1) et ses sources," 117.

on the Heracleon fragment, in which the same sequence may be detected.⁶³ 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.*⁶⁴ Recognizing the prevalence of the triad, Luisier describes it as forming “une triade somme toute banale”.⁶⁵ 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”.⁶⁶ 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 φωνῆ βοῶντος ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ (Jn 1,23). Finalement, avec Jésus, c’est la parole, le Logos même de Dieu qui se manifeste.⁶⁷

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.⁶⁸ 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.*⁶⁹ 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-

63 Luisier, “De Philon d’Alexandrie à la Prôtennoia Trimorphe. Variations sur un thème de grammaire grecque,” 537.

64 *Ibid.*: 538–542 and 551–552. 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.

logie de l'exégète gnostique de Jean."⁷⁰ 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 $\chi\rho\omicron\upsilon\gamma$, $\sigma\mu\eta$ and $\lambda\omicron\gamma\omicron\varsigma$ 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 ($\tau\tau\eta\eta\rho\gamma$) and the human/sensible Cosmos ($\kappa\omicron\sigma\mu\omicron\varsigma$) or Tartaros ($\tau\alpha\rho\tau\alpha\rho\omicron\varsigma$). Protennoia is defined as first and foremost the Thought ($[\lambda\alpha\lambda\omicron\kappa]$ $\tau\epsilon$ $\tau\pi\rho\omega$ $[\tau\epsilon\eta\eta\eta\omicron\iota\alpha$ $\pi\mu]$ $\epsilon\epsilon\gamma\epsilon$) (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" ($\epsilon\epsilon\iota$ $\kappa\iota\mu$ $\chi\rho\alpha\iota$ $\chi\eta\sigma\omega\eta\tau$ $\nu\mu$) (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")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" (ἀνοκ πε πωνε νταεπινοια).⁷² This recalls the *Apocryphon of John*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" (εερεγυπογρη ντκτικισ τηρε) (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* (NH 11,4),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" (ντο πενταετ ναι επωνε σεναμουτε ερο δε τμααυ ννετονε) (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.*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

71 Turner, *Sethian Gnosticism and the Platonic Tradition*, 227.

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.*

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

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 11,4) (BCNH.T 5; Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval/Louvain: Éditions Peeters, 1980).

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.

35*:32-36*:3⁷⁷
 ΔΝΟΚΟΥΖΡΟΡ[Υ ΕΥCNCN̄ ΕΒΟΛ ΖΗC]ΥΧΗ
 ΕΕΙΩΟΠ ̄[NN̄ΩΟΡΙΓ̄
 ΕΕΙΩΟΠ Ζ]P[Δ]i ΖN̄†M̄N̄TKA[PΩC ΟΥΟΝ] ΝΙΜ N̄ΜΑΥ
 ΑΥΩ Π[Ζ]P[ΟΟΥ ΠΕ ΕΤΖ]N̄Π ΕΤΩ[ΟΟΠ ΖΡΔi] N̄ΖΗ†
 ΖP[Δi] ΖM̄ΠΜΕΕΥΕ] ΝΑΤ̄†Τ̄ΕΖ[ΟQ N̄]ΔΤΩΡΙΓC
 Ζ[PΔi] ΖN̄†M̄N̄†TKAΡΩC N̄ΔΤΩΡΙΓ[C]

I am a Soun[d who resonates qu]ietly,
 existing s[ince the beginning,
 existing] within the Silen[ce ever]yone there,
 and [it is] the hi[dden Sou]nd that exists within me,
 [within the] incomprehen[sible] immeasurable
 [Thought within] the immeasurable Silen[ce].

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 Poirier⁷⁸ 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.

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 ἀε[ιαι εἴραϊ εἰτ]μητῆ ἡαμῆτ[ε] 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.⁸² Yet, the text quickly returns to the linguistic theme. Here Protennoia emphasizes and develops her identity and manifestation as Sound:

36*:9–27

ἀνοκ πετοτῆ ἡῖροοῦ εβολ[λ]
 ριτοοτ· εωασει εβολ ἡβιτῆνωσις εε[ι]
 ωοοπ· ρῆνιατῶα.χε ἡμοοῦ μῆνιατ·
 σοῦωνοῦ ἀνοκ πε ταίσθης μῆπσο
 οῦν εεἰτε[γῶ ἡ]οῦροοῦ εβολ ριτοοτῆ
 ἡοῦμεεε α[νο]κ πε ἡροοῦ ετωοοῖ
 εεἰτῆραῦ ρῆνοῦον νιμ· αῦω σεσοῦω[ν]
 ἡμας ερεοῦσπερμα· ωοοπ ρραῖ ἡρῆ[τοῦ]
 ἀνοκ πε πμεεεε ἡπῶτ α[γ]ω [εβ]ολ ριτο
 οτ· αῦῶωωωπ· ἡει εβολ ἡσ[ιπρ]οοῦ ετε
 παῖ πε πσοῦν ἡνετεμῆτεῦ ραν εἰ
 ωοοπ· ἡμεεεε ἡπ[τη]ρῶ· εεἰρατρε α
 ροῦν· ἀπμεεεε ἡατῆ[ο]ῦωωω· αῦω ἡατ·
 τεροῦ αειοῦονετ [ε]βολ ἀνοκ ἡρραῖ
 ρῆνεητ· αῦσοῦωωτ· τηροῦ χεανοκ ἡ
 γαρ πετῆρατρε μῆνοῦον νιμ ἡρρα ρῆ
 πμεεεε ετῆηπ αῦω ρῆνοῦ<ρ>ροοῦ εῶ·
 χοσε αῦω οῦροοῦ εβολ ριτοοτῶ· ἡ
 πμεεεε ἡατῆαῦ εροῦ

It is I who am laden with the Sound. It is through
 me that Gnosis comes forth, since [I]
 exist 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 (ΓΝΩΣΙΣ), being herself the categories of both Perception (ΑΙΣΘΗΣΙΣ) and Knowledge (ΣΟΦΥΗ). 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 characterized 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 promoter 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 passage 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 (ΜΕΕΥΕ = ἔννοια)—connaissance (COOYN = γνῶσις)—perception (αἴσθησις)—son (ΞΡΟΟΥ = φθόγγος)". He introduces them as follows: "Ces concepts, empruntés au vocabulaire philosophique et grammatical, expriment les diverses étapes de la manifestation de la Proténnoia".⁸³ Poirier continues by comparing the way in which the Sound is "sent out" (ΤΕΥΟ ΕΒΟΛ) 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" (... ἀνθρώπου ... ἐστὶν ἔναρθρος καὶ ἀπὸ διανοίας ἐκπεμπομένη).⁸⁴ 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".⁸⁵ 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 8:40–47.⁸⁶ Secondly, the recognition is due to the seed (σπέρμα) 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 ἐκπέμπειν does not figure under the Greek equivalents to ΤΑ(Ο)Υ ΕΒΟΛ, one does find πέμπειν under those for ΤΑ(Ο)Υ. 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" (ἡμεας) 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 ἡμεας 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 it 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 which concerns a Mystery (ΟΥΜΥΣΤΗΡΙΟΝ). 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 ΔΝΟΝ (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” (ΑΥΩ ΠΕΤΝΗΡΑΪ ΝΗΗΤΝ ΕΤΗΗΠ ΓΤ ΝΜΦΟΡΟΣ ΝΝΕΦΚΑΡΠΟΣ ΑΤΟΟΤΥ ΜΠΗΟΟΥ ΜΠΩΝΗ), that is, baptism.⁸⁷ This leads on to the first passage concerning the Son.

37*:3–13

ΤΟΤΕ ΟΕ

ΠΩΗΡΕ ΕΤΧΗΚ` ΕΒΟΛ ΖΝΗΩΒ ΝΙΜ ΕΤΕΠΑΪ
 ΠΕ ΠΛΟΓΟΣ ΕΤΑΖΩΠΕ ΕΒΟΛ ΖΙΤΝΠ
 ΖΡΟΟΥ ΕΑΦΡΩΟΡΙ· ΝΕΙ ΕΒΟΛ ΜΠΧΙΣΕ ΕΥ
 ΝΤΑΓ ΜΜΑΥ ΜΠΡΑΝ ΝΗΡΑΪ ΝΗΗΤΥ` ΕΦΟ Ν
 ΟΥΟΕΙΝΕ ΑΦΟΥΟΝΗ ΕΒΟΛ ΝΝΙΑΤΖΑΗ ΑΥ
 Ω ΝΙΑΤΣΟΥΩΝΟΥ ΤΗΡΟΥ ΑΥΣΟΥΩΝΟΥ
 ΑΥΩ ΝΑΪ ΕΤΜΟΚΗ ΝΡΖΕΡΜΗΝΕΥΕ ΜΜΟ
 ΟΥ ΜΝΗΘΗΠ· ΑΦΟΥΟΝΗΟΥ ΕΒΟΛ ΑΥΩ
 ΝΕΤΩΟΟΠ` ΖΝΟΥΜΝΤ` ΚΑΡΩΣ ΜΠΠΩΟΡΙ
 ΜΜΕΕΥΕ ΑΓΤΑΩΘΕΟΕΙΩ ΝΑΥ

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

ΠΡΑΥ ΝΔΕ ΕΝΤΑΦΩΠΕ Ε
 ΒΟΛ Ζ̄ΠΑΜΕΕΥΕ ΕΦΩΟΠ̄ ΝΩΟΜΤΕ Μ̄
 ΜΟΝΗ ΠΩΤ̄ ΤΜΑΔΥ ΠΩΗΡΕ ΟΥΣΜΗ ΕΣ
 ΩΟΟΠ Ζ̄ΝΟΥΑΙΣΘΝΣΙΣ ΟῩΝΤΕΦ Μ̄ΜΑΥ Ν̄
 ΟΥΛΟΓΟΣ Ζ̄ΡΑΪ Ν̄ΖΗΤΦ̄ ΠΑΪ ΕΤΕῩΝΤΑΦ Μ̄ΜΑΥ
 Ν̄[[ΟΥΕ]]<Ε>ΟΟΥ ΝΙΜ ΔΥΩ ΟῩΝΤΕΦ Μ̄ΜΑῩ Ν̄
 ΩΟΜΤΕ Μ̄ΜΝΤΞΟΟΥΤ̄ ΔΥΩ ΩΟΜΤΕ Ν̄ΔΥ
 ΝΑΜΙΣ ΔΥΩ ΩΟΜΤ Ν̄ΡΑΝ ΕΥΩΟΟΠ̄ Μ̄ΠΕ
 ΕΙΡΗΤΕ Μ̄ΠΩΑΜΤ̄ □□□ ΕΥΟ Ν̄ΦΤΟΥΚΟ
 ΟΞ Ζ̄ΝΟΥΠΕΤΞΗΠ Ζ̄ΡᾹ[Ι Ζ̄]̄ΝΟΥΜ̄ΝΤΚΑΡΩΣ
 Μ̄ΠΑΤΩΑΔΞΕ Μ̄Μ[ΟΥ . . .

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.

descends 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; Sound⁹³ (fem., perhaps Greek φωνή) corresponds to Mother; and Word (λόγος) corresponds to Son.⁹⁴

This was followed up on by Gilhus⁹⁵ and Poirier,⁹⁶ 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,”⁹⁷ 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 équivalence par emboîtement: le Père en tant que son (ἑρσοϋ, φθόγγος) est la triade, laquelle se déploie comme Mère-Voix (μη, φωνή) et Fils-logos.”⁹⁸ 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.”⁹⁹ 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 οὔτετ ε̅μαγ may be understood as a parallel construction to a similar one a few lines before, which concerned the Voice (οὔτετ ε̅μαγ ἡογλογοσ ε̅ραἰ ἡε̅ητ), I understand this one as relating to the Sound. These three triads find a parallel in the *Apocryphon of John* (11,5:6–9), 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 μη/φωνή.

94 Turner, “Introduction to Codex XIII,” 432. See also 382.

95 Ingvild S. Gilhus, “The Trimorphic Protennoia,” in *Searching the Scriptures, Vol. II: A Feminist Commentary* (ed. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza; New York: Crossroad, 1994), 55.

96 Poirier, *La Pensée Première à la triple forme*, 15–17 and 220–221.

97 *Ibid.*: 16. My emphasis.

98 *Ibid.*: 221.

99 Janssens, *La Prôtennoia trimorphe*, 62.

Prot.: “il s’agit de trois triple réalités que possède (ΟΥΝΤΕΥ ΜΜΑΥ) le son venu à l’existence à partir de la pensée de la Prôtennoia.”¹⁰⁰ 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).¹⁰¹ 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

ΑΥΤΑΙΩΝ ΜΠΩΤ· ΝΑΙΩΝ ΤΗΡΟΥ ΕΤΕ[Δ]
 ΝΟΚ ΠΕ ΠΜΕΕΥΕ ΜΠΩΤ· ΝΤΠΡΩΤΕΝ
 ΝΟΙΑ ΕΤΕΠΑΪ ΠΕ ΒΑΡΒΗΛΩ ΠΕΘΟΥ ΕΤΧ[ΗΚ]
 ΕΒΟΛ ΑΥΩ ΠΑΤ`ΝΑΥ ΕΡΟΦ ΕΦΖΗΠ` ΝΑΤΩ[ΓΤΓ']
 ΑΝΟΚ ΠΕ ΘΙΚΩΝ ΜΠΠΝΑ ΝΑΤ`ΝΑΥ ΕΡΟ[Υ]
 ΑΥΩ ΝΤΑΠΤΗΡΥ` ΧΙΡΙΚΩΝ ΕΒΟΛ ΖΙΤΟΟΤ
 ΑΥΩ ΤΜΑΔΥ ΠΟΥΘΕΙΝΕ ΠΑΪ ΕΝΤΑΣΚΑΔΥ
 ΕΦΟΙ: ΜΠΑΡΘΕΝΟΣ ΤΑΪ ΕΤΟΥΜΟΥΤ[Ε]
 ΕΡΟΣ ΧΕ ΜΕΙΡΘΕΑ ΤΟΤΕ ΝΑΤ`ΤΕΖΟΣ ΠΞΡ[Ο]
 ΟΥ ΝΑΤ`ΕΜΑΖΤΕ ΜΜΟΥ· ΑΥΩ ΝΑΤΩΙΤΩ

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[fect] glory
 and the invisible, hidden, immea[surable].
 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 [So]und.

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 $\epsilon\tau\epsilon\ \pi\alpha\tilde{\iota}\ \pi\epsilon$ construction, which is characteristic of *Trim. Prot.*¹⁰² Protennoia’s relation to the Invisible Spirit is reaffirmed, and her role as Mother and a “Wisdom-like co-creator” from whom the All receives its image is supplemented with the identification of her with Meirothea ($\overline{\mu\epsilon\iota\rho\theta\epsilon\alpha}$). Meirothea is known from other, primarily Classic Gnostic, sources, in which her androgynous nature is in focus.¹⁰³ In the *Holy Book of the Great Invisible Spirit/ the Gospel of the Egyptians* (NHC III,49:1–16) and *Zostrianos* (NHC VIII,6:30) she is the mother of Adamas.¹⁰⁴ According to Turner, “Meirothea” may likely mean “divine anointed one” ($\mu\upsilon\rho\theta\epsilon\acute{\omicron}\varsigma$) instead of the usual “destiny god/goddess ($\mu\omicron\iota\rho\theta\epsilon\acute{\omicron}\varsigma$)” 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 identified 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 different modes of manifestation as Sound (masc.), Voice (fem.) and Word (masc.). In 45*:2–12 Protennoia even proclaims to be androgynous ($\lambda\text{ΝΟΚ}^{\text{}} \text{ΟΥ}\tilde{\rho}[\text{ΟΟ}]\Upsilon\tilde{\Gamma}\tilde{\Sigma}\tilde{\Psi}\tilde{\Omega}\text{Ε} \lambda[\text{ΝΟΚ} \text{ΟΥ}\tilde{\text{Μ}}\tilde{\text{Α}}\tilde{\text{Δ}}\tilde{\text{Υ}} \lambda\text{ΝΟ}]\text{Κ}^{\text{}} \text{ΟΥ}\tilde{\text{Ε}}\tilde{\text{Ι}}\tilde{\text{Ω}}\tilde{\text{Τ}}^{\text{}}$) 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,5:7).

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” (ΠΤΕΛΙΟΣ ἸΩΗΡΕ) (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” (ΠΕΧ̄C ΠΝΟΥΓΤΕ ΠΑΪ ΕΝΤΑΦΩΠΕ ΟΥΛΛΑΤΦ) (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” (ΤΕΞΟ), 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*.¹⁰⁷ This is also stressed in the next passage of *Trim. Prot.*, beginning in 39*:13, where the narrative narrows down to the last of the four aeons: Eleleth.

Eleleth is now called the “great Light” (ΠΝΟΣ ἸΝΟΥΘΕΙΝ ΗΛΗΛΗΘ). 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

107 Cf. 11,7:32–8:21.

passage narrates how a word ($\lambda\omicron\gamma\omicron\varsigma$) 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 ($\lambda\omicron\gamma\omicron\varsigma$) 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* (11,11:19–21).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 *logoi* 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* (111,56:22–24) 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.

109 Which of course derives from Is 44:6; 45:5–6 and 46:9.

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” (ΔΥΩ ΝΤΟΥΝΟΥ ΕΤΜΑΔΥ ΔΠΦΟΥΘΕΙΝΕ ΟΥΩΝΞ ΕΒΟΛ ΕΦΠΡΪΩΟΥ ΕΥΝΤΑΦ` ΜΜΑ[Υ Ν]ΤΕΠΝΟΙΑ) (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.¹¹¹ In 39*:28–32 it is said explicitly that Epinoia is the power that was stolen:

ΠΑΪ ΝΤΑΦΧΙ ΝΟΥΘΟΜ` ΝΤΑΦΤΩΡΠ`
 ΜΜΟΣ ΝΤΟΟΤΪ ΝΪΑΤΪΠΕΘΟΟΥ ΝΤΑΦΧΡΟ Ε
 ΡΟΣ ΝΩΟΡΠ` ΕΤΕΤΑΪ ΤΕ ΤΕΠΝΟΙΑ` ΜΠΟΥ
 ΟΕΙΝΕ ΝΤΑΦΕΙ ΔΠ[ΙΓΝ] ΤΪΑΪ ΝΤΑΦΕΙ ΕΒΟΛ Μ
 ΜΟΣ ΧΝΝΩΟ[Ρ]Π`

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

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, ΝΗΣ ΧΙΠ,1*.” Trimorphic Protennoia 35*, 1–50*, 24,” 374.

conjunction with 39*, 31–32, constitutes an implicit claim that Sophia is the innocent creator of Yaltabaoth.¹¹²

Poirier agrees with this mutual identification¹¹³ and compares it with a mention of the “Sophia of Epinoia” in the long version of the *Apocryphon of John* (II,9:25): ΤΣΟΦΙΑ ΝΤΕΠΙΝΟΙΑ.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 *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 (ΕΤΕΤΑΙ ΤΕ ΤΕΠΙΝΟΙΑ· ΜΠΟΥΘΕΙΝΕ) refers back to the power (ΟΥΘΟΜ) and the relative ΝΤΑΞΕΙ ΑΓ[ΙΤΝ] (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 *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 *Trim. Prot.* has established the basis for its main issue: the account of the descent of Protennoia.

112 Turner, “Introduction, NHC XIII,1*”: Trimorphic Protennoia 35*, 1–50*, 24,” 442.

113 Poirier, *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, *La Prôtennoia trimorphe*, 70.

114 *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 (μερος), 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” (νωρη υποουεν) (41*:1), whom she empowers and shapes. She tells them (as their Father) a mystery (μυστηριον) 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 (μερος), which is now referred to as the Spirit (πινδ):

41*:20–29
 ανοκ' πε ποωρη νταϊει απιτν̄
 ετβεπαμερος ετσοχπ' ετεπαϊ πε
 πινδ ετωοοπ' εντγγχη νταφω
 πε εβολ εμπμοογ μπωνη εγω εβολ
 εμπλωκμ̄ νμμυστηριον δειδαδε
 ανοκ ην̄αρχων εγω ενεζογσια
 δειδωκ γαρ εραϊ επσαμ̄πιτν̄ μπογ
 λας εγω δειδω νναμυστηριον ανε
 τενωϊ ογμυστηριον εφρηπ' εγβωλ
 εβολ ην̄σναεζ μν̄τβωε ν̄{αν} ανεε

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.¹¹⁵ 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.¹¹⁶ 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 (ΨΥΧΗ). 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”.¹¹⁷ 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 γαρ, 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 [ΠΑΤΡΙΜΑ]ΡΜΕΝΗ [Β] (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 (ΖΗΜΑΡΜΕΝΗ), 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

ΑΝΟΚ ΠΕ ΠΖΡΟΥΥ Ν̄ΤΑΦΟΥΩΝΖ ΕΒΟΛ ΖΙ
 Τ[Ο]ΤῩ Μ̄ΠΑΜΕΕΥΕ ΑΝΟΚ ΓΑΡ ΠΕ ΠΕΤΖΔΤΡΕ

118 Sevrin, *Le Dossier Baptismal Séthien. Études sur la Sacramentaire Gnostique*, 62.

119 Poirier, *La Pensée Première à la triple forme*, 285.

ΕΥΜΟΥΤΕ ΕΡΟΪ ΧΕΠΜΕΕΥΕ ΜΠΑΤΝΑΥ ΕΡΟ[ϰ]
 ΕΥΜΟΥΤΕ ΕΡΟΪ ΧΕΤΣΜΗ ΕΤΕΜΑΣΩΙΒΕ Σ[Ε]
 ΜΟΥΤΕ ΕΡΟΪ ΧΕΤΕΤΖΟΤΡΕ ΔΝΟΚΟΥΪΕ Ν[ΟΥ]
 ΩΤ· ΕΒΙΟ ΝΑΤΧΩΖΗΕ ΔΝΟΚ ΤΕ ΤΗΔΔΥ [Μ]
 ΠΖΡΟΥ ΕΒΙΩΔΑΧΕ ΝΖΔΖ ΝΡΗΤΕ ΒΕΙΧΩΚ· Ε
 ΒΟΛ· ΜΠΠΗΡϰ ΕΡΕΠΣΟΥΝ ΩΟΟΠ· ΝΖΡΑΪ Ν
 ΖΗΤ· ΠΣΟΥΝ Ν<ΝΕ>ΤΕΜΝΤΕΥ ΖΔΗ ΔΝΟΚ Π[ΕΤ]
 ΩΔΑΧΕ ΖΡΑΪ ΖΝΣΩΝΤ· ΝΙΜ· ΑΥΩ ΑΥΣΟΥΩΝΤ·
 ΕΒΟΛ ΖΙΤΟΟΤϰ· ΜΠΠΗΡϰ ΔΝΟΚ ΠΕΤ† Ν
 ΤΣΜΗ ΜΠΖΡΟΥ ΕΖΡΑΪ ΑΜΜΑΔΑΧΕ ΝΝΕΝ
 ΤΑΥΣΟΥΩΝΤ· ΕΤΕΝΑΕΙ ΝΕ ΝΩΗΡΕ ΜΠΟΥΟ
 ΕΙΝΕ ΔΪΕΙ ΔΕ ΜΠΜΑΖΣΕΠ· ΣΝΑΥ ΜΠΣΜΟΤ·
 ΝΟΥΣΖΙΜΕ ΑΥΩ ΔΪΩΔΑΧΕ ΝΜΜΑΥ

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 chiasmatically, 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” (ζοτρε) and as “one” (ουΪε).

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 ΣΜΗ (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" (ΔΝΟΚ ΤΕ ΤΕΣΜΗ ΕΤΕ ΝΑΩΕ ΠΕΣΖΡΟΟΥΓ') (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 (ΤΣΜΗ ΠΠΖΡΟΟΥΓ') 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" (ἡπιμοτ ἡοῦςριμε) 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 (ριμαρμενη). 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

αγω ἡκληρος ἡτιριμαρμενη ἡἡνετωι
 ἡἡοικος αγωτορτρ ἡπιωα ερραῖ α.α.ἡ
 ογρογμπε εναωωα αγω ἡθρονος ἡ
 ἡδγναμικ αγωτορτρ εαγπωνε αγω πογ
 ῖρο αφῖροτε αγω νετπωτ ἡκατιμαρ
 μενη αγτ ἡτογἡπῖ ἡκοτ απμοῖτ αγ
 ω πα.α.εγ ἡἡδγναμικ α.εογ πε πιωτορ
 τῖ ἡἡπικιμ ἡταφει ερραῖ ε.α.ω.ν εβολ ρι
 τοοτῖ ἡογροογ εα{ε}ἡπ ατcmη ετ.α.ο.ε

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 (ογρογμπε). 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

name.¹²¹ 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.¹²²

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

ΕΙΣΖΗΗΤΕ ΘΕ ΤΕΝΟΥ ΑΦΟΥΩΝ[Σ]
 ΕΒΟΛ Ν̄ΣΙ[ΟΥ]ΞΡΡΟΥ ΕϷ[[Σ]]ΗΠ ΔΤΣΗΗ Ν̄ΔΤ' ΝΔ[Υ]
 ΕΡΟΣ ΤΑ[ΠΑΙΩ]Ν̄ ΕΤ̄Ν̄ΣΟΟΥΝΕ Μ̄ΜΟ[[Ϸ]]Σ' Δ̄Ν ΔΥ
 Ω ΔΝΟΝ [Μ̄Π̄Ν̄]ΣΟΥΩΝ̄ ΟΥΔΑΤ̄Ν ΧΕΔΗΗΠ
 ΔΝΙΗ ΔΕΠΞΡ[Ο]ΟΥ ΓΑΡ ΕΤ̄Μ̄ΔΥ Ν̄ΤΑΝΣΩΤ[Μ̄]
 ΕΡΟΥ ΟΥΩΜ̄ΜΟ ΕΡΟΝ ΠΕ ΔΥΩ Τ̄Ν̄ΣΟΟΥΝΕ
 Μ̄ΜΟΥ ΔΝ Μ̄Π̄Ν̄Μ̄ΜΕ ΧΕΟΥΕΒΟΛ ΤΟ ΠΕ ΔϷΙ
 ΔϷΚΩ Ν̄ΟΥΞΡ̄ΤΕ Ξ̄Ν̄ΤΕΝΗΗΤΕ ΔΥΩ ΟΥΒΩΛ [Ε]
 ΒΟΛ Ν̄Μ̄ΜΕΛΟΣ Ν̄ΤΕ̄Ν̄ΣΒΟΕΙ ΤΕΝΟΥ ΘΕ Μ̄[Δ]
 Ρ̄Ν̄ΡΙΜΕ ΔΥΩ Ν̄Τ̄Ν̄ΝΕΞΠΕ Ξ̄Ν̄ΟΥΝΕΞΠ[Ε ΕΝΔ]
 ΩΩϷ'

Behold, now [a] Sound has
 appeared [[belonging]] to that inv[i]sible Voice
 of [the aeo]n which we do not know and
 we ourselves [we did not] know to whom we
 belong, for that So[u]nd 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*.

122 Recalling Turner's description of Protennoia's manifestation as a *theophony* instead of a *theophany*: Turner, *Sethian Gnosticism and the Platonic Tradition*, 153.

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 Archigenitor of our birth, because of whom we pride ourselves, he did not know this Voice" (ΕΙΣΖΗΝΤΕ ΓΑΡ ΝΤΟΥ ΖΩΩΨ ΠΑΡΧΙΓΕΝΕΤΩΨ ΜΠΝΔΠΟ ΕΤΝΩΟΥΟΥΨ ΜΜΟΝ ΕΤΒΗΤΨ ΜΠΨΜΕ ΖΩΩΨ ΔΤΣΜΗ) (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..." (ΤΕΝΟΥ ΣΕ ΣΩΤΨ ΕΡΟΙ ΝΩΗΡΕ ΜΠΜΕΕΥΕ ΔΤΣΜΗ ΝΤΗΔΔΥ ΜΠΕΤ[Ν]ΝΔΕ ΧΕΨΤΩΤΝΕ ΓΑΡ ΔΤΕΤΝΡΜΠΩΔ ΜΠΜΥΣΤ[Η]ΡΙΟΝ...) (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. Prot.* before this point. Earlier the term that was used for Protennoia's elected people was "Sons of Light".¹²³ 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).¹²⁴ 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".¹²⁵

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. Prot.* The second group would be the "Sons of Thought", the term which is used in the second part of *Trim. Prot.* And the third would be the "Sons of Man", which is employed in the third part of *Trim. Prot.* (49*:18). This issue will have to be further investigated.

¹²⁵ Turner, "Introduction, ΝΗΣ ΧΙΠ,1*: Trimorphic Protennoia 35*, 1-50*, 24," 447. Cf. also Poirier, *La Pensée Première à la triple forme*, 316.

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” (ΟΥΣΜΗ ΝῆΡΟΥΥ) 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” (ΔΝΟΚ ΠΙΕ ΠΧΩΚ ΕΒΟΛ ΜΠΤΗΡΥ) (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: ΔΕ[ΙΒΩΚ] ΕΞ[ΡΑ]Ϊ ΔΧΝΠΑΚΛΑΔΟC ΔΕΙΞΜΕC[Τ` ΜΜΑΥ ΖΡΑΪ ΖΝΝ]ΩΗΡΕ ΜΠΟΥΟΕΙ[Ν] ΕΤΟΥ[ΔΔΒ.] “I ascended without my branch, I sat there among the Sons of the holy light . . .” The problem is the translation of the preposition ΔΧΝ—, which is often translated by “without” (as I have done).¹²⁸ On the other hand, ΔΧΝ—has multiple meanings and may also be translated by “to”, “upon”, “over”, “for”, “against” etc.¹²⁹ The translators of *Trim.*

126 For a thorough analysis of the baptismal material in *Trim. Prot.* see Sevrin, *Le Dossier Baptismal Séthien. Études sur la Sacramentaire Gnostique*, 49–79. For this particular passage, cf. Poirier, *La Pensée Première à la triple forme*, 320–323.

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 $\alpha\chi\bar{\nu}$ —in the meaning of “upon”.¹³⁰ By contrast, the French translations by Yvonne Janssens and Paul-Hubert Poirier both translate by the meaning of “without”.¹³¹ 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: $\alpha\epsilon\pi\omega\tau\ \epsilon\rho\alpha\acute{\iota}\ \epsilon\tau\alpha\nu\omicron\gamma\eta\epsilon\ \bar{\nu}\omicron\gamma\omicron\epsilon\iota\mu$, “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.¹³²

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*:5–33¹³³

$\alpha\lambda\omicron\kappa\ \pi\epsilon\ \bar{\nu}\ [\lambda\omicron\gamma\omicron]\omicron\varsigma\ \epsilon\tau\omega\omicron\bar{\nu}\ [\pi\ \epsilon\bar{\nu}\bar{\nu}\omicron\gamma\epsilon\iota\mu\epsilon]$
 $\bar{\nu}\alpha\tau\ \omega\alpha\chi\epsilon\ \epsilon\rho\omicron\varsigma\ \epsilon\epsilon\iota\omega\omicron\ [\omicron]\bar{\nu}\ [\dots\dots\dots]$

130 Schenke, *Die Dreigestaltige Protennoia*, 45. Turner, “Introduction, ΝΗC XIII,1*,” *Trimorphic Protennoia* 35*, 1–50*, 24,” 423. Layton, *The Gnostic Scriptures*, 97. Layton understands the movement of Protennoia first to go upwards and then downwards: “And I ascended and proceeded into my light. I (?) [...] down upon my branch...”.

131 Janssens, *La Prôtennoia trimorphe*, 39. Poirier, *La Pensée Première à la triple forme*, 157.

132 Poirier, *La Pensée Première à la triple forme*, 327.

133 In the translation which follows, I have left the $\lambda\omicron\gamma\omicron\varsigma$ untranslated despite the fact that I render it “Word” or “Discourse” in the analysis.

ἄταχῶς με ἀγῶ οὐ μὲ εὐε ἀφ[ωλπ᾽ ἐβολ]
 ῥῆνογαίς ἐν σὶς ἐβολ ῥιτοοῦτς ἡ[οὔνοσ ἡ]
 σμη ἡτέτῃ αἰετὸς εὐχῆ πο ἡῖροοῦτς ῥ[.]
 ἡκαἰετ᾽ ἐρῆαῖ ἀγῶ ἐσῶοοπ᾽ ἡἡἡῶ[ρπ]
 ῥῆἡκαἰετὸς ἡπῆτῆρῥ· οὐ ἡνοῦοεῖνε δε [εῖ]
 ῶοοπ ἐφῆρῆρ ῥῆαῖ ῥῆσῖγῆ ἀφῆῶορπ ἡῖ[ι]
 ἐβολ ἡτός δε οὔαατ᾽ ἐσῶοοπ ἡκαρῶῥ
 ἀνοκ πε πλογος οὔαατ᾽ ἡατῶαδε ἡμο[ῥ]
 ἄταχῶς με ἡατῶιτῥ ἡατῆεεε ἐροῥ
 οὔοεῖνε ἐφῆρῆρ πε ἐφ᾽ ἡοὔκαρπος ἡ
 ῶνῆ ἐφῆεεβε ἡοὔμοοῦ ἡῶνῆ ἔβῶλ
 ῥῆἡπῆγῆ ἡατ᾽ ἡαῦ ἐρος ἡατῶς με
 ἡατῶιτῥ· ἐτεπ᾽ πε πῆροοῦ ἡπεοοῦ
 ἡἡαῦ ἡατοῦαῖετῥ πεοοῦ ἡπῆπο
 ἡπῆνοῦτς οὔπαρῆενος ἡῖροοῦτ᾽ ἐβολ
 ῥιτοοῦτῥ ἡοὔνοῦς ἐφῆρῆρ ἐτεταῖ τε
 τῆἡἡκαρῶῥ ἐρῆρ᾽ ἀπῆρῥ ἐσο ἡατοῦ
 αῖετς οὔοεῖν ἡατ᾽ ῶιτῥ ἡπῆγῆ ἡπῆ[ρ]ῥ
 τῆοὔνε ἡπαῖῶν τῆρῥ τῆαῖς τε ἐτῥ
 ἐρῆαῖ ῥακῖνῆς σὶς ἡἡ ἡτεἡαῖῶν ἐ[τ]
 ἡρ᾽ ἀπεοοῦ ἐτῶοορ᾽ πκῶ ἐρῆαῖ πε ἡβ[α]
 σὶς ἡἡ πῆιῥε πε ἡἡῆαἡ πῆαλ πε ἡ
 ἡῶοἡτε ἡἡοἡ ἐσῶοοπ᾽ ἡῖροοῦ
 ἐβολ ῥιτοοῦτῥ ἡοὔμῆεε ἀγῶ οὔλο
 γος πε ἐβολ ῥιτοοῦτς ἡἡσμη ἡἡαῦτῆ
 νοοῦτῥ ἀῖροῦοεῖν ἀνετῶοοπ ῥῆπκ[α
 κ]ε

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, unrepeatabe, the glory of the offspring
 of God, a male virgin (issued) from
 a hidden mind, that is,
 the Silence hidden from the All, being unrepeatabe,
 an immeasurable Light, the source of the A[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[kn]ess

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”.¹³⁴ By repetition 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.”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

134 Poirier, *La Pensée Première à la triple forme*, 330.

135 *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.”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 *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.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 (ΜΟΝΗ), 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 *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:

καρωσ—μεεγε—ερωσ—σμη—λογος
 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/

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*: 333.

¹³⁷ Sevrin, *Le Dossier Baptismal Séthien. Études sur la Sacramentaire Gnostique*, 57–58, and Poirier, *La Pensée Première à la triple forme*, 334.

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,¹³⁸ 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 (ΝΟΥΣ ΠΤΕΛΕΙΟΣ), 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*

138 Cf. 47*:30–32 where Protennoia proclaims to descend as the Light to her brethren in the world of mortals (ΔΝΟΚ ΠΕ ΠΟΥΘΕΙΝ ΕΤΡΑΘΕ ΖΡ[ΔΙ ΖΨΝΑ]ΣΗΝΗΥ ΔΕΙΕΙ ΓΑΡ ΕΡΡΑΙ ΕΠΚΟΜΟC [ΠΤΕΛΕΙ]ΡΕΦΗΟΥ). Later she describes how she clothes herself as a Son of Man among the Sons of Man (49*:18–19), which refers to her third descent as Word in their “tents”, that is in their likeness (47*:13–16).

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 (ΠΜΑΞΕΡΕΝ` CΝΑΥ ΔΑΙΕΙ ΖΝ̄Τ[CMH] ΜΠΑΞΡΟΟΥ). 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” (CKHHH) as well as “in the likeness of their image” (ΔΕΙ ΟΥΟΝΖΤ` ΕΒΟΛ ΖΜΠΕΙΝΕ Ν̄ΤΟΥΖΙΚΩΝ), wearing their “garments” (ΖΒCΩ) (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 (ΖΥΛΗ). 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 illuminating 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” (ΕΤΒΕ ΠΠΝΑ ΕΤCΟΞΠ` ΖΡΞ[Ῑ Ν̄ΖΗΤΥ] ΠΑΙ Ν̄ΤΞ[ΥΒΩΚ ΕΞΡ]Δ̄Ι Ν̄ΤΑΥΕΙ ΕΒΟΛ [ΖΝ̄]ΤCΦΦΙΑ Ν̄[ΔΤΠΕΘΟΟΥ]) (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” ([Δῖ]† ΖΙΩΩΦ ΝΟΥΘΕΙΝΕ ΕΦΠῚΡΙΩΟΥ ΕΤΕΡΑῖ ΠΕ ΠΣΟΥΝΕ ἸΠΜΕΕΥΕ ἸΤΥἸΝΤΕΙΩ[Τ]) (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” (ΜΕΛΟΣ), 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 (ἤχος), then as Voice (φωνή) and at last as the Word (λογος). 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:

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

Trim. Prot.'s equivalent appears as this:

καρῶν—μεεγε—ἤχος—φωνή—λογος
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.

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.* (ἘΒΡΩΝΤῆ: ΝΟΥΣ ΝῆΤΕΛΕΙΟΥΣ) 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,¹ followed by a photographic publication in the Facsimile Edition of 1972.² The photographic evidence was adjusted and reanalysed based on other unique photographic

1 Krause and Labib, *Gnostische und Hermetische Schriften aus Codex 11 und Codex VI*.

2 Robinson, “Preface”.

evidence in 1979 and 1984, respectively.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.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,⁵ who concludes that the Coptic of codex VI is:

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.⁶

With regard to the dating of the manuscripts, it is important to note that within the cartonnage of codex VII was found three contracts⁷ 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.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

3 Stephen Emmel, “Unique Photographic Evidence for Nag Hammadi Texts: CG V–VIII,” in *BASP* 16:3 (1979); James M. Robinson and Stephen Emmel, “Addenda et Corrigenda,” in *The Facsimile Edition of the Nag Hammadi Codices. Introduction* (ed. James M. Robinson; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1984), 119–120.

4 For a general overview of the research history concerning the manuscript, see Poirier, *Le Tonnerre intellect parfait*, 1–8.

5 Two contributions in Poirier, *Le Tonnerre intellect parfait*, 13–53 and 53–97.

6 W.-P. Funk in Poirier, *Le Tonnerre intellect parfait*, 96–97.

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

8 John W. B. Barns, Gerald M. Browne and John C. Shelton, eds., *Nag Hammadi Codices. Greek and Coptic Papyri from the Cartonnage of the Covers* (NHS XVI; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1981), 4–5.

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.

10 Anne McGuire, “Introduction,” in *The Thunder: Perfect Mind*. Online: <http://www.stoa.org/diotima/anthology/thunder.shtml>.

11 George W. MacRae, “The Thunder: Perfect Mind,” in *Nag Hammadi Codices v, 2–5 and vi with Papyrus Berolinensis 8502, 1 and 4* (ed. Douglas M. Parrott; NHC XI; The Coptic Gnostic Library; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1979), 231.

12 Layton, “The Riddle of the Thunder (NHC VI,2),” 38; see also Patricia Cox Miller, “In Praise of Nonsense,” in *Classical Mediterranean Spirituality. Egyptian, Greek, Roman* (ed. A. H. Armstrong; London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986), 481 who just calls it a “poem”.

13 Layton, *The Gnostic Scriptures*, 77–78.

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 “Botenselbstsbericht”. 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 “Botenselbstsbericht” 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:

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- 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).
- 16 Hans-Gerhart Bethge, “‘Nebront’ Die zweite Schrift aus Nag Hammadi-Codex VI: Eingeleitet und übersetzt vom Berliner Arbeitskreis für koptisch-gnostische Schriften,” in *TLZ* 98 (1973): 99. Poirier mentions that also the editors of the apocryphal *Acts of John* describes *Thund.* as a “discours de revelation gnostique”, cf. Poirier, *Le Tonnerre intellect parfait*, 98.
- 17 Heinz Becker, *Die Reden des Johannesevangeliums und der Stil der gnostischen Offenbarungsrede* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1956).
- 18 Poirier, *Le Tonnerre intellect parfait*, 98–99.
- 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. Layton²⁶ and S. Giversen.²⁷ 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.²⁸ 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 Paragraphs²⁹

§1 (13:1) *Titre*

§2 (13:2–16a) *Prologue*

(13:2–5a), (13:5b–15a), (13:15b–16a)

§§3–14 (13:16b–21:5a) *Développement*

§3 (13:16b–14:9a)

(13:16b–22a), (13:22b–27a), (13:27b–32), (13:33–14:9a)

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 (NHС VI,2)," 40 n. 9, he admits that some sayings are difficult to identify as one or the other element.

27 Søren Giversen, "Jeg-er teksten I kodeks VI fra Nag Hammadi," in *Hilsen til Noack. Fra kolleger og medarbejdere til Bent Noack på 60-årsdagen den 22. august 1975* (ed. Niels Hyldahl and Eduard Nielsen; København: G. E. C. Gad, 1975), 65–80. Giversen distinguishes between four elements: self-proclamations, appellations, exhortations, and rhetorical questions. Giversen is faithful to the text in his division, but his procedure also leaves the text somewhat fragmented.

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)

(14:27b–32a), (14:32b–15:1), (15:2–14), (15:15–16a), (15:16b–21), (15:22–24), (15:25–29a)

§7 (15:29b–17:3b)

(15:29b–30), (15:31–16:3a), (16:3b–31a), (16:31b–17:3a)

§8 (17:3b–18:8)

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

(19:20b–25a), (19:25b–27), (19:28–20:5a)

§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”.³⁰

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.

30 I already argued for such a division in Tilde Bak, “Adskillensens åbenbaring. En analyse af Tordenen: fuldkommen forstand (NHС VI,2)” (Master’s thesis, University of Copenhagen, 2004), 22–24.

- 2 **14:15–18:8 “Opposite Social Concepts”**
 (14:15–27) hate—love; (14:27–15:29) exalt—disparage; (15:29–17:3) Greeks—Barbarians; (17:3–18:8) small—large.
- 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”**
 (19:20–25) second linguistic passage; (19:26–34) knowledge of the name; (20:1–5) damaged text; (20:5–26) judgment-acquittal; (20:26–28) bridge; (20:28–35) third linguistic passage; (21:1–5) damaged text; (21:6–32) epilogue.

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 (ἀνοκ τε/πε) 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” (ἀνοκ γαρ τσοφ[ια] [ἡ]ἑλληνας ἀγω τγνώσις ἡ[ἡ]β[α]ρ[α]ρ[ο]ς) (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 8:12.

32 Giversen, “Jeg-er teksten i kodeks VI 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 Cumae³⁶ 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

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- 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: Almqvist & Wiksell International/Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1977), 115, who adds that neither does Proverbs include the antithetical element.
- 36 See Jan Bergman, *Ich bin Isis: Studien zum memphitischen Hintergrund der griechischen Isisaretalogien* (Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis; Historia Religionum 3; Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1968), 301–303.
- 37 See especially Poirier, *Le Tonnerre intellect parfait*, 155.
- 38 Gilles Quispel, “Jewish Gnosis and Mandaean Gnosticism: Some Reflections on the Writing Brontè,” in *Les Textes de Nag Hammadi (Colloque du Centre d’Histoire des Religions, Strasbourg, 23–25 Octobre 1974)* (ed. Jacques-Étienne Ménard; Leiden: Brill, 1975), 88; MacRae, “Discourses of the Gnostic Revealer,” 116 and Layton, “The Riddle of the Thunder (NHC VI,2),” 44.
- 39 George W. MacRae, “The ego-proclamations in Gnostic Sources,” in *The Trial of Jesus* (ed. Ernst Bammel; SBT 13; London: SCM Press LTD, 1970), 133 and George W. MacRae, “The Thunder: Perfect Mind,” in *Protocol of the Fifth Colloquy of the Center for Hermeneutical Studies in Hellenistic and Modern Culture, no. 5* (ed. W. Wuellner; Berkeley: Center for Hermeneutical Studies in Hellenistic and Modern Culture, 1975), 3.
- 40 Poirier, *Le Tonnerre intellect parfait*, 156. Cf. also his chapter on “Brontè et les ‘isiaca’” pp. 153–157.

suffices to repeat that *Trim. Prot.* also contains long sequences of $\lambda\nu\omicron\kappa$ $\tau\epsilon/\pi\epsilon$ -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 $\lambda\nu\omicron\kappa$ $\tau\epsilon/\pi\epsilon$ -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” ([$\bar{\nu}$]ΤΑΥΤΑΟΥΘΕΙ $\lambda\nu\omicron\kappa$ ΕΒΟΛ $\xi\bar{\nu}$ [Τ]ϚΟΜ) (13:1–2)), whereas both Protenoia 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” ($\lambda\nu\omicron\kappa$ $\tau\epsilon$ $\tau\epsilon\sigma\zeta\bar{\iota}\mu\epsilon$ $\lambda\gamma\omega$ $\tau\pi\alpha\rho\theta\epsilon\nu\omicron\varsigma$) (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” ($\lambda\nu\omicron\kappa$ $\tau\epsilon$ $\tau\zeta\bar{\iota}\mu\epsilon$. $\lambda\nu\omicron\kappa$ $\tau\epsilon$ $\tau\pi\alpha\rho\theta\epsilon\nu\omicron\varsigma$). 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 . . .” ($\lambda\iota\alpha$ $\tau\omicron\upsilon\gamma\tau\omicron$ $\sigma\epsilon\lambda\omega$ $\bar{\iota}\mu\omicron\varsigma$ $\epsilon\rho\omicron\varsigma$ $\chi\epsilon$ $\alpha\sigma\chi\omicron\omicron\varsigma$ $\chi\epsilon$); and in the *Hypostasis of the Archons*, it is introduced by $\chi\epsilon$. 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).⁴² 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.⁴³ 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*.⁴⁴

Another literary parallel to *Thund.* is found in the so-called "Dinanukht's Book" of the Mandaean *Ginza*,⁴⁵ 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."⁴⁶ MacRae suggests that perhaps the passage in the *Ginza* "echoes an older *topos* in the Mandaean literature that has roots common with *The Thunder*."⁴⁷ 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.⁴⁸

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.⁴⁹

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.

44 Poirier, *Le Tonnerre intellect parfait*, 138.

45 See Mark Lidzbarski, *Ginza. Der Schatz oder Das grosse Buch der Mandäer* (Quellen der Religionsgeschichte 13, gr. 4; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978).

46 *Ibid.*: 207:35–36. I have translated Lidzbarski's German translation.

47 MacRae, "Discourses of the Gnostic Revealer," 119.

48 Poirier, *Le Tonnerre intellect parfait*, 140.

49 For a few other literary parallels see Poirier, *Le Tonnerre intellect parfait*, 132–141, where he draws attention to P. Berol. 15995, f. 21^v, *Apophysis Megale* cited by Hippolytus in his *Elenchos* (VI,17:2–3), 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.

51 Layton, “The Riddle of the Thunder (NHC V,2),” 1986.

52 McGuire, “The Thunder, Perfect Mind,” 43.

53 *Ibid.*: 48.

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.⁵⁴

To Poirier the antithetical and paradoxical self-proclamations tell us that the female revealer is “un être absolu.”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.”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.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.⁵⁸ With respect to the function of paradox and antithesis in *Thund.*, Taussig's team seems to be much in line with

54 *Ibid.*: 43.

55 Poirier, *Le Tonnerre intellect parfait*, 119.

56 *Loc. cit.*

57 *Loc. cit.*

58 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."⁵⁹

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.⁶⁰

Through my analysis of *Thund.* it will become apparent that I agree with McGuire, Poirier and Olsen⁶¹ 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.⁶²

59 Hal Taussig et al., *The Thunder: Perfect Mind. A New Translation and Introduction* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 94.

60 Nanna Liv Elkjær Olsen, "Tordenen: Den fuldkomne bevidsthed—en bevidsthedssønder-slående aretalogi," in *Den Sammenklappede Tid. Festskrift til Jørgen Podemann Sørensen* (ed. Tim Jensen og Mikael Rothstein; København, Forlaget Chaos, 2011), 361–363 and 367.

61 Although I do not consider the question of performativity.

62 Poirier, *Le Tonnerre intellect parfait*, 147–149.

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.⁶³ 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.⁶⁴ 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."⁶⁵

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.⁶⁶

The First Linguistic Passage

14:9–15

... ΑΝΟΚ ΠΕ ΠΚΑΡΩϞ
 ΕΤΕΝΑΥΩΤΓΑΞΟϞ· ΑΥΩ ΤΕΠΗΝΟΙ
 Δ ΕΤΕΝΑΩΕΠΕΣΡ̅ΠΜΕΕΥΕ·
 ΑΝΟΚ ΤΕ ΤΕΣΗΗ ΕΤΕΝΑΩΕΠΕΣ
 ΞΡΟΟΥ· ΑΥΩ ΠΛΟΓΟΣ ΕΤΕΝΑΩΕ
 ΠΕΦΕΙΝΕ· ΑΝΟΚ ΠΕ ΠΩΑΧΕ Ἰ
 ΠΑΡΑΝ·

... 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

63 Turner, *Sethian Gnosticism and the Platonic Tradition*, 153 note 23; Layton, *The Gnostic Scriptures*, 87; Denzey, "What did the Montanists Read?" 435.

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:

καρωϙ—επινοια—(ἡροοϙ)—σμη—λογος—ωδ.ξε—(παν)
Silence—Thought—(Sound)—Voice—Word/Discourse—Speech/
Utterance—(Name)

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

καρωϙ—μεεϙε—ἡροοϙ—σμη—λογος
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: $\alpha\lambda\omicron\kappa \tau\epsilon \tau\epsilon\sigma\mu\eta \epsilon\tau\epsilon\lambda\alpha\omega\epsilon\pi\epsilon\sigma\eta\eta\omicron\omega\gamma \lambda\gamma\omega \pi\lambda\omicron\gamma\omicron\sigma \epsilon\tau\epsilon\lambda\alpha\omega\epsilon\pi\epsilon\phi\epsilon\mu\epsilon$, in that I have rendered both $\eta\eta\omicron\omega\gamma$ and $\epsilon\mu\epsilon$ 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 $\eta\lambda\alpha\omega\epsilon$. 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/μεεγε/επινοια). 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 φωνή σημαντική ἀπὸ διανοίας ἐκπεμπομένη (a sentence (logos) is an intelligible voice, issued from thought).⁶⁸

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 καρωϩ (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 aretological style of the text provides a divine manifestation which is anything but silent.

68 Diogenes Laertius: *Lives*, VII, 56.

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” (III,2; 42:21–43:1).

70 *Marsanes* 4:19–24 “The thirteenth speaks concerning [the Unknown] Silent One, even the foundation of the indistinguishable One.” Translation by John D. Turner, “Marsanes.

Allogenes (NHC XI,3)⁷¹ 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 (εἰρηνοία). 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 εἰρηνοία 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 εἰρηνοία 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

NHC X,” in *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures. The International Edition* (ed. Marvin Meyer; New York: Harper Collins, 2007). There are many other examples in that text.

71 *Allogenes* 53:23–25 “On account of the third silence of Mentality and the undivided secondary activity that appeared in the first thought, that is, the Barbelo Aeon, and the undivided semblance of division, even the Triple-Powered One and the nonsubstantial Existence, it appeared by means of an activity that is stable and silent.” Translation by John D. Turner, “Allogenes the Stranger. NHV XI,3,” in *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures. The International Edition* (ed. Marvin Meyer; New York: Harper Collins, 2007).

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.

73 Taussig, *The Thunder: Perfect Mind*, 2 “and the idea infinitely recalled”; Gilhus, *Gnostiske Skrifter*, 84 “og ettertanken med det mangfoldige minne”; McGuire, “The Thunder: Perfect Mind (CG VI,2:13,1–21,32),” 1 “and the much-remembered thought”; Poirier, *Le Tonnerre intellect parfait*, 180–181 “et la pensée dont la memoire est riche”; Layton, *The Gnostic Scriptures*, 80 “and afterthought, whose memory is so great”; MacRae, “The Thunder: Perfect Mind,” 236–237 “and the idea whose remembrance is frequent”; Giversen, “Jeg-er teksten i kodeks VI fra Nag Hammadi,” 73 “og den eftertanke hvis omtanke er stor”; Bethge, “Nebront’ Die zweite Schrift aus Nag Hammadi-Codex VI,” 101 “und die Epinoia, an die vieles (in der Welt) erinnert”.

ΠΡΩΤ-ΕΝΝΟΙΑ (*first-Thought*). According to Crum, ΜΕΕΥΕ can be either a translation of the Greek διάνοια, νόημα, ἔννοια, ἐπίνοια, and many other terms, which shows the broadness of the Coptic noun. The female revealer of *Thund.* is not designated as ΜΕΕΥΕ, but only as ΕΠΙΝΟΙΑ. *Thund.* does, however, use the Coptic ΜΕΕΥΕ, although only in compound expressions such as ΜΕΕΥΕ ε—(think of/recognize) (13:4, 6 and 16:26, 31) and ῤΠΜΕΕΥΕ (remembrance) (14:11).⁷⁴ The obvious question now is why *Thund.* does not use ΜΕΕΥΕ for “thought” instead of ΕΠΙΝΟΙΑ, 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” (ΤΕΠΙΝΟΙΑ ἸΠΟΥΘΕΙΝ) and is referred to as “life” (ΖΩΗ) (*Apocryphon of John* ΝΗC II,20:19).⁷⁵ Most importantly, though, she is called “the Epinoia of luminous Pronoia” (ΤΕΠΙΝΟΙΑ ἸΤΠΡΟΝΟΙΑ ἸΟΥΘΕΙΝ) (28:1–2), 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 (ΕCΤCΕΒΟ ἸΜΑC ΔΤΕCΒΙΝΕΙ ΔΠΙΤῆ ἸΠCΠΕΡΜΑ . . . ΕΠΜΑἿΤ ΒΒΩC ΕΖΡΑἿ) (20:21–24). Furthermore, she is the one who awakens his thought (ΠΕCΜΕΕΥΕ).

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).⁷⁶ The tree is also of great importance in the *Hypostasis of the Archons* (ΝΗC 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*,

74 Poirier, *Le Tonnerre intellect parfait*, 362.

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).”⁷⁷

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 (ἄουε) of Adam’s perception (αἰσθησις) (22:25). The state of mind of Adam is also described as a drunkenness from which he is to become sober (ῥηηφε) 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 (...ϠΑΝΤΟΥῚῤῥΗΦΕ ἸΣΕΠΩΤ ΕῒΡΔἰ ΕΠΟΥΚΗΜΗΤΗΡΙΟΝ· ΔΥΩ ΣΕΝΔΓΙΝΕ ἸΜΟΕΙ ἸΠΜΑ ΕῒΜΜΔΥ...) (21:27–30).

In *Trim. Prot.* the term ΕΠΙΝΟΙΑ is not used as a designation for Protennoia.⁷⁸ 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.⁷⁹ 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.”⁸⁰

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 ΕΠΙΝΟΙΑ in *Trim. Prot.* See chapter on *Trim. Prot.* for references.

79 Turner, *Sethian Gnosticism and the Platonic Tradition*, 227.

80 Turner, “Introduction, ΝΗC XIII,1*”: Trimorphic Protennoia 35*,1–50*,24,” 435. Cf. also my chapter on *Trim. Prot.* for an analysis of the role of Epinoia in that text.

in the long version of the *Apocryphon of John*, namely, the “I am”-declaration (ΔΝΟΚ 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, Protенnoia, 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/Protенnoia. 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.

82 Turner, *Sethian Gnosticism and the Platonic Tradition*, 223.

83 *Ibid.*: 227–228.

manifestation: the “ἄνοκ πε/τε”-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 II,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

84 *On the Origin of the World* (NHC II,5 and XIII,2 (fragment)) 114:4–15.

85 *The Hypostasis of the Archons* (NHC II,4) 89:11–17.

86 Layton, “The Riddle of the Thunder (NHC V,2),” 48.

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.

89 King, *The Secret Revelation of John*, 187, here speaking of the same strategy in the *Apocryphon of John*.

aspect of Pronoia/Barbelo, who is the emissary of the Power (ΤΥΟΜ), 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 teaching, which recalls both 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” (ΠΟΟΥΝ ΔΥΩ ΤΜΝΤΑΤΟΟΟΥΝ) (14:26–27), “war and peace” (ΠΠΟΛΕΜΟΣ ΔΥΩ †ΡΗΝΗ) (14:31–32), or “the union and the dissolution” (ΤΖΩΤΡ ΜΝ ΠΒΩΛ ΕΒΟΛ) (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” (ῤΠΜΕΕΥΕ) 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 “ἀνοκ πρ/τε”-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” (ΠΟΥΩΝ̄Ξ ΕΒΟΛ Ν̄Τ.Δ.ΙΞΕΡΕΙΣ) (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 (ῥΠΟΥΥ), as does Protennoia throughout *Trim. Prot.* In *Thund.*, Sound figures as a description of the multiplicity of the Voice (CΜΗ): “It is I who am the Voice whose *Sound* is manifold”.

The Voice (CΜΗ)⁹² is a designation with which both the Epinoia of *Thund.* and Protennoia are identified. But whereas *Trim. Prot.* distinguishes rather sharply between ῥΠΟΥΥ and CΜΗ, *Thund.* seems to be closer to the Stoic understanding of the Greek equivalent to CΜΗ, that is, φωνή, than *Trim. Prot.* is. According to Diogenes Laertius’ account of the Stoic theory of a verbal expression, φωνή 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 (φωνή). Therefore, when Protennoia reveals herself as both sound and voice, she splits up the Stoic notion of φωνή into sound (ῥΠΟΥΥ) and voice (CΜΗ). *Thund.* does use the term “sound” (ῥΠΟΥΥ) but only as a descriptive term for Voice, thereby pulling sound and voice together. Thus, it lies somewhat closer to the Stoic conception of φωνή as the unarticulated human voice.

92 Contrary to the diversities of translation of CΜΗ 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.⁹³ It is then the obvious, immediate conclusion to assume that the title of *Thund.* (ΤΕΒΡΟΝΤΗ: ΝΟΥΣ ΝΤΕΛΕΙΟΣ) has something to do with the revelation which takes place in the text. The following paragraph will sustain this understanding of ΒΡΟΝΤΗ to be correct. The discussion of the title is introduced at this point because ΒΡΟΝΤΗ 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.⁹⁴ 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 φωνή 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 “Jupiter 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 “τ”, so that together with the proceeding “ε” it would constitute the definite article τε. 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: ΝΕΒΡΟΝΤΗ, regarding Nebront as a parallel to the Mandaean *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.

ΝΟΥΣ ἸΤΕΛΕΙΟΣ (Perfect Mind).⁹⁵ Furthermore, in an additional article from 1975, he argues that *Thund.* is part of a second-century, Middle Platonic exegetical tradition of the Platonic myth of Er,⁹⁶ where a clap of thunder and an earthquake mark the ascent of the souls to their original home.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 *direct* literary source of *Thund.*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.⁹⁹ The problem of finding a link between the title of *Thund.* and the text it introduces lies in the fact that nowhere in the text is the term ΒΡΟΝΤΗ repeated. Nor is its Coptic equivalent ΞΡΟΥΜΠΕ/ ΞΡΟΥΒ(Β)ΔΙ.¹⁰⁰ Meanwhile, it is the general opinion that the second part of the title might be reconstructed in 18:9 "ΔΝΟΚ ΔΕ ΠΕ ΠΝΟΥΣ Ἰ[ΤΕΛΕΙΟΣ]". 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 *is* the Perfect Mind, which means that she *is* the Thunder. He illustrates it in the following manner: βροντή = νοῦς τέλειος = locutrice.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

95 Michel Tardieu, "Le titre du deuxième écrit du codex v1," in *Mus* 87 (1974): 523–530. He concludes that *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 μήτις, σοφία, νοῦς, διάνοια and νόητις. (p. 529).

96 *Republic* x, 621 b 1–4.

97 Michel Tardieu, "Le titre de CG VI 2 (addenda)," in *Mus* 88 (1975): 365–366.

98 *Ibid.*: 367.

99 Poirier, *Le Tonnerre intellect parfait*, 204–205.

100 Giversen, "Jeg-er teksten i kodeks v1 fra Nag Hammadi," 71, makes an attempt to reconstruct the usual Coptic rendering of the Greek ἡ βροντή: ΞΡΟΥ ἸΠΕ (the voice of heaven) in 18:9: ΔΝΟΚ ΔΕ ΠΕ ΠΝΟΥΣ Ἰ[ΤΕΛΕΙΟΣ] ΔΥΩ ΤΑΝΑΠΑΥΣΙΣ ἸΠ[ΞΡΟΥ] ἸΠΕ "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, *Le Tonnerre intellect parfait*, 205, n. 35.

101 Poirier, *Le Tonnerre intellect parfait*, 205.

et de son message.”¹⁰² 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).¹⁰³ 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.”¹⁰⁴ 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.¹⁰⁵

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 φωνή 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.¹⁰⁶ 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 ΒΡΟΝΤΗ 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

102 *Ibid.*: 206.

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.

104 Poirier, *Le Tonnerre intellect parfait*, 207.

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 ΝΟΥΣ ἤτελειος 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 ΒΡΟΝΤΗ 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 (ΝΟΥΣ) 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. ΝΟΥΣ 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 ΝΟΥΣ as Silence and origin: “... $\text{ΟΥΝΟΥΣ ΕΦΖΗΠ ΕΤΕΤΑΙ ΤΕ ΤΜΗΤΚΑΡΩΦ ΕΣΖΗΠ ΔΠΤΗΡΦ ΕΣΟ ἸΑΤΟΥ ΔΖΜΕΣ ΟΥΘΕΙΝ ἸΑΤ΄ΟΥΙΤ΄ ΤΠΗΓΗ ἸΠΤΗ[Ρ]Φ ΤΝΟΥΝΕ ἸΠΑΙΩΝ ΤΗΡΦ}$ ”, (a hidden mind, that is, the Silence hidden from the All, being unrepeatable, an immeasurable Light, the source of the A[1]), 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” (ΟΥΝΟΥΣ ἤτελειος [c. . .]) 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 λογος (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 Protennaio, 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” (εΤΕΝΑΩΘΕ ΠΕΦΕΙΝΕ)? The translation of ΕΙΝΕ as “form” is only one of several possibilities. Most translators of *Thund.* render the Coptic word “image”, “appearance”, or the like.¹⁰⁷ 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, ΕΙΝΕ is the Coptic equivalent of many Greek terms, including εἶδος, which again may have several meanings. I fasten on the language-related context in which εἶδος has the connotation of class, kind or form, or more precisely: *logical species*.¹⁰⁸ 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

107 Taussig, *The Thunder: Perfect Mind*, 2 “guises”; Gilhus, *Gnostiske Skrifter*, 84 “uttrykk”; McGuire, “The Thunder: Perfect Mind (CG VI,2: 13,1–21,32),” 1 “forms”; Poirier, *Le Tonnerre intellect parfait*, 180–181 “aspects”; Layton, *The Gnostic Scriptures*, 80 “images”; MacRae, “The Thunder: Perfect Mind,” 236–237 “appearance”; Giversen, “Jeg-er teksten i kodeks VI fra Nag Hammadi,” 73 “udseende”; Bethge, “‘Nebront’ Die zweite Schrift aus Nag Hammadi-Codex VI,” 101 “Abbilder”.

108 Cf. *LSJ*. The specifically linguistic use of εἶδος 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 $\phi\omega\nu\eta\ \theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$. 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 finding¹⁰⁹ 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

$\lambda\omicron\kappa\ \pi\epsilon\ \pi\omega\lambda\chi\epsilon\ \bar{\mu}\pi\alpha\rho\alpha\nu$ (“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 $\omega\lambda\chi\epsilon$? It is usually translated as either “speech”, “utterance” or even “word”, and thus understood as the Coptic equivalent for the Greek $\lambda\acute{o}\gamma\omicron\varsigma$. However, *Thund.* clearly distinguishes between the untranslated $\lambda\omicron\gamma\omicron\varsigma$, which was employed in the preceding proclamation, and $\omega\lambda\chi\epsilon$. Therefore, we must assume that in *Thund.* $\omega\lambda\chi\epsilon$ has a different connotation than $\lambda\omicron\gamma\omicron\varsigma$.

In his commentary, Poirier renders $\omega\lambda\chi\epsilon$ by “énoncé”, thus understanding it as corresponding to the Greek $\rho\acute{\eta}\mu\alpha$ ¹¹⁰ which means “that which is said or spoken” (not to be confused with how the Stoic *lepton* 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 $\omega\lambda\chi\epsilon$ as “son acception générique de mot, language, acte

109 See for instance Poirier, *Le Tonnerre intellect parfait*, 118.

110 According to Crum 613–614, this is certainly a possibility.

111 *LSJ*: 949–953.

d'énonciation".¹¹² 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 $\Theta\Delta\Xi\epsilon$ 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 φωνή 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 (ῥῆχος). It is important to remember though, that a λέξις is still a φωνή, 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 ΣH should be understood as the articulated, but not yet intelligible Voice, since in that text it accounts for the level preceding the $\lambda\omicron\gamma\omicron\varsigma$ (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 φωνή and the λέξις. In *Thund.* it seems at first sight as if the same distinction is at stake. However, if $\Theta\Delta\Xi\epsilon$ is understood corresponding to the Greek λέξις, it would follow that *Thund.* differentiates between ΣH (Voice) and $\Theta\Delta\Xi\epsilon$ (Speech), thus following the Stoic delineation of the different levels of a verbal expression.

In *Thund.* ΣH may thus be understood as both the inarticulate and articulate, but unintelligible, Voice. Accordingly, $\Theta\Delta\Xi\epsilon$ must be understood as the always articulate but still unintelligible Speech/Utterance/Pronouncement. However appealing this understanding of $\Theta\Delta\Xi\epsilon$ 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 ($\rho\alpha\text{N}$) 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 ρΑΝ (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” (ΤΗΟΣ ἸΣΟΜ) and about not moving the name (ΝΑΚΙΜ ΔΝ ἸΠΡΑΝ), but it is not clear who it is that is not moving the name. Poirier suggests that the subject of ΝΑΚΙΜ ΔΝ is the same as in 21:10 [ΠΕΤΑΞ]ΕΡΑΤΥ ΠΕΝΤΑΥΤΑΜΙΟΪ (“It is he who stands firm who created me”).¹¹³ 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 ΒΡΟΝΤΗ 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 ΒΡΟΝΤΗ. 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: ἸΤΗΟΣ ἸΣΟΜ· ΔΥΩ ΠΕ[Τ][ΔΞΕΡΑ]ΤΥ ΝΑΚΙΜ ΔΝ ἸΠΡΑΝ· [ΠΕΤΑΞ]ΕΡΑΤΥ ΠΕΝΤΑΥΤΑΜΙΟΪ (“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.”).

114 Cf. Poirier, *Le Tonnerre intellect parfait*, 227. See also Einar Thomassen, “Gnostic Semiotics: The Valentinian Notion of the Name,” *Tem* 29 (1993): 141–156.

115 Tardieu, “Le titre du deuxième écrit du codex VI,” 524.

116 Poirier, *Le Tonnerre intellect parfait*, 205, n. 33.

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.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.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. ΒΡΟΝΤΗ 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, ΒΡΟΝΤΗ 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

¹¹⁷ McGuire, “Thunder, Perfect Mind,” 45.

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—ΒΡΟΝΤΗ—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 ΒΡΟΝΤΗ, 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.”¹²⁰ So, the sound of the female revealer is ΒΡΟΝΤΗ which obviously is a “sound-word”. Being an onomatopoeic 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 *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 . . .”¹²¹

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 *Trim. Prot.*, although with a few minor differences. To summarize the manifestation of the female revealer:

Silence—Thought—(Sound)—Voice—Word/Discourse—Speech/
Utterance—(Name)

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 (*phonē*), over the articulated yet unintelligible speech (*lexis*), to the articulated and fully intelligible word/discourse (*logos*). Reading this short passage from *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 *Thund.* to describe the manifestation of the divine. At the same time *Thund.* combines the use of Stoic material with the Platonic notion of the name found in the *Cratylus*, which again was revised by the Stoics.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*: 47.

¹²¹ *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”
 εἶδωλον, “représentation”
 ἐπιστήμη (καὶ νοῦς ἀληθῆς τε δόξα), “science”, “connaissance”
 ὁ δὴ γνωστόν τε καὶ ἀληθῶς ἐστὶν 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.

122 Poirier, *Le Tonnerre intellect parfait*, 225–226, who refers to section 342a 6-b 2 in the *Seventh Letter*.

123 *Ibid.*: 226.

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.*: $\omega\epsilon\chi\epsilon$ (Word), $\xi\pi\alpha\gamma$ (Voice), $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ (Mind) and $\overline{\mu\eta\tau\iota\kappa\alpha\rho\omega\upsilon}$ (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 *Apophysis*, attested in Hippolytus’ *Refutatio omnium haeresium* VI,12, 2, which enumerates six roots of the engendered world: $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$, $\acute{\epsilon}\pi\nu\omicron\iota\alpha$, $\phi\omega\eta\eta$, $\delta\nu\omicron\mu\alpha$, $\lambda\omicron\gamma\iota\sigma\mu\acute{o}\varsigma$ and $\acute{\epsilon}\nu\theta\acute{\upsilon}\mu\eta\sigma\iota\varsigma$. 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 *Apophysis* 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 $\xi\pi\alpha\gamma$, which is another spelling of $\xi\pi\omicron\omicron\gamma$, could also be translated with “sound” as it is done in *Thund.* and *Trim. Prot.* However, “voice” is still possible.

125 The Coptic word $\omega\epsilon\chi\epsilon$ may be a translation of the Greek $\lambda\acute{o}\gamma\omicron\varsigma$.

126 Poirier, *Le Tonnerre intellect parfait*, 227.

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.¹²⁹ 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."¹³⁰ 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"¹³¹ (ἀΝΟΚ ΠΕ ΠῚΩΤῚΡ ἸᾶΝ ΠῚΩΛ ΕΒΟΛ· ΑΝΟΚ ΠΕ ΤΜΟΝΗ· ΑΥΩ ΑΝΟΚ ΠΕ ΠῚΩΛ) (19:10–12), the female revealer touches upon a central issue of the notion of *diairesis*, with which she identifies herself in the third

129 Long, "Stoic linguistics, Plato's *Cratylus*, and Augustine's *De dialectica*," 49–55.

130 Poirier, *Le Tonnerre intellect parfait*, 224.

131 See below for further analysis.

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” (ΑΝΟΚ ΔΝΟΚ ΟΥΑΤΝΟΒΕ· ΑΥΩ ΤΝΟΥΝΕ ΜΠΝΟΒΕ ΟΥΕΒΟΛ Ν̄ΖΗΤ ΤΕ· ΔΝΟΚ ΤΕ ΤΕΠΙΘΥΜΙΑ Ξ̄ΝΟΥΖΟΡΑΔΙΣ· ΑΥΩ ΤΕΓΚΡΑΤΕΙΑ Μ̄ΦΗΤ ΕΣΩΟΟΠ Ν̄ΖΗΤ·) (19:15–20).

We shall now turn to the second linguistic passage.

The Second Linguistic Passage

19:20–25

... ΔΝΟΚ
ΠΕ ΠΣΩΤ̄Μ ΕΤΩΗΠ Ν̄ΟΥΟΝ
ΝΙΜ· Μ̄ΝΠΩΔ.ΧΕ ΕΤΕΜΑΥΩΕ
ΜΔΖΤΕ Ν̄ΜΟΦ· ΔΝΟΚ ΟΥΕΒΩ
ΕΜΑΣΩΔ.ΧΕ· ΑΥΩ ΝΑΩΕ
ΤΑΜ̄ΝΤΖΔΖ Ν̄ΩΔ.ΧΕ·

... 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 langage et de la pensée”.¹³² 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 (ΠΩΤΗ). 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” (ΔΥΩ ἸΡΕϞ ΩΤΗ ΩΤΗ ΕΡΟΐ) (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 numerous 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 saying, 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 sayings 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 contraste entre le mutisme et l'abondance des paroles, à accentuer le caractère paradoxal de la figure sapientielle qui s'exprime dans Brontë.” 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).¹³⁶ 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.¹³⁷

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.¹³⁸ 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:¹³⁹

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.

136 Jean-Pierre Mahé, “Six énigmes arméniennes anciennes sur le mythe de l’homme primordial,” *REArm* 15 (1981): 53.

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

... *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 "audition, parole, non-parole, loquacité, écoute, instruction puis cri, écoute, manifestation, énoncé, refutation...".¹⁴¹ In other words, a linguistic vocabulary. Nevertheless, the interruption by another saying (19:31–32) disturbs the progression of the text enough for us to separate the two passages.¹⁴² 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."¹⁴³ Firstly, the saying clearly alludes to her linguistic (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" ([Ἰ]ΤΑΥΤΑΘΥΟΕΙ ΔΝΟΚ ΕΒΟΛ ΕἸΝ [Τ]ϚΟΜ') (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.¹⁴⁴ It must be noted here that the proclamation is important, since it contains the only occurrence of ΝΟΥC (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: ΕἸΞἸ ΠCΘ ἸΠΚΑC "upon the face of the earth" by making dots above the letters. The general assumption is that the scribe recognized it as a dittography since the same words appear in line 30. Cf. MacRae, "The Thunder: Perfect Mind," 249 and Poirier, *Le Tonnerre intellect parfait*, 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” (ΔΝΟΚ ΤΕ ΤΓΝΩΣΙΣ ἸΠΠΑΡΑΝ). 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” (ΔΥΩ ΝΤΑΙἸ ὩΔΑΝΕΤΜΕΕΥΕ 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 ϙΦ[Ρ]ἄΓΙC (“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 (ἔβCΩ) in 20:18–25:

*For what is inside of you is what is outside of you,
and the one who shaped you on the outside
has made an impression of it
inside of you. And what
you see outside of you,
you see inside of you;
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 ἔβCΩ “garment” (47*:17) 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 CΤΟΛΗ (Cτολή). 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

145 MacRae, “The Thunder: Perfect Mind,” 250–251.

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 $\bar{\upsilon}\phi[\rho]\alpha\varsigma\iota\varsigma$ as “des énoncés”.¹⁴⁷ He finds this fitting with his reconstruction of $[\rho\chi\eta]\mu\epsilon\iota\omicron\iota\omicron$ 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 $\chi\eta\mu\epsilon\iota\omicron\iota\omicron$ 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 20:11b–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)*

147 Poirier, *Le Tonnerre intellect parfait*, 194–195.

148 The facsimile edition of codex VI shows only a trace of the letter before “ ϕ ”, which may possibly be the supra linear stroke over “ $\bar{\upsilon}$ ”. It seems impossible to read this trace as the upper part of a “c” 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

... ΔΝΟΚ ΠΕ
 ΠCΩΤ̄Μ̄ ΕΤΩΗΠ̄ Ν̄ΖΩΒ ΝΙΜ'
 ΔΝΟΚ ΠΕ ΠΩΔ.ΧΕ ΕΤΕΜΔΥ
 ΩΔΜΑΖΤΕ Μ̄ΜΟΦ' ΔΝΟΚ ΠΕ
 ΠΡΑΝ̄ Ν̄ΤCΜΗ' ΔΥΩ ΤΕCΜΗ
 Μ̄ΠΡΑΝ' ΔΝΟΚ ΠΕ ΠCΗΜΕΙ
 ΟΝ̄ Μ̄ΠC'Ζ'ΑΪ' ΔΥΩ ΠΟΥΩΝ̄Ζ̄ ΕΒΟΛ
 Ν̄ΤΔΙΖΕΡΕCΙC' ΔΥΩ ΔΝΟΚ . . .

... 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 (ΔΝΟΚ ΠCΩΤ̄Μ̄ ΕΤΩΗΠ, “it is I who am the Hearing which is

receivable . . .”) $\bar{\eta}\zeta\omega\beta$ $\eta\mu\mu$, “in everything”¹⁵¹ instead of $\bar{\eta}\omicron\gamma\omicron\eta\eta$ $\eta\mu\mu$, “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 “ $\bar{\eta}\omicron\gamma\omicron\eta\eta$ $\eta\mu\mu$ ” in 19:21–22 refers primarily to persons,¹⁵³ whereas the “ $\bar{\eta}\zeta\omega\beta$ $\eta\mu\mu$ ” in 20:29 refers to things.¹⁵⁴ So, if one chooses to translate the $\bar{\eta}$ —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 Protенноia 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” ($\Delta\eta\omicron\kappa\ \pi\epsilon\ \pi\rho\alpha\eta\ \bar{\eta}\tau\epsilon\sigma\mu\eta\ \lambda\gamma\omega\ \tau\epsilon\sigma\mu\eta$

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 $\bar{\eta}$ —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.

155 See for instance the *Apocryphon of John* 30:19–20.

ἄπραν'). 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..."¹⁵⁶ 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 משה (the name) instead of the tetragram and concludes that the association with this tradition affirms her divine character.¹⁵⁷ 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.'...").¹⁵⁸ 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,¹⁵⁹ 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 19:12.

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 meaningfulness 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.¹⁶⁰

The divine name “projects over and beyond meaning” at 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.¹⁶¹ 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.¹⁶² In that, we find a description of the ten *sefiroth*—the ten original numbers—which together with the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet

160 Gershom Scholem, “The Name of God and the Linguistic Theory of the Kabbala (Part 2),” *Diogenes* 20/80 (1972): 193–194.

161 Gershom Scholem, “The Name of God and the Linguistic Theory of the Kabbala (Part 1),” *Diogenes* 20/79 (1972): 70.

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 Yešira* (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”.¹⁶³

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 (ΒΡΟΝΤΗ). ΒΡΟΝΤΗ may thus be understood as a “sound-word”, an onomatopoesis of the phenomenon of thunder. Therefore, ΒΡΟΝΤΗ, 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 onomatopoeic 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.¹⁶⁴ 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)...”.¹⁶⁵ 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

163 Scholem, “The Name of God (Part 1),” 72–74.

164 Mahé, “Six énigmes arméniennes anciennes sur le mythe de l'homme primordial,” 57. 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.

165 *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, “ΒΡΟΝΤΗ”, 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 “ΒΡΟΝΤΗ” 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: ΔΝΟΚ ΠΕ ΠΣΗΜΕΙΟΝ ἸΠΣ’ Ἐ’ ΔΙ’ ΔΥΩ ΠΟΥΩΝῚ ΕΒΟΛ ἸΤΔΙΞΕΡΕΣΙC “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 ΣΗΜΕΙΟΝ are myriad depending on the context in which it is employed.¹⁶⁶ 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.¹⁶⁷ 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.

ōōōōōōōōōōōōōōōō. And (in this) way the three powers gave praise to the (great), invisible, unnameable, virginal, uncallable Spirit . . .¹⁷²

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!”¹⁷³ 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).¹⁷⁴ 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.¹⁷⁵ 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”,¹⁷⁶ 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.*¹⁷⁷ 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

172 *Ibid.*: 483. *Gospel of the Egyptians/Holy Book of the Great Invisible Spirit* (NHC III,2; IV,2) 43:18–44:13.

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).

Thund. 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.”¹⁷⁸ 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 (ΔΝΟΚ ΠΕ ΠΚΑΡΩΨ ΕΤΕΜΑΥΩΤΑΞΟΨ) (14:10). Only two other instances of “apophatic-like” language are found in the proclamation about the “speech that cannot be grasped” (ΔΝΟΚ ΠΕ ΠΩΔΧΕ ΕΤΕΜΑΥΩΔΜΑΞΤΕ ΞΜΟΨ) (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*.¹⁷⁹ 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 $\text{CHM}\epsilon\text{I}\text{O}\text{N}$ as the single letters of the alphabet, which is not the usual sense of the term.¹⁸¹ The Greek terms for “letter” are typically $\sigma\text{t}\text{o}\iota\chi\epsilon\iota\text{o}\nu$ or $\gamma\rho\acute{\alpha}\mu\mu\alpha$.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 $\sigma\eta\mu\alpha\acute{\iota}\nu\omicron\nu\tau\alpha$ and $\sigma\eta\mu\alpha\iota\nu\acute{\omicron}\mu\epsilon\nu\alpha$, 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 $\sigma\text{t}\text{o}\iota\chi\epsilon\iota\text{o}\nu$ was employed.

183 Cox Miller, “In Praise of Nonsense,” 482.

184 McGuire, “Thunder, Perfect Mind,” 49.

Diairesis

The third linguistic passage ends by the female revealer proclaiming herself to be the “manifestation of the division” (ΠΟΥΩΝῆ ΕΒΟΛ ἸΤΑΙΪΕΡΕΣΙΣ). 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 ΣΗΜΕΙΟΝ. 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 *sêmeion*, 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.¹⁸⁵ 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” (ἄνταϊεῖ φανετημεεγε εροῖ) (13:3–4). 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” (πλογοσ ετενααοε πεφεινε) (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

186 McGuire, “Thunder, Perfect Mind,” 49.

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 it 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 (διαίρεσις) 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 διαίρεσις 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.

191 Turner, *Sethian Gnosticism and the Platonic Tradition*, 625.

The context in which *Marsanes* discusses the issue of diairesis is one of “alphabetic 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.¹⁹² 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”.¹⁹³ 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 . . .¹⁹⁴

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”.¹⁹⁵

192 *Ibid.*: 632.

193 Thus, Turner, *Sethian Gnosticism and the Platonic Tradition*, 80–84.

194 *Marsanes* 35:20–36:2. Again, I bring Turner’s translation because of his reconstructions. Turner, *Sethian Gnosticism and the Platonic Tradition*, 625.

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:

καρῶν—ἐπινοία—(ἤρῳν)—σῆη—λογος—φάξε—(ῥᾶν)
 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 (ΘΑΝΤΟΥΡ̄ΝΗΦΕ Ν̄ΣΕΠΩΤ ΕΞΡΑΪ ΕΠΟΥΚΝΗΜΗΤΗΡΙΟΝ· ΑΥΩ ΣΕΝΑΒΙΝΕ Ἰ̄ΜΟΕΙ Ἰ̄ΠΠΑ ΕΤ̄ΙΜΑΥ Ν̄ΣΕΩΝ̄Ξ· ΑΥΩ Ν̄ΣΕΤ̄ΙΣΩΤ ΕΜΟΥ·) (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

196 For an analysis of *Thund.*'s affiliation with Jewish Wisdom traditions see Poirier, *Le Tonnerre intellect parfait*, 157–161.

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 (ἤχος), Voice (φωνή) and Word (λόγος) 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 (καρπός) 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 “Epinoina” 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 Protенnoia 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 Protенnoia 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 (σμη) (and Sound (ἡροοϋ)), Word (λογος) and Speech (ἠλαξε). As Protенnoia 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 φωνή 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.

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