

**Plato's *Parmenides*
and Its Heritage**

Volume 1

*History and Interpretation from the
Old Academy to Later Platonism
and Gnosticism*

Edited by

John D. Turner and Kevin Corrigan

PLATO'S *PARMENIDES* AND ITS HERITAGE
VOLUME 1

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PLATO'S *PARMENIDES* AND ITS HERITAGE, VOLUME 1

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CONTENTS

Abbreviations	vii
Introduction	1
SECTION 1: PLATO, FROM THE OLD ACADEMY TO MIDDLE PLATONISM	
1. The Place of the <i>Parmenides</i> in Plato's Thought and in the Subsequent Tradition <i>Kevin Corrigan</i>	23
2. Speusippus's Neutral Conception of the One and Plato's <i>Parmenides</i> <i>Gerald Bechtle</i>	37
3. The Fragment of Speusippus in Column I of the <i>Anonymous Commentary on the Parmenides</i> <i>Luc Brisson</i>	59
4. Speusippus and the Ontological Interpretation of the <i>Parmenides</i> <i>John Dillon</i>	67
5. The Indefinite Dyad in Sextus Empiricus's Report (<i>Adversus Mathathematicos</i> 10.248–283) and Plato's <i>Parmenides</i> <i>Thomas Szlezák</i>	79
6. Plato and Parmenides in Agreement: Ammonius's Praise of God as One-Being in Plutarch's <i>The E At Delphi</i> <i>Zlatko Pleše</i>	93
7. Moderatus, E. R. Dodds, and the Development of Neoplatonist Emanation <i>J. Noel Hubler</i>	115
SECTION 2: MIDDLE PLATONIC AND Gnostic TEXTS	
8. The Platonizing Sethian Treatises, Marius Victorinus's Philosophical Sources, and Pre-Plotinian <i>Parmenides</i> Commentaries <i>John D. Turner</i>	131

9. Is There a Gnostic “Henological” Speculation? <i>Johanna Brankaer</i>	173
10. The Greek Text behind the Parallel Sections in <i>Zostrianos</i> and Marius Victorinus <i>Volker Henning Drecoll</i>	195
11. The <i>Chaldaean Oracles</i> and the Metaphysics of the Sethian Platonizing Treatises <i>John D. Turner</i>	213
12. A Criticism of the <i>Chaldaean Oracles</i> and of the Gnostics in Columns IX and X of the <i>Anonymous Commentary on the Parmenides</i> <i>Luc Brisson</i>	233
13. The <i>Anonymous Commentary</i> on Plato's <i>Parmenides</i> and Aristotle's <i>Categories</i> : Some Preliminary Remarks <i>Gerald Bechtle</i>	243
14. Negative Theology and Radical Conceptual Purification in the <i>Anonymous Commentary</i> on Plato's <i>Parmenides</i> <i>Alain Lernoùld</i>	257
15. A Criticism of Numenius in the Last Columns (XI–XIV) of the <i>Anonymous Commentary on the Parmenides</i> <i>Luc Brisson</i>	275
References	283
Contributors	297
Subject–Name Index	301
Index Locorum	315

ABBREVIATIONS

GENERAL

ca.	circa
cf.	compare
conj.	conjecture
e.g.	for example
i.e.	in other words
frg.	fragment
Ps.	Pseudo-
rev. ed.	revised edition
sc.	that is to say
<i>test.</i>	Testimonium
TPO	Triple-Powered One

PRIMARY SOURCES

Aetius	
<i>Plac. reliq.</i>	<i>De placitis reliquiae</i>
Alcinous	
<i>Intr.</i>	<i>Introductio in Platonem</i>
<i>Didask.</i>	<i>Didaskalikos</i>
Alexander of Aphrodisias	
<i>In metaph.</i>	<i>In Aristotelis metaphysica commentarium</i>
Anonymous	
<i>In Theaet.</i>	<i>Commentarius in Platonis Theaetetum</i>
<i>Anon. in Parm.</i>	<i>Anonymus Taurinensis in Platonis Parmenidem commen-</i> <i>tarium</i>
<i>Ap. John</i>	<i>Apocryphon of John</i>
Aristotle	
<i>Eth. eud.</i>	<i>Ethica eudemia</i>
<i>Eth. nic.</i>	<i>Ethica nichomachea</i>
<i>Metaph.</i>	<i>Metaphysica</i>
<i>Top.</i>	<i>Topica</i>

Athanasius	
<i>Adv. Ar.</i>	<i>Adversus Arium</i>
Augustine	
<i>Civ.</i>	<i>De civitate Dei</i>
<i>Ord.</i>	<i>De ordine</i>
Clement	
<i>Strom.</i>	<i>Stromata (Miscellanies)</i>
<i>Cod. Bruc.</i>	<i>Codex Brucianus</i>
<i>Cod. Taur.</i>	<i>Codex Taurinensis</i>
Damascius	
<i>Dub. et sol.</i>	<i>Dubitationes et Solutiones</i>
<i>Princ.</i>	<i>De principiis</i>
<i>Vit. Isid.</i>	<i>Vita Isidori</i>
Diogenes Laertius	<i>Vitae philosophorum</i>
Dexippus	
<i>In cat.</i>	<i>In Aristotelis categorias commentarium</i>
Eusebius	
<i>Praep. ev.</i>	<i>Praeparatio evangelica</i>
Hesiod	
<i>Theog.</i>	<i>Theogony</i>
Hippolytus	
<i>Ref.</i>	<i>Refutatio omnium haeresium</i>
Iamblichus	
<i>Comm. math. sc.</i>	<i>De communi mathematica scientia</i>
<i>Theol. Arith.</i>	<i>Theologoumena arithmeticae</i>
Irenaeus	
<i>Adv. Haer.</i>	<i>Adversus Haereses</i>
Jean of Damascus	
<i>Fide orthod.</i>	<i>De fide orthodoxa</i>
John Lydus	
<i>Mens.</i>	<i>De mensibus</i>
Marius Victorinus	
<i>Adv. Ar.</i>	<i>Adversus Arium</i>
<i>Cand.</i>	<i>Ad Candidum</i>
Nicomachus of Gerasa	
<i>Arith. Intro.</i>	<i>Arithmetike eisagoge</i>
<i>Orac. chald.</i>	<i>De oraculis chaldaicis</i>
PGM	<i>Papyri Graecae Magicae</i>
Phanes	
<i>Orph. Frag.</i>	<i>Orphicorum Fragmenta</i>
<i>Orph. Hymn.</i>	<i>Orphicorum Hymni</i>
Philo	
<i>Cher.</i>	<i>De Cherubim</i>

<i>Deus</i>	<i>Quod Deus sit immutabilis</i>
<i>Fug.</i>	<i>De fuga et invention</i>
<i>Leg.</i>	<i>Legum allegoriae</i>
<i>Post.</i>	<i>De posteritate Caini</i>
<i>Prov.</i>	<i>De providentia</i>
<i>Sobr.</i>	<i>De sobrietate</i>
<i>Somn.</i>	<i>De somniis</i>
<i>Spec.</i>	<i>De specialibus legibus</i>
Plato	
<i>Charm.</i>	<i>Charmides</i>
<i>Crat.</i>	<i>Cratylus</i>
<i>Leg.</i>	<i>Leges</i>
<i>Min.</i>	<i>Minos</i>
<i>Parm.</i>	<i>Parmenides</i>
<i>Phaedr.</i>	<i>Phaedrus</i>
<i>Pol.</i>	<i>Politicus</i>
<i>Resp.</i>	<i>Respublica</i>
<i>Theaet.</i>	<i>Theaetetus</i>
<i>Tim.</i>	<i>Timaeus</i>
Plotinus	
<i>Enn.</i>	<i>Enneads</i>
Plutarch	
<i>Adv. Col.</i>	<i>Adversus Colotem</i>
<i>An. procr.</i>	<i>De animae procreatione in Timaeo</i>
<i>Comm. not.</i>	<i>De communibus notitiis adversus stoicos</i>
<i>Def. orac.</i>	<i>De defectu oraculorum</i>
<i>E Delph.</i>	<i>De E apud Delphos</i>
<i>Frat. amor.</i>	<i>De fraterno amore</i>
<i>Is. Os.</i>	<i>De Iside et Osiride</i>
<i>Quaest. plat.</i>	<i>Quaestiones platonicae</i>
Porphyry	
<i>Abst.</i>	<i>De abstinentia</i>
<i>Gaur.</i>	<i>Ad Gaurum</i>
<i>In cat.</i>	<i>In Aristotelis Categorias expositio per interrogationem et responsonem</i>
<i>Hist. phil.</i>	<i>Historia philosophiae fragmenta</i>
<i>Isag.</i>	<i>Isagoge sive quinque voces</i>
<i>Sent.</i>	<i>Porphyrii Sententiae ad intelligibilia ducentes.</i>
<i>Vit. Plot.</i>	<i>Vita Plotini</i>
<i>Vit. Pyth.</i>	<i>Vita Pythagorae</i>
Priscianus	
<i>Metaph. Theophr.</i>	<i>Metaphrasis in Theophrastum</i>

Proclus

<i>Eclog. phil. chald.</i>	<i>Eclogae de philosophia Chaldaica</i>
<i>Inst. theol.</i>	<i>Institutio Theologica</i>
<i>In Alc.</i>	<i>In Alcibiadem</i>
<i>In Parm.</i>	<i>In Parmenidem</i>
<i>In Tim.</i>	<i>In Timaeum</i>
<i>Prov.</i>	<i>De decem dubitationibus circa providentiam</i>
<i>Theol. Plat.</i>	<i>Theologia Platonica</i>

Psellus

<i>Exp. Orac. Chald.</i>	<i>Expositio oraculis chaldaicis</i>
<i>Hyp.</i>	<i>Hypotyposis</i>

Ps.-Iamblichus

<i>Theol. Arith.</i>	<i>Theologumena Arithmeticae</i>
<i>Sap. Sal.</i>	<i>Sapientia Salomonis</i>

Seneca, Lucius Annaeus

<i>Ep.</i>	<i>Epistulae morales</i>
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Sextus Empiricus

<i>Math.</i>	<i>Adversus Mathematicos</i>
<i>Pyrr. hyp.</i>	<i>Pyrrhoniae hypotyposes</i>

Simplicius

<i>In cael.</i>	<i>In Aristotelis quattuor libros de caelo commentaria</i>
<i>In cat.</i>	<i>In Aristotelis categorias commentarium</i>
<i>In phys.</i>	<i>In Aristotelis physica</i>

<i>Steles Seth</i>	<i>Three Steles of Seth</i>
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Stobaeus

<i>Anth.</i>	<i>Anthologium</i>
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Syrianus

<i>In Metaph.</i>	<i>In Metaphysica</i>
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Theon of Smyrna

<i>Exp.</i>	<i>Expositio rerum mathematicarum ad legendum Platonem utilium</i>
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Theophrastus

<i>Caus. plant.</i>	<i>De causis plantarum</i>
<i>Met.</i>	<i>Metaphysica</i>
<i>Zost.</i>	<i>Zostrianos</i>

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- ANET* Pritchard, J. B., ed. *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament with Supplement*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992
- ANRW* *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*
- Armstrong Armstrong, A. H. *Plotinus: Ennead II*. LCL 441. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1966
- BA* *Biblical Archaeologist*
- BCNH Bibliothèque copte de Nag Hammadi
- BG* *Codex Berolinensis Gnosticus*. Edited by C. Schmidt and W. C. Till, *Die gnostischen Schriften des koptischen Papyrus Berolinensis 8502. Texte und Untersuchungen 60*. Berlin: Akademie, 1955. Rev. ed. edited by H.-M. Schenke, 1972
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- BETL Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium
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- CAG Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca
- CCSG *Corpus Christianorum Series Graeca*
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- Lettere “La Colombaria”, Union Académique Internationale, Unione Accademica Nazionale, 2008
- CQ *Classical Quarterly*
- Crum Crum, W. E. 1939. *A Coptic Dictionary*. Oxford: Clarendon.
- CSEL Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum
- CUF Collection des Universités de France
- de Falco de Falco, V., ed. [*Iamblichus*] *theologoumena arithmeticae*. Leipzig: Teubner, 1922
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- HDAC Histoire des Doctrines de l'Antiquité Classique
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- HTR *Harvard Theological Review*
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- JEH *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*
- JHS *Journal of Hellenistic Studies*
- JTS *Journal of Theological Studies*
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- NHC Hag Hammadi Codex
- NHS Nag Hammadi Studies
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- RAPH Recherches d'archéologie, de philologie et d'histoire
- REG *Revue des études grecques*
- Rehm Rehm, B. and F. Paschke, eds. *Die Pseudoklementinen II: Recognitiones*. GCS 51. Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1965
- RevScPT *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques*
- RGRW Religions in the Graeco-Roman World
- RHPR *Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses*
- Rousseau-Doutreleau *Irénée de Lyon: Contre les hérésies*, Livre 1, vol. 2: *Texte et traduction*. Edited by Adelin Rousseau and L. Doutreleau. SC 264. Paris: Cerf, 1979
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- SBLSymS SBL Symposium Series
- SC *Sources chrétiennes*. Paris: Cerf, 1943–
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- TP *Testimonium Platonicum*
- TS *Theological Studies*
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- Wuensch Wuensch, R. ed. *Johannes Laurentius Lydus, Liber de mensibus*. Stuttgart: Teubner, 1967
- WUNT *Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament*
- ZAC *Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum*
- ZKG *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte*
- ZNW *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche*
- Zostrien Barry, C., W.-P. Funk, P.-H. Poirier, and J. D. Turner. *Zostrien (NH VIII, 1)*. Bibliothèque Copte de Nag Hammadi Section Textes 24. Québec: Presses de l'Université Laval; Louvain: Peeters, 2000.

INTRODUCTION

These two volumes collect the work of twenty-two scholars from ten different countries presented in a seminar, “Rethinking Plato’s *Parmenides* and Its Platonic, Gnostic and Patristic Reception,” that was held during six annual meetings of the Society of Biblical Literature from 2001 to 2006 and that has broken new ground on several fronts in the history of interpretation of Plato’s *Parmenides*. There was also a special conference, “Mittelplatonisches im nachplotinischen Diskurs bis Augustin und Proklos,” held at the end of July, 2007 in Tübingen, Germany, organized and hosted by Volker Drecoll, whose results were published in the *Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum* (ZAC) 12, 2008. Four of those papers have been included in vol. 2 of this collection by kind permission of the editors and publisher (Walter de Gruyter) of ZAC.

Two of the most impressive features of this extended enterprise have been the excellent, free spirit of international collaborative scholarship, still quite rare in the Humanities, and the dedicated commitment of our small community to sustain the project over what has effectively been a six-year period. Since not only Plato’s *Parmenides* itself but also the various traditions or instances of its interpretation are difficult and highly complex, we provide here a detailed survey of the contents of the two volumes so as to make this collaborative, interdisciplinary work as accessible as possible to students and scholars in many fields.

The overall theme of vol. 1 is the dissolution of traditionally rather firm boundaries for thinking about the tradition of *Parmenides* interpretation from the Old Academy up to and including the beginnings of what has become known as Neoplatonism. The volume suggests a radically different interpretation of the history of thought from Plato to Proclus than is customary by arguing against Proclus’s generally accepted view that there was no metaphysical interpretation of the *Parmenides* before Plotinus in the third century C.E. Instead, this volume traces such metaphysical interpretations, first, to Speusippus and the early Platonic Academy; second, to the Platonism of the first and second centuries C.E. in figures like Moderatus and Numenius, who began to uncover various metaphysical realities in the “hypotheses” of the second part of the *Parmenides*; third, to the emergence of an exegetical tradition that read Aristotle’s categories in relation to the *Parmenides*; and fourth, to important Middle Platonic figures and texts. The volume also casts further doubt upon several commonly held theses: 1) it pro-

vides evidence to suppose that the *Anonymous Commentary on the Parmenides* (attributed for the last forty years to Porphyry, but perhaps even pre-Plotinian) is probably itself dependent upon an earlier, now lost, commentary or commentaries available to both late-second- and early-third-century Gnostics and Platonists; 2) it suggests that the "Middle Platonic" provenance usually assigned to Moderatus's "Neopythagoreanism" (via Porphyry's testimony in Simplicius) has undergone interpolation with a much later Neoplatonic set of ideas; and 4) it also shows that, despite the undoubted importance of Plotinus, the traditional view of Plotinus as the "father" of Neoplatonism and "originator" of the doctrine of the three "Ones," should be seriously rethought on the basis that not only Plotinus, but also Gnostic and Platonic thinkers that preceded him, seem to be the joint inheritors of a tradition that may well go back to the early Academy.

Volume 1 focuses on the earlier period from Plato and the Old Academy up to Middle Platonism and Gnosticism, with a critical eye upon direct or indirect testimonies from the later Neoplatonists and others. Volume 2 first examines the Neoplatonic tradition itself from Plotinus to Damascius and then takes a broader comparative view of the reception of the *Parmenides* by such important figures as Philo, Clement, and certain other Patristic authors up to Pseudo-Dionysius.

VOLUME 1: PLATO'S *PARMENIDES*: HISTORY AND INTERPRETATION FROM THE OLD ACADEMY TO LATER PLATONISM AND GNOSTICISM

SECTION 1: PLATO, FROM THE OLD ACADEMY TO MIDDLE PLATONISM

Kevin Corrigan sets the scene by problematizing the place of the *Parmenides* in Plato's writings and by providing an overview of some of the major interpretations ranging from the time of Proclus's *Commentary on the Parmenides* to contemporary scholarship. Corrigan suggests that, despite Proclus's apparent view that there were no metaphysical interpretations before Plotinus, the intrinsically thought-provoking nature even of an aporetic dialogue such as the *Parmenides* (when put beside its earlier counterpart dialogue of ideas, the *Symposium*) makes it unlikely that such metaphysical interpretations arose only in late antiquity, especially when one considers hints of such interpretations in earlier authors: in the "episodic" system of Speusippus, in Moderatus, Eudorus, and Nicomachus of Gerasa, in the apparently pre-Plotinian Sethian Platonizing Gnostic texts, and in Middle Platonic thought in general, especially the *Anonymous Commentary on the Parmenides*, attributed to Porphyry by Pierre Hadot, but possibly composed even earlier than Plotinus.

There then follow three different perspectives on Speusippus. Gerald Bechtle asks what "points of contact" between Plato's *Parmenides* and Speusippus's metaphysical system might have meant, especially since such points of contact do not necessarily imply a paraphrase or a definite system of principles in either Plato or Speusippus, and since such contact may have been bidirectional, as has

been proposed by Andreas Graeser, who has hypothesized that Plato wrote the *Parmenides* as a reaction against Speusippus's theory of principles. Bechtle then undertakes a brief reconstruction of Speusippus's doctrine of principles (the One and Multiplicity) on the basis of both Aristotelian material and later Platonist texts. He argues that the tenet of the One as smallest principle does not necessitate a view of the One as deficient negativity or as (Neoplatonic) transcendent non-being or beyond-being, but it should rather be interpreted in a neutral way according to which the One is not any determinate being in the stereometric, planimetric, linear, or mathematical dimensions deduced from it. He concludes that there are clear links between Speusippus's metaphysics and the *Parmenides*. First, the dichotomic method of the second part of the *Parmenides* and Speusippus's equally exhaustive diairetic semantics are conducted exactly on the same logical principles. Second, the first and third Parmenidean deductions (about the one in relation to itself and the others in relation to the one, on the hypothesis that the one exists) and Speusippus's views on the relation between the one and the many are genuinely comparable and concern exactly the same topic, namely, they explore possibilities of how to conceive and render functional the principles necessary to explain how all of reality comes about.

Luc Brisson tackles the question from a different perspective. He starts with a fragment attributed to Speusippus in the *Anonymous Commentary on the Parmenides*. By means of a critical analysis of texts in Damascius, Proclus, Iamblichus, Porphyry (as attested in Cyril of Alexandria), and Plotinus that seem to refer to it, Brisson, following Carlos Steel, argues that this fragment does not go back to the historical Speusippus, but instead derives from a Neopythagorean apocryphon that reveals a Neopythagorizing interpretation of the *Parmenides* proposed in the first two centuries C.E. that is used by the Neoplatonists (perhaps Amelius or Porphyry) to interpret the first series of deductions of the second part of the *Parmenides*. We are therefore deprived of what looked at first sight to be quasi-direct access to Speusippus himself even though tantalizingly closer to relatively early *Parmenides*-interpretation, albeit through the lens of Neoplatonic spectacles.

Finally, John Dillon argues that an ontological interpretation of Plato's argument in the second hypothesis (about the generation of number at *Parm.* 142d–144a, and especially 143c–144a) may have been behind Speusippus's theory about the way the universe is generated from a radically unitary and simple first principle, and that this theory has actually left traces in Plotinus's doctrine of numbers in 5.6 [34]. This view seems, on the one hand, to contradict the consensus (based on Proclus) that earlier generations of Platonists took the *Parmenides* simply as a logical exercise, but, on the other hand, to render Moderatus's derivation of a system of hypostases from the first three hypotheses of the *Parmenides* more comprehensible.

What ultimately interests Plotinus is an insight derived from Speusippus, namely, that the first product of the union of the primal One and Multiplicity is not the Forms, but Number. Being is prior to Number (as against Speusippus),

but Number is prior to beings or the multiplicity of the Forms (as Speusippus asserted). Plotinus finds room for forms as well as numbers, whereas Speusippus wanted to relegate forms to the level of the World Soul. However, if we are prepared to suppose that Speusippus assigned an ontological value to the first two hypotheses, then we may well go further (on the understanding that we cannot know definitively whether or not this was actually the case) and suggest that, since Speusippus seems to have posited a five-level universe, he probably took the first five hypotheses as representing levels of reality, while the last four hypotheses simply reinforced—in negative terms—the necessity of there being a One. Hence the matching of the first five hypotheses with levels of reality is an entirely plausible interpretation as early as Speusippus, Plato's own nephew.

The three following contributions that make up the first major section of vol. 1 broaden the focus so that we can see some of the deep complexities of interpretation involved in our assessment of the historical period between the times of Speusippus and Moderatus.

Thomas Szlezák explores the question of the indefinite dyad in Sextus Empiricus's report at *Math.* 10.248–283, setting forth initially good reasons for considering this report to be a Neopythagorean version of an older report on Plato's famous lecture, "On the Good." How does this relate to the interpretation of the *Parmenides* that we find in Simplicius's quotation from Porphyry's testimony on Moderatus's thought, which looks like a Neopythagorean anticipation of the Neoplatonic hierarchy of hypostases? In the Sextus passage, the monad and indefinite dyad are said to be the highest principles of all things (numbers, lines, surfaces, geometrical bodies, the four elements, and the cosmos). But the indefiniteness of the dyad is neither explained nor really employed in the generation of numbers and things, suggesting that we have a doxographical report that was not really understood philosophically. By contrast, Plato's *Parmenides* is philosophically thorough, but the indefinite dyad is never mentioned; yet in a thinker such as Plato, who does not care about terms so much as about what is really at stake, the intended point—that the cooperation of two components is necessary for anything to come into being—may nevertheless be legitimately recognized in the *Parmenides*.

In the history of scholarly criticism, hypotheses 4 and 7 have been related to the indefinite dyad (of the Unwritten Teachings), ontologically in 4 and epistemologically in 7. But hypothesis 3 is more revealing, since the nature of the "other than the one" reveals itself as unlimitedness, and in hypothesis 2 the doubling of the existent one has also been seen as referring to the indefinite dyad; the resultant doubling of every "part" yields an indefinite multiplicity (143a2) applicable to both intelligible and sensible realms, as Aristotle attests. And even in the first hypothesis, to deny the dissimilarity of the one would be akin to distinguishing between first and second principles. So the *Parmenides* shows us how we are to think of the initially puzzling idea of an indefinite dyad, but we need other dialogues such as the *Republic* and *Timaeus* to arrive at the concept. Sextus's report

is Platonic and must be very old because of its explicit use of the term “indefinite dyad” and it is certainly complementary to the *Parmenides*. So this provides a necessary caution that the whole of Plato’s philosophy cannot legitimately be deduced from a single dialogue, especially if that dialogue does not provide the key to its own decryption.

Very much in tune with Szlezák’s view but in a different key, Zlatko Pleše gives a powerful sense of the different options available for Plato-interpretation in the first and second centuries C.E. from Plutarch’s dialogue *The E at Delphi*, in which Ammonius, Plutarch’s teacher, is given a major role in praise of the highest God. Is Ammonius a character expressing Plutarch’s own views, or is he a historical personality reflecting the monistic tendencies of Alexandrian Platonism, such as the derivational monism and the one beyond being of Eudorus? Pleše rejects both of these possibilities as unwarranted by the text and argues instead that Ammonius’s speech is a sophisticated treatment of Platonic dichotomies (Being/Becoming, thought/sense-perception, eternity/time) from the *Timaeus*, *Sophist*, *Philebus*, *Cratylus*, and *Republic*, within which earlier compatible Pre-Socratic theories are integrated and strong resemblances to the *Parmenides* can be detected (e.g., Ammonius’s abrupt introduction of “otherness” in the light of *Parmenides* 143a4–b8 and in the very setting of Plutarch’s dialogue, with its equation of Parmenides with Ammonius and Socrates with Plutarch). Ammonius’s views are not out of step with those of Plutarch. The history of Platonism is marked by its cleavage into two different traditions: one dogmatic, reaching back to the Old Academy, and the other skeptical, initiated by Arcesilaus. What we find in Ammonius’s speech is Plutarch’s passionate homage to the continuing unity of those traditions and their common opposition to empiricism.

To conclude the first section of vol. 1, Noel Hubler casts serious doubt upon E. R. Dodds’ famous claim that the first-century Neopythagorean philosopher, Moderatus, had anticipated Plotinus’s supposedly unique theory of hypostases by developing a theory of emanation through a series of three Ones. Hubler argues that, in basing his claim upon a single passage in the sixth-century commentator, Simplicius, Dodds failed to take into account Simplicius’s own stated preference to supplement, clarify, or apply descriptions designed to deny the application of physical attributes to the intelligible realm of Neoplatonic metaphysics. In his analysis of Simplicius’s text, Hubler argues that Simplicius’s Neoplatonist summary and Porphyry’s own apparent version of Moderatus cited by Simplicius recount two different theories, Porphyry’s version being consistent with other testimony he provides about Moderatus and with what we know from other sources about the Neopythagoreanism of Moderatus’s time. In sum, a textual source long thought to be definitive for our reconstruction of the history of thought turns out to be a figment of Simplicius’s Neoplatonic imagination.

We may add, however, that the problem of the origin of the supposed Neoplatonic hypostases very much remains at issue, for Plotinus himself makes no claim to originality for his thought and asserts that his only innovation was the

theory of the undescended soul (5.1 [10], a theory rejected by Iamblichus and the later Neoplatonists anyway). So if not Plotinus, and if not Moderatus or other Neopythagoreans of the first century, then where did the theory of three Ones become mapped onto, or out of, the first three hypotheses of the Parmenides?

SECTION 2: MIDDLE PLATONIC AND Gnostic TEXTS

The second major section of vol. 1 brings us into direct contact with one of the major revolutions in recent times in our ways of analyzing and categorizing ancient thought. Scholars have typically tried to separate Platonism from Gnosticism just as they have also tried to distinguish rational philosophy from irrational religion. The picture that has recently emerged and that will appear clearly to the reader of both volumes is much more complex, for with the discovery of the Nag Hammadi texts, and especially, for our purposes, the Sethian Gnostic "Platonizing" texts (*Three Steles of Seth*, *Allogenes*, *Zostrianos*, and *Marsanes*), we are in the presence of a highly sophisticated religious, soteriological Platonism with complex triadic and even enneadic structures, a "Platonic" competitor of early Christianity with equally strong Jewish roots that antedates not only Iamblichus and Proclus but also Plotinus and Porphyry. In this "Gnostic" Platonism, as in other strands of a very complex overall Platonic tradition, religion and philosophy are interwoven. Moreover, as we shall see below, there are no hermetic seals to compartmentalize strands of this complex tradition that we have hitherto regarded as separate. These different texts reflect upon, and speak sometimes to one another in unexpected ways.

In the first presentation of the second section of vol. 1, John Turner argues that with the Platonizing Sethian treatises we are at the cusp of a shift from what is known as Middle Platonism, for which the principal Platonic dialogue of reference is the *Timaeus*, towards the Neoplatonism of later times, for which the *Parmenides* and *Symposium* (and the three kings of Plato's *Second Letter*) assume greater importance. This shift can be seen already during the first and second centuries in Platonists like Moderatus and Numenius who were attracted by the Neopythagorean doctrines of Eudorus and Thrasyllus, aspects of which probably go back to Speusippus. As a result, various expositions and lemmatic commentaries like the Turin *Anonymous Commentary on the Parmenides* began to uncover the various metaphysical realities in the hypotheses of the second part of the *Parmenides*. In the case of the Sethian treatises, the Unknowable One, clearly beyond being, is described in negative terms derived from the first hypothesis, from which the Barbelo Aeon emanates as a divine Intellect in a sequence of Existence, Vitality/Life, and Mentality/Intellect roughly parallel to the unfolding of the second One from the first One of the *Anonymous Commentary*. In addition, the negative theologies of these texts in relation to the Unknowable One (variously characterized in different Sethian texts) are based upon common sources, probably Middle Platonic epitomes of or commentaries on the *Parmenides*, one

of which is shared by *Allogenes* and the *Apocryphon of John*, and another by Zostrianos and Marius Victorinus (first detected by Michel Tardieu and Pierre Hadot in 1996), thus providing incontestable proof of a pre-Plotinian theological interpretation of the *Parmenides*' first hypothesis and suggesting an interpretation of the second hypothesis as the emergence of a second from a first One.

All of this suggests that expositions or commentaries on the *Parmenides* were available in the late-second or third centuries; that they were used by the authors of *Zostrianos* and *Allogenes*, works known to Plotinus and Porphyry; that they were Middle Platonic works; and that in this milieu the *Anonymous Commentary* may well be pre-Plotinian (as Bechtle and Corrigan have suggested), especially since the *Anonymous Commentary* appears to depend, in part, not only upon the apparently late second-century *Chaldean Oracles* but also upon the source common to both Victorinus and *Zostrianos*.

This web of intertextual affiliations, therefore, provides an entirely new view of the history of thought, compelling the modification of Willy Theiler's long-standing hypothesis, namely, that every Neoplatonic, non-Plotinian doctrine simultaneously in Augustine and in a late Neoplatonist author must come from Porphyry. The Trinitarian theology of Marius Victorinus may come via Porphyry, but it is based not exclusively in Neoplatonism but in Middle Platonic thought such as that of the Platonizing Sethian treatises.

There follow two presentations that take a more cautious approach to some elements in this overall picture. Johanna Brankaer argues by means of a comparative analysis of the Sethian Platonizing texts that, while oneness is certainly applied to the supreme entities, there is no developed henology such as we find in Plotinus. The articulation of the one and the many is common to both the *Parmenides* and Sethian speculation, but oneness is often connected to Being rather than to a One "beyond being." What we see in the Gnostic texts, therefore, is a sophisticated adaptation that recalls Platonic and Neoplatonic texts, but is really transformed to the different purpose of a soteriological system.

Volker Drecoll next undertakes to analyze one of the common sources mentioned by Turner above, namely, the source common to *Zostrianos* and Victorinus (on the assumption that this must have been a Greek text) and argues, on the basis of comparison between the two texts, that there is a surprisingly small list of common expressions and even that these might simply reflect common currency of the day. He therefore suggests that the Tardieu-Hadot hypothesis should be reconsidered in the light of other possible hypotheses: 1) Abramowski's hypothesis that behind the parallel sections there was a common source produced by a crypto-Gnostic Nicene circle at Rome that Victorinus used without knowing its Barbelo-Gnostic origin. Drecoll rejects this, however—on the grounds that we have virtually no evidence for such a circle—in favor of the easier hypothesis, namely 2) that Victorinus read Gnostic texts but was perfectly capable of rejecting Gnosticism, and so presented us with a patchwork of different sources, including Gnostic sources, just as Plotinus read *Zostrianos* without becoming a

Gnostic. But 3) did Victorinus use the Greek Zostrianos or a text dependent on it, perhaps a Neoplatonic text with the Gnostic myths and images expurgated or a Coptic version that could have changed the Greek source? Drecoll concludes therefore that we know too little to assume an unknown common source (though it certainly looks like a plausible solution) or to use this assumption to infer a pre-Plotinian date for the *Anonymous Commentary*. There may have been a common source, but we cannot exclude other possible alternatives.

In the following presentations, we now move to detailed comparative analyses of some of the major texts in question, most of them definitely Middle Platonic, but at least one—the *Anonymous Commentary on the Parmenides*—whose attribution oscillates back and forth, as it were, between Middle Platonism and Neoplatonism according to the eye of the beholder. First, John Turner and Luc Brisson undertake comparative analyses of the *Chaldean Oracles*, Gnostic texts, and the *Anonymous Commentary on the Parmenides*. Turner highlights some striking structural similarities in these texts on several different levels: First, the six-level system of the *Chaldean Oracles* is similar to the schemes of Sethian texts. Second, the enneadic structure that Hadot discerns (on the basis of John Lydus) in Porphyry's interpretation of the *Oracles* is strongly reflected not only in Allogenes' portrayal of the Invisible Spirit's Triple Power, namely infinitival Existence, indeterminate Vitality, and determinate Mentality, as an enneadic sequence of three emanative phases in which each term of the triad sequentially predominates and contains the other two within each phase of its unfolding. Third, there are striking structural and functional resemblances between the Chaldean Hecate and the Sethian triple-powered One and also between the Sethian Aeon of Barbelo and the three phases of Hecate's existence as prefiguration, source, and place of the instantiation of ideal multiplicity. Turner concludes, therefore, first, that the Sethian authors seem familiar with Neopythagorean arithmological speculation, with the Being–Life–Mind triad perhaps derived from Plato's *Sophist*, and with the implied metaphysics of the *Oracles* and, second, that the Being–Life–Mind triad, despite differences in nomenclature, functions in very much the same emanational context in the *Anonymous Commentary on the Parmenides* as in the Sethian texts, with the major difference that the Sethians (except for the *Three Steles of Seth*) locate the triad at the level of the first One and see it as the origin rather than the result of the emanative process.

What was therefore thought to be much later in the history of thought, namely, the theory of emanation, and the development of progressive enneadic structures comprising triads, turns out to be earlier, at least as early as the late-second or early-third century. This provides a very different view of the development of Platonism in a more amorphous and cosmopolitan environment.

Luc Brisson undertakes a similar comparative study on the basis of folios 9 and 10 of the *Anonymous Commentary on the Parmenides* (in relation to the first hypothesis) which he argues reveal a Neoplatonist critique of the Chaldean positive claim that we can know God. Since God is not an object, only in unknowing

does the soul experience something of God. Unlike the Gnostics, we cannot claim to know either God or the mode of procession. Such a critique (undertaken in part via a critique of the Stoic criterion of truth) might be taken as evidence of a pre-Plotinian date for the *Commentary*, but Brisson holds to a post-Plotinian authorship since this critique implies that the One of the first hypothesis is beyond being and because it presupposes knowledge of 6.1 [10].⁸ Brisson draws two conclusions: First, he locates the shared source of Victorinus and *Zostrianos* in the *Chaldean Oracles*' description of the Father (frg. 3, 4, 7), which in turn had been influenced by Plato's description of the One in the first hypothesis of the *Parmenides* (142a). Second, he proposes that an earlier commentary on the *Parmenides* must have existed at the end of the second century, one that turned the first God into an Intellect—that is, determinate Being that was somehow assimilated to the first One of the *Parmenides*—and claimed that God could be known, if only indirectly. For the possibility of this knowledge, the authority of the *Oracles* was invoked. This positive commentary was cited by *Zostrianos*, criticized by the *Anonymous Commentary* and available, directly or indirectly, to Marius Victorinus.

Gerald Bechtle opens up a different avenue of inquiry: the relation of Plato's *Parmenides* and Aristotle's *Categories*. Starting from Hadot's monumental work, *Porphyre et Victorinus* (1968), and his collection of Porphyrian texts in Victorinus in vol. 2, Bechtle focuses upon group IV of those texts and particularly Hadot's insight in pinpointing a relation between the extant fragments of the *Parmenides Commentary* and the exegetical tradition regarding Aristotle's *Categories*. He poses the broader questions, where do the surviving bits of the *Anonymous Commentary on the Parmenides* fit into the *Categories*-related tradition? and can the latter cast significant chronological light upon the former? But he focuses here upon the well-established intertwining of the two exegetical traditions by the end of the second century C.E., so standard in fact as to be mentioned casually in Alcinous's *Handbook*. Is there evidence, then, for the metaphysical relevance of the categories before Plotinus? The already established metaphysical discussion of Aristotle's categories in Plotinus and Lucius and Nicostratus is confirmed by Simplicius and Porphyry, as well as by Plotinus himself. Indeed, nine of Aristotle's categories can be found in some form in Plato's *Parmenides*, and the five greatest genera of the *Sophist* even more so. Bechtle then goes on to uncover a tradition of reading Aristotle's categories into the *Parmenides* in different ways on the part of Clement, Alcinous, Atticus, and Proclus, a tendency, he notes, that goes back to Nicomachus of Gerasa. This is an important project that is part of the unfinished work of the *Parmenides* seminar that needs to be extended to a study of the Stoic categories (as Bechtle has outlined elsewhere) and of Porphyry's *Isagoge* as well as its appropriation by Patristic authors, particularly the Cappadocians.

The question of the date of the *Anonymous Commentary on the Parmenides* has been much debated, with Bechtle arguing for Middle Platonic authorship, Corrigan attributing it to a member of the school of Numenius (perhaps Cronius)

and Brisson suggesting at one point that it may have been authored by Numenius himself. On the other side, there are many advocates of the Hadot thesis (that it is by Porphyry), among them Dillon and, for the most part, Brisson. Volume 1 ends on a slightly agnostic note, but one that tends to favor authorship either contemporary with or after Plotinus.

Alain Lernoùl focuses on the tension implicit in the *Anonymous Commentary* to preserve the One's transcendence and yet to make it an entity that knows and that is not nothing. In particular, he examines fragments 1 (folios I–II), 2 (folios III–IV), and 4 (folios IX–X together with the major contemporary translations). He concludes, against the views of Bechtle, Corrigan, and Turner, that the *Commentary* must be after Plotinus (since, for example, in fragment 1, philosophical prayer, as an ascent of the mind to God conditioning the possibility of scientific discourse about God, is a specific feature of post-Plotinian Platonism). It is instead closer to Damascius than to Proclus, for the author suggests, not that we should rely on our concepts before negating them, but that we should not rely on our concepts at all, no matter how elevated, since these necessarily relate to what is immediately after the One, that is, the Chaldean triad of Father, Power, Intellect—a position closer to that of Damascius.

Volume 1 concludes on a historical knife edge, as Luc Brisson continues what has become his own extended commentary on the *Anonymous Commentary* with an analysis of folios XI–XIV in terms of Numenius's First and Second Gods and the second hypothesis of Plato's *Parmenides*. The anonymous commentator distinguishes two moments in Intellect, the first a state of absolute simplicity in which it seems to be blended with the One itself and the second a state in which it emerges from itself to return to itself fully as Intellect. This is a view that recalls that of Numenius, which Plotinus once appeared to accept (3.9 [13].1.15–18), but later in his treatise against the Gnostics (2.9 [33]) rejects. While Brisson does not take this as evidence for Porphyry's authorship of the commentary, he sees the commentator trying to account for the procession of Intellect from the first One into the second, yet remaining in its cause; he thus aligns himself with Plotinus in the process.

VOLUME 2: PLATO'S *PARMENIDES*: ITS RECEPTION IN NEOPLATONIC, JEWISH, AND CHRISTIAN TEXTS

Volume 2 is divided into two sections: first, *Parmenides* interpretation from Plotinus to Damascius and, second, the hidden influence of the *Parmenides* in Philo, Origen, Clement, and later Patristic thought.

SECTION 1: *PARMENIDES* INTERPRETATION FROM PLOTINUS TO DAMASCIUS

Matthias Vorwerk opens the volume with an overview of the scholarly state of the question on the origin of the Plotinian One from Dodds (1928) to Charrue (1978). He argues that in the crucial and only text (5.1 [10].8) where Plotinus

introduces, as a correction to Parmenides himself, the differentiation of three degrees of unity from Plato's *Parmenides* that corresponds to his own three hypostases, he mentions the *Parmenides* only last in a series of Platonic texts and does not present it as the key text for his three hypostases. In fact, 5.1 [10].8 shows instead that Plotinus developed his system of hypostases or "natures" from a series of other Platonic texts (*Letters* 2.312e and 6.323d; *Timaeus* 35a–b, 41d; *Republic* 509b), showing considerable skill in interpreting them as complementary, that is, by subordinating Demiurge and Paradigm to the Good in tune with most Middle Platonic philosophers. Why, then, was Plotinus reluctant about the *Parmenides*? This is probably because the first three hypotheses cannot be interpreted systematically to correspond exactly with the three hypostases. They are introduced therefore to provide additional support for his interpretation and also because they provide a powerful conceptual source for thinking about the one and the many.

On the basis of Proclus's *Commentary on the Parmenides*, Kevin Corrigan gives an overview of the interpretations of all (whether 8, 9, or 10) of the hypotheses of the second part by Amelius, Porphyry, Iamblichus, Theodorus of Asine, Plutarch of Athens, Syrianus, and Proclus, and then provides a reconstruction of what Plotinus's position might have been despite the absence of direct evidence that Plotinus held an interpretation of any hypothesis beyond the first three. By means of small linguistic hints scattered throughout the *Enneads* and of comparison between Amelius and Porphyry, Corrigan argues that while Plotinus clearly did not care to make any systematic correspondences between hypotheses and their supposed subjects, he probably held an 8–9 hypothesis view, in between the positions of Amelius and Porphyry, but perhaps more complex. That is, like Proclus, he would not have needed to take hypotheses 6–8 or 9 to refer to actual realities, since what appears to be at issue in them are the negative discourses of quantity, matter, and so on. He concludes by pointing out in comparison with Plotinus and Porphyry that Hegel's later treatments of this topic in different works allow for both a metaphysical interpretation and a logical schema of possibility: thus the negative hypotheses constitute vanishing fields of discourse in which self-identity is dissolved. In this respect, Plotinus, Proclus, and Hegel seem to bear comparison.

Luc Brisson next broadens the focus to give us an unusual look at the human circle of Plotinus's intimates and associates, the roots of this circle in Middle Platonism, and its later opposition to Iamblichean theurgy through the figure of Porphyry. The evidence tends to show, he argues, that Longinus and Origen the Platonist (who had studied with Plotinus under Ammonius) defended an ontological or "being" interpretation of the second part of the *Parmenides*. If the Firmus mentioned in the *Life of Isidore* is Castricius Firmus, this means that some in Plotinus's own school were opposed to his new transcendent interpretation of the first hypothesis. In 5.1 [10].8, for instance, Plotinus relies no longer on the *Timaeus* but finds the principles of his exegesis in the *Parmenides*. The six

fragments of the *Anonymous Commentary* reflect a similar historical situation, namely, they are in between Numenius (and Neopythagorean inspiration) and Theodore of Asine who reuses the *Commentary's* doctrines. The author could well be Porphyry or Amelius. But Iamblichus rejects its audacious affirmation of the absolute transcendence of the first One coupled with the immanence of relative things preeminently in the first. In his promotion of theurgy, Iamblichus subsequently elevated the entire hierarchy of gods by one rank and broke the limits of the *Parmenides* because his ineffable One beyond the One fell outside Plato's hypotheses and therefore outside the text of Plato. Armed with his edition of Plotinus's works in his final years, Porphyry was therefore led to oppose the spirit of Greek rationalism to Iamblichus's break with that spirit.

This is a plausible picture, but is it right? Vorwerk would not agree with its analysis of 5.1 [10].8, and there is much evidence in pre-Plotinian periods for a One that is beyond being in some sense or other, as we have seen.

Tuomas Rasimus provides a groundbreaking alternative view by arguing against Hadot's attribution to Porphyry of 89 fragments of clearly Platonic technical metaphysics found in Victorinus' trinitarian treatises and in the six fragments of the *Anonymous Commentary on the Parmenides* (taking full account of the earlier work of Bechtle, Corrigan, and Turner) and by suggesting instead something that has hitherto been unthinkable, namely, that the authorship of the latter is more likely to have been Sethian Gnostic. Many of the ideas contained in the fragments of the *Anonymous Commentary* are better attested in Sethian texts than in the undisputed Porphyrian material and many of the supposed Porphyrian features (e.g., intelligible triad identified with the highest One; distinction between infinitival and substantive being; juxtaposition of paronyms, etc.) are already found in pre-Plotinian Gnostic sources, that is, in the *Apocryphon of John* and the possibly common, likely Gnostic, source behind *Zostrianos* and Victorinus. Some evidence even suggests that Porphyry cannot be the author of the *Anonymous Commentary on the Parmenides*. Indeed, as Serge Cazalais (2005) has shown, the expression, ὁ ἐπὶ πᾶσιν θεός, which occurs three times in the *Commentary* and six times in the undisputed Porphyrian evidence—and which Hadot took to be a veritable signature of Porphyry—occurs at least eighty times in the writings of Origen of Alexandria. The Platonizing Sethian treatises show a good doctrinal match with the fragments of the *Commentary*. The *Apocryphon of John* shows similarities with the *Chaldean Oracles* and even betrays signs of the use of Stoic physics in the service of Platonic metaphysics similar to that Hadot has claimed for Porphyry.

At the very least, then, we have to reassess Hadot's theory and the role of the Sethian Gnostics in the development of Neoplatonism, since the evidence shows that it was the Sethian Gnostics rather than Porphyry who were the innovators.

Is such a thesis really defensible? Certainly, the preponderance of evidence supports it. Furthermore, if it is possible for Victorinus or Plotinus to read Gnostic texts and not become Gnostics, then it is even more plausible for a Gnostic

of considerable sophistication, and perhaps with intimate knowledge of a school such as that of Plotinus, to write a commentary for a different “Platonic” audience on a work of crucial importance to both groups. If Mozart could write the *Magic Flute*, then a Sethian Gnostic could have written a lemmatic commentary on the *Parmenides*.

So also Volker Drecoll takes up the question of Hadot’s attribution of these eighty-nine fragments in Victorinus to Porphyry and provides a detailed analysis of Victorinus’s use of sources in the *Ad Candidum*, *Adversus Arium* 1B, 3, and 4. He concludes that there is no evidence for a single source and therefore no warrant for supposing that Victorinus at every point must be dependent on Porphyry. Drecoll and Rasimus together therefore indicate the need for a complete rethinking of these issues (and see Edwards below).

But we leave the *Anonymous Commentary* still poised between Hadot’s thesis and its revision, a fitting way of representing the state of the question in contemporary scholarship, for Luc Brisson goes on to unpack vestiges of a logical interpretation in folios 7–8 of the *Commentary* that he interprets (within the historical schema of Proclus’s *Commentary*) as a training for dialectic by means of a logical exercise that must be seen, in the manner of Aristotle’s *Sophistical Refutations*, as an exercise for escaping sophism. From Iamblichus on, this interpretation was opposed by what became in Proclus the dominant interpretation of the *Parmenides* as a treatise on theology. In Brisson’s view, to write such a commentary as the *Anonymous Commentary* is impossible without a library, senior philosophers, and a deeper commitment to a theological reading; this is impossible outside a scholarly context similar to that of the school of Plotinus.

The concluding papers of section 1 of vol. 1 concern some of the fascinating developments in later Neoplatonism: in Iamblichus, Syrianus, Damascius, and Simplicius, with the presence of Proclus, of course, everywhere.

John Finamore reconstructs from fragments of Iamblichus in Damascius and Proclus Iamblichus’s unique interpretation of the *Parmenides*’ third hypothesis as concerning not souls, but superior classes of beings (angels, daemons, and heroes). He interprets this as resulting from Iamblichus’s interpretation of elements in the Phaedrus myth and of Diotima-Socrates’ representation of daemons as two-way messengers between heaven and earth in the *Symposium*; and he argues that it reflects Iamblichus’s peculiar view that there is a class of purified souls that can descend and yet remain unharmed. This interpretation, rejected by the later Neoplatonists, nonetheless allowed Iamblichus both to follow Plato (perhaps disastrously in the view of Porphyry and others, as Brisson argued above in “The Reception of the *Parmenides* before Proclus”) and to create a working doctrine of theurgy in which each class of soul played a different role.

John Dillon explores the startling exegesis of the *Parmenides*’ second hypothesis by Syrianus, Proclus’s teacher, and his insight that each of the fourteen distinct propositions constituting this hypothesis corresponds to a separate level of entity within the intelligible world: three triads of intelligible gods, three triads of intelli-

gible-intellective gods, an intellectual hebdomad (two triads and a seventh entity, the “membrane”). If we count each triad as a single unit, this results in nine units. Syrianus therefore adds another five: hypercosmic gods; hypercosmic-encosmic gods; encosmic gods; universal souls; superior classes of beings (angels, daemons and heroes, not—like Iamblichus—to be ascribed to the third hypothesis). This gives a total of fourteen to correspond to the fourteen propositions of the second hypothesis. What possible justification could Syrianus have found in the text? In a fascinating analysis, Dillon articulates a plausible justification for the entire structure that reveals a blueprint for the structure of both the intelligible and sensible universes.

Sarah Abel-Rappe then goes on to show how Damascius's treatment of the third hypothesis correlates with the way the Neoplatonists see the soul and its multiple configurations as the foundation of a “way of seeming” that is the ultimate subject of Damascius's *Commentary on the Parmenides*. If soul is the entry to non-being and the last four hypotheses are way-stations on the path to complete unreality, then the entry into the dimensions of soul begins in the third hypothesis. Unlike Iamblichus, for whom the soul's helplessness necessitates divine assistance, the soul is instead a self-mover that is nonetheless capable of altering the quality of its essence and so of its very identity by the focus of its attention and its capacity to experience time in different ways (instant-time and now-time). On the one hand, the individual soul is a modality of intelligible seeing. On the other hand, it is the gateway to Plato's own “way of seeming.”

Finally, to conclude section 1 of vol. 2, Gerald Bechtle explores what it means to metaphysicize the Aristotelian categories. If the categories link language and reality and if they imply not only the ten most general classes of being but also the movement from the physical to the metaphysical (a movement unsupported by Aristotle's *Categories* on its own), then their application to divine things is understandable. Moreover, in the tradition of *Categories* exegesis, this application paved the way for their application to properly Christian theological entities (*praedictio in divinis*), not simply in Boethius but even earlier with the Cappadocians (as Radde-Gallwitz's *Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa, and the Transformation of Divine Simplicity* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming] also makes clear). What does this metaphysicizing in Simplicius mean? Simplicius chooses to comment on the *Categories* and not the *Parmenides*, thereby reversing an entire Platonic tradition. So Bechtle examines the only two passages where Simplicius refers to the *Parmenides* and shows that while Simplicius himself does not refer the categories to anything other than sensibles as they are signified by words, nonetheless, in relation to his source, probably Iamblichus, he sees the One of the *Parmenides*, running through the different hypotheses/hypostases, as everywhere expressive of the community and continuity of the categories, whether applying to all of them vertically or only to one horizontally. Simplicius, by means of Iamblichus, therefore, reinvents a pre-Plotinian tradition that goes back at least as far as Alcinous.

SECTION 2: THE HIDDEN INFLUENCE OF THE *PARMENIDES* IN PHILO, ORIGEN, AND LATER PATRISTIC THOUGHT

In the papers of section 2 of vol. 2, on the *Parmenides* in relation to Jewish and Christian thought, we move from Philo and Clement through Origen and the Cappadocians to Pseudo-Dionysius, an examination, as far as we know, never before undertaken in this form.

David Runia points out that Philo never mentions Plato's *Parmenides* and that the *Timaeus* trumps any possible influence from the *Parmenides* we might try to find in Philo. Whittaker and Dillon suppose the influence of the first hypothesis at work in Eudoran, Philonic, Clementine, and Hermetic texts, but it is difficult to confirm this in Philo's well-known negative theology and also in what may appear to be the dialectical categories of the *Parmenides* (e.g., whole-part, limit-unlimited, etc.) in Philo's doctrine of creation. Clement of Alexandria, however, is different, despite the absence of explicit references to the *Parmenides* (except implicitly in Stromateis 5.112.2). In two passages (Stromateis 5.81–82 and 4.156) he uses the dialectical argumentation of the first hypothesis to develop a negative theology of absolute transcendence and of both the first and second hypotheses to develop a positive theology focused on the Son. Thus, the problem of the one and many is given a new theological solution that does not involve a hierarchy of gods.

Mark Edwards, in a groundbreaking work very much in tune with that of Tuomas Rasimus above, examines two topics: the use of a formula ἄρρητος καὶ ἀκατονόμαστος and the provenance of the *Anonymous Commentary* which uses the phrase. In the case of the formula, only Philo and Origen juxtapose the terms, but Christians could make use of privative terms without being driven to the antinomian logic of the *Parmenides*. In the case of the latter, however, if we cannot accept that the Being–Life–Mind triad antedated orthodox Platonism, but must have been an invention of Porphyry somehow intuited from the *Chaldean Oracles* and Plato's *Sophist*, then the *Zostrianos* we possess must be a secondarily doctored text. On the other hand, if reflections on the first and second hypotheses can be found in *Allogenes*, then perhaps such reflection is more Christian than Platonist. Is there any trace of Christianity then in the *Anonymous Commentary*? The formula ἄρρητος καὶ ἀκατονόμαστος found in Origen and Philo appears only in the *Anonymous Commentary* and in no other pagan text—a little like the “god over all” formula that is more characteristic of Origen than of Porphyry. So the author of the Commentary was perhaps a Christian or someone who occupied an intellectual hinterland, unknown to Irenaeus, of free trade between paganism and Christianity. If we cannot accept that a Christian of the second century might comment on Plato, then we should read the puzzling version of a passage from the *Republic* in the Nag Hammadi collection (NHC VI,5) that no one quite knows how to classify.

Edwards's second contribution poses the broader question what "dependence" really means when we uncritically call someone like Origen a "Platonist" and he rejects many facile characterizations or caricatures of what such dependence might mean, making us more aware that apparent similarity of phrase, doctrine, text, or even quotation is no guarantee that we do not actually encounter radical difference. We include this essay in this volume as a necessary corrective to seeing Platonism or even anti-Platonism everywhere or to characterizing thinkers like Philo and Origen as Platonists and then, as is often the case, reducing unique forms of thought to adjectival denominationalisms. Even in cases where we can detect traces of the use of or meditations upon Platonic dialogues such as the *Parmenides* or *Timaeus*, these may be in the service of an entirely different universe of reference.

Jean Reynard then gives us a fascinating tour of the possible presence or significant lack of the *Parmenides* in Gregory of Nyssa and his older brother, Basil of Caesarea. We can suppose direct or indirect influence of the *Parmenides* in Gregory's discussions of participation, virtue, unity of God yet plurality of hypostases, Christology, Gregory's peculiar theory of humanity and individual human beings, negative theology, and view of motion. But we cannot say for certain whether or not this is the case. Basil seems more promising because of his early connection with Eustathius of Cappadocia, a pupil of Iamblichus, and because of his youthful, disputed work *De Spiritu*, which shares strong links with Plotinus. But why is there such complete silence about the *Parmenides*? Reynard argues cogently that this was not because Basil and Gregory did not have the dialogue in their manuals, but because Iamblichus's Neoplatonic interpretation influenced and shaped Neo-Arianism, Aetius and Eunomius in particular, and so Iamblichean Neoplatonism represented a hard-line form of Neoplatonism that had to be rejected.

Kevin Corrigan takes up the same issues in a different key and argues that the shadow of the Neoplatonic hypostases and the hypotheses of the *Parmenides* (as explicitly connected by Plotinus in *Enn.* 5.1 [10].8—a work certainly read by Basil and Gregory of Nyssa) can be seen generally in Basil's *De Spiritu Sancto*, more prominently in Athanasius's *Adv. Ar.* 1.18, and conspicuously in Gregory Nazianzus's *Third Theological Oration*, where we can clearly detect a complex meditation upon the second hypothesis of the *Parmenides* partly through the lens of language from *Resp.* 8.545c–d and the dispute of the one with itself. The Trinity, Gregory argues, cannot be split from itself or become perfect by addition. It is perfect already by virtue of something like the Plotinian principle of synneusis. Thus Athanasius and the Cappadocians are concerned 1) to distance themselves from the Neoplatonic hypostases in the concrete knowledge that they are derived, in part, from Plato's *Parmenides*; 2) to show that the Trinity cannot be conceived as functioning like some second hypothesis either by addition or by being qualitatively or quantitatively cut up into plurality; and, 3) to indicate (especially in the case of Gregory of Nyssa) that while the overall Neoplatonic worldview obviously has to be rejected, there is nonetheless a triadic causal procession of sameness

and otherness in Plotinus and Porphyry that results in the hypostases or individual persons, as it were, being substantially included in divine substance rather than being severally distributed into a hierarchy of different substances. Corrigan therefore concludes that the fourth-century Fathers were well aware of the second part of the *Parmenides* and that, in fact, this text was an indispensable backdrop, however indirect, for the formulation of Trinitarian theology in this century.

The strength and persistence of this hidden tradition of *Parmenides* interpretation is taken up by Andrew Radde-Gallwitz in the closing contribution of vol. 2 on Pseudo-Dionysius (or Denys the Areopagite) and the problem of contradiction, a problem also to be found in the Buddhist tradition as Radde-Gallwitz illustrates in his epigraph, a tetralemma from the third century c.e. philosopher Nagarjuna, which seems, like the language of Denys about God, to undermine the laws of non-contradiction and excluded middle. As we have seen in the earlier Patristic tradition, the *Parmenides*' first hypothesis leads to negative, the second to positive, theology. Denys, of course, cannot divide levels of Divinity like the pagan Neoplatonists and so must apply the two hypotheses to one God, but in what sense? To different aspects or moments of God (abiding and procession) to avoid contradiction, that is, a causal interpretation? Or to God in the sense that such language is not subject to either law, that is, a transcendent interpretation? Both solutions have been adopted by modern scholarship, but which is right?

If the causal interpretation is right, does such language name intrinsic properties or not? Proclus says they do not; they only name the relation of other things to God. But Denys appears to hold that they do name intrinsic properties or a diversity unified in God that he illustrates by means of a sun image (*Republic* 7) similar to Socrates' day analogy in the *Parmenides*, which seems a red herring since it explains only the simultaneous participation of many things in Being, not a diversity of unified divine properties. Denys, however, seems to mean that God contains causes that appear merely relative. But how, since he also denies every predicate he affirms of God? Radde-Gallwitz's solution is that the causal interpretation, instead of contradicting the transcendent interpretation, actually implies it. The laws of non-contradiction and excluded middle do not apply in theology. So we have in Denys a kind of ouroboric maneuver by which positive and negative theologies live only by ending in their own destruction.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, then, let us briefly sum up some of the major results of these two volumes:

- 1) The preponderance of evidence overthrows the standard view, proposed originally by Proclus, that there was no metaphysical interpretation of the second part of the *Parmenides* before Origen the Platonist. It is more reasonable to discern such an interpretation going back to Speusippus, Plato's nephew and heir, approximately five hundred years and more before Origen.

2) At some time before the end of the first century C.E., someone in the Platonic-Neopythagorean tradition also came to the conclusion that Plato was presenting in the *Parmenides* a blueprint for the structure of reality. Even if we cannot be certain that Simplicius's account of Porphyry's report of the doctrine of Moderatus on the three ones is not simply Simplicius's interpolation of his own Neoplatonic views, nonetheless, the notion of a one in some sense or other beyond being must be pre-Plotinian since it goes back 1) to Sextus Empiricus's very old, Platonic account of Plato's last lecture, 2) to Speusippus's view of the one as the smallest principle beyond being from which all the dimensions of beings can be deduced, 3) to Alexandrian Platonism, especially Eudorus, and 3) to the Unknowable One of the Sethian treatises—not to mention 4) to Plato's dialogues themselves, including both the letters associated with his name and the early accounts of the unwritten teachings.

3) The evidence suggests that expositions or commentaries on the *Parmenides* were available in the late-second or third centuries, that they were used by the authors of the Sethian treatises, *Zostrianos*, and *Allogenes*, works known to Plotinus and Porphyry, and that they were generally Middle Platonic works.

4) In the case of the Sethian treatises, the Unknowable One, clearly beyond being, is described in negative terms derived from the first hypothesis, from which the Barbelo Aeon emanates as an Intellect in a sequence of phases designated as Existence, Life, and Intellect in a way roughly parallel to the unfolding of the second One from the first One of the *Anonymous Commentary*. In addition, the negative theologies of these texts in relation to the Unknowable One are based upon common sources, probably Middle Platonic epitomes of or commentaries on the *Parmenides*, one of which is shared by *Allogenes* and the *Apocryphon of John*, and another by *Zostrianos* and Marius Victorinus, thus providing incontestable proof of a pre-Plotinian theological interpretation of the *Parmenides*'s first hypothesis and perhaps even an interpretation of the second hypothesis as the emergence of a second from a first One.

5) Analysis of Victorinus's use of sources shows that Victorinus does not use a single source, whether derived from Porphyry, as Pierre Hadot supposes, or from someone else.

6) Contemporary scholarship on the *Anonymous Commentary* remains divided as to its date and authorship, as the reader will see throughout. Luc Brisson argues powerfully and consistently for a Plotinian or post-Plotinian author, Amelius or Porphyry. Gerald Bechtle, Kevin Corrigan, and John Turner have argued (elsewhere) for Middle Platonic authorship. A serious alternative has been proposed for the first time in vol. 2 on the basis of what seems to be the best interpretation of the strongest evidence. Tuomas Rasimus proposes a Sethian Gnostic and Mark Edwards a Christian author (in what almost amounts to the same thing). Before now such views were virtually unthinkable, but, we suggest, this will be a benchmark for future scholarship and the case of note either to reject or to explore further.

7) Indeed, the Being–Life–Mind triad, one of the most characteristically Platonic-Neoplatonic triads in the history of thought, and a triad partly derived from Plato’s *Sophist* and the *Chaldean Oracles*, was most probably developed in large measure by Sethian Gnostic thinkers.

8) Despite the undoubted importance of Plotinus, the traditional view of Plotinus as the “father” of Neoplatonism and the “originator” of the doctrine of the three “Ones,” should be seriously rethought on the basis that both Gnostics and Platonists seem to be the joint inheritors of a tradition that may well go back to the early Academy.

9) *Parmenides* interpretation and the *Categories* exegetical tradition are in important ways intertwined and Gerald Bechtle has uncovered a tradition of reading Aristotle’s categories into the *Parmenides*, in different ways, in Clement, Alcinous, Atticus, and Proclus, a tendency that goes back to Nicomachus of Gerasa and assumes a different nuance later in Simplicius. This interwoven tradition is of major importance for the development of Christian thought.

10) The shadow of *Parmenides* interpretation looms large over the early Christian developments of both negative and positive theologies and plays a crucial, if often unspoken role, in the later need to combat hard-line Iamblichean Neoplatonism, reflected in Neo-Arianism, as well as in the development and formulation of Athanasian-Cappadocian Trinitarian theology, where it proves to be decisive. The *Parmenides* emerges from the shadow with new heuristic clarity in Pseudo-Dionysius’s rethinking of cataphatic and apophatic theology.

Finally, we thank all the participants of the seminar, including our hosts in Tübingen in 2007, Volker Drecoll and Luise Abramowski. We are grateful to Alexander Cooper, a doctoral student in Philosophy at Emory University, for his translation of Thomas Szlezák’s contribution, to Michael Chase of CNRS-Paris for his translations of the contributions of Luc Brisson, to the editors of *Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum* and to its publisher Walter de Gruyter for permission to reprint four papers from their edition of the Tübingen conference, and to Billie Jean Collins at SBL Publications for her encouragement and help. The Graduate Institute of the Liberal Arts and the Fox Center for Humanistic Inquiry at Emory University have provided much needed support, as has also the Research Council of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. We thank them warmly.

John D. Turner and Kevin Corrigan
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SECTION 1
PLATO, FROM THE OLD ACADEMY TO
MIDDLE PLATONISM

THE PLACE OF THE *PARMENIDES* IN PLATO'S THOUGHT
AND IN THE SUBSEQUENT TRADITION

Kevin Corrigan

1. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE QUESTION

Why should the question of the place of the *Parmenides* in Plato's thought be problematic and why should it be important? The question is problematic for two major reasons: 1) Nothing in a Platonic dialogue is ever quite as simple as it seems. For one thing, Plato himself never makes a participant appearance (except for two mentions in all the dialogues), and so we cannot easily determine what we can meaningfully ascribe to Plato as his "own thought. For another, like so many of the early dialogues, the *Parmenides* is aporetic in that it appears to reach no conclusion whatsoever. Furthermore, the relations between the various parts of the dialogue are not at all clear: how, for instance, the framing structure of the dialogue is related to the conversation with Zeno or to the critique of forms in the exchange between Socrates and Parmenides, and, above all, how all of this is in any way to be brought into the perspective of the final part which has variously been regarded as tortuous intellectual gymnastics, dry dusty argumentative chains, or replete with theological significance. In sum, if the meaning of the dialogue remains opaque and if the very notion of "Plato's thought" is an abstraction from the dialogue form that is its proper setting, then to place the *Parmenides* even in a fairly well-recognized structure is fundamentally problematic. 2) We might also ask what is the relation between Plato's *Parmenides* and the philosopher Parmenides himself. Why, for instance, should Plato choose Parmenides and not Heraclitus, Xenophanes, or Empedocles? Gorgias and Protagoras have their place in Plato's dialogues, and Anaxagoras gets treated in the latter part of the *Phaedo*. So what is the precise point of a supposed meeting with Parmenides and Zeno, the historical basis of which seems to receive convoluted confirmation in the introduction? And what is the significance of the *Parmenides*' early subtitle "On Forms"? None of these questions yield easy or immediate answers. And this

too renders any question of the place of the dialogue in Plato's thought even more problematic.

Why then should this question be important? So many Platonic dialogues have been influential in the sense that they have given rise to almost entire traditions of interpretation and creativity. The *Symposium* and the *Phaedrus*, for instance, have informed the whole history of thought and even little bits of the *Symposium*, to mention but one example, have proved definitive even for modern thought: Aristophanes' speech and Freud's development of the theory of Eros and Thanatos drives in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, for instance. The *Timaeus*, one may argue, has been even more form-creating for the history of physics, from generations of exegeses of the *Hexaemeron* to our contemporary understanding of quantum physics and the subatomic world, an understanding that looks so much more like Plato than did the post-Newtonian mechanical universes of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The *Parmenides* is in a similar position, for its influence—in one way or another—appears to have been decisive for developing the very character of later Platonism from the early Academy through Middle Platonism to Neoplatonism, a tradition that might claim a relatively continuous heritage right up to the nineteenth century when the supposed “ancient” Plato became finally separated out as the new “modern” Plato from his mystical Neoplatonic swaddling clothes, apparently to be understood henceforth on his own terms. This is, of course, a noble and thoroughly worthwhile project, but in context it raises the following important questions. What is it about the *Parmenides* that was so important for subsequent Platonism that this Platonism could not be defined without it? To the degree that an influential text and its subsequent history cannot be entirely distinguished, surely subsequent Platonism characterized by that text will have something important to tell us about the nature of the text itself, particularly if that text seems to define the very essence of Platonism itself? Hegel, for instance, regarded the *Parmenides* as the consummate manifestation of the Platonic dialogue. Why should this be so, if the *Parmenides* is so enigmatic?

In sum, then, the question of the place of the *Parmenides* in Plato's thought is important because any answer, however partial or unfinished, to this question will shed new light upon one of the great mysteries of that thought: a perennially puzzling dialogue from the master of dialectical disguise as well as entire traditions of later thinking apparently dependent upon it (many of them implicit, e.g., Gnostic, Patristic, Middle Platonic) that thought of their own metaphysics as formed in the crucible of this dialogue to some major degree.

2. APPROACHES TO THE PROBLEM

Here I will take up the questions before us from three different perspectives: first, I will indicate what internal evidence there is from the dialogues about the place of the *Parmenides* and what this may or may not suggest about a supposed train of “thought” from the “middle” to the “later” dialogues; second, I will outline

some of the major kinds of interpretation of the *Parmenides* over the past two and a half thousand years in order briefly to suggest some of the strengths and weaknesses of each; and third, more specifically, I will focus briefly upon the earlier tradition, from Speusippus to Proclus, to see if some provisional conclusions might at least be outlined for the larger project.

In one, very simple way, the question of the place of the *Parmenides* in Plato's thought is rather easy to answer. The *Parmenides*, *Theaetetus*, *Sophist*, and *Politicus* are clearly meant to be read together, whether or not this is the order of their composition, and whether or not bits of the *Parmenides*, for example, the first (i.e., introduction and conversations between Socrates, Zeno, and Parmenides) and second parts, were written at different times and then (artificially) put together, as has been supposed. It would also appear that they are meant to be read in the above order, for in the *Theaetetus* (183c) and *Sophist* (217c) Socrates mentions his meeting long ago with Parmenides; in the *Sophist* the three speakers of the *Theaetetus* meet again "according to yesterday's agreement"; and the *Politicus* begins with explicit references to the *Sophist* and includes others at 258b, 266d, 284b, and 286b (Guthrie 1978, 5, 33; Diès 1932, xii). Needless to say, this internal evidence has often been disregarded (whether by Aristophanes of Byzantium (257–180 B.C.) who preferred an arrangement of the dialogues by threes and left the *Parmenides* and *Philebus* out of the order, or by Derkylides who preferred to arrange the dialogues in tetralogies and placed the *Parmenides* and *Philebus* after the *Cratylus*, *Theaetetus*, *Sophist*, *Politicus*, or by Schleiermacher who preferred a pedagogical order with the *Parmenides* very early.

Beyond this, we can be sure of very little (and perhaps not even of this). Guthrie arranges the *Parmenides* after the *Cratylus*, which many previous critics had believed to be earlier than the *Phaedo*, *Symposium*, *Republic*, and *Phaedrus*, but again the aporetic nature of this dialogue about the relation of words, things, and their essential natures provides no firm support for either supposition (though such an examination may well be thought a fitting prelude to the *Parmenides*) (Guthrie 1978, 5, 1–30). Brandwood concludes, on the basis of stylistic evidence, that the *Parmenides* should be located somewhere in the middle to late period and, on the balance of evidence, that it should rather head the series of middle dialogues than close it (Brandwood 1990, 85). What exactly this means is not entirely clear. However, it is not even safe to suppose that the *Parmenides* follows the four great earlier middle dialogues (i.e., the *Phaedo*, *Symposium*, *Republic*, and *Phaedrus*—whatever we are to suppose about them or about their composition, particularly in the vexed case of the *Republic*) or to suppose that it looks forward, as we have seen, to the *Theaetetus*, *Sophist*, and *Politicus*. With regard to the middle dialogues, for instance, G. E. L. Owen has argued with some cogency that the *Timaeus* and *Critias* complete the work of the *Republic* group and should be dated even before the *Phaedrus* (Owen 1965, 313–38)—a thesis rejected by Cherniss (1965, 339–78). With regard to the later dialogues, Kenneth Sayre has more recently argued that the kind of dialectic we find in the *Parmenides* does

not appear there full-blown as if for the first time. Dialectic by negation appears first in the *Sophist*, later in the *Politicus*, and is finally developed as Plato's most powerful dialectical tool in the *Parmenides*—all of which evidently supposes a different chronology of the later dialogues (Sayre 2007).

3. FIVE INITIAL QUESTIONS

Can we say anything about the place of the *Parmenides* from its internal content and its apparent relation to other dialogues? We may set out part of what we can say as an initial set of questions.

First, the frame of the dialogue is striking: a narrated dialogue that we hear from a certain, rather shadowy Cephalus, who heard it from a certain Antiphon, who in turn learned it by heart from Pythodorus, who actually witnessed the meeting between Parmenides, Zeno, and Socrates decades before. The name, Cephalus, cannot but remind us of the different Cephalus in the *Republic*, but this thrice-removed narrative form is shared by only one other dialogue, as far as I know: that is, the *Symposium*. Why should this be so and why the onion-skin form of narration?

Second, Socrates' position as the mature interlocutor is taken by Parmenides, a displacement surely of some significance since it foreshadows the entry of the Stranger and Socrates' disappearance in later dialogues. Why should this take place here in the *Parmenides* for the first time, if we accept the predominant chronology we have outlined above?

Third, why are there two major parts connected by brief transitional sections: 1) 126–137c7 and transition: 135c8–137c3; 2) 137c4–166c5 (though there are many different suggestions as to where to end the first part [see Bechtle 1999a, 71]). What weight should we put on each or both? Should we follow one sort of interpretation that puts more emphasis on the first part or exclusive emphasis upon some of its problems (like self-predication and the third-man argument) or if the second major part is either unfathomable (for many interpreters, if not most readers) or to be dismissed as eristic gymnastics, should we seek the interpretation of the whole work and its problems from what "Plato" says in other dialogues? Both approaches are obviously lopsided, as would also be (presumably) their corollary that we seek for the interpretive key exclusively in the second "most intractable" (Meinwald 1992a, 4) part, which on the surface has seemed to many commentators to contain embarrassingly bad arguments systematically arranged so as to yield apparently contradictory results. Surely, however, the second part, no matter how difficult, must address the problems raised in the first, as Parmenides himself indicates to Socrates? Here again, surely, the problem of the frame would seem to have something to do with the problem of the relation of parts, and any interpretation would have to be holistic and comprehensive, one might argue, but open-ended, since clearly the enormous difficulty of the second part literally drives the reader *back* into the frame and the first part. Why this

should be so is evidently a pressing problem. On the other hand, we could even suppose—with Gilbert Ryle—that the two parts might in fact not be connected. Since the first part is in indirect speech and the second in direct speech, we may imagine Plato bringing down from his shelf one part or the other to link them together with “some, but not all, of the needed continuities” (Ryle 1965, 145).

Fourth, in the exchange between the young Socrates and the venerable Parmenides, Socrates' statements are generally agreed to be reminiscent of views expressed in the *Phaedo* and *Republic*, views thought to represent “Plato's theory of forms” (but omitting among other things, as Guthrie observes, the complementary doctrine of the human soul as immortal and intermediary between forms and the visible world). Yet Socrates fails to maintain these views in the *Parmenides* and falls into perplexity; and the general conclusion of the first part is that without the forms there can be no *dialegethai* (*Parm.* 135b)—whatever *dialegethai* is to mean (and presumably no firm answer could be given that did not take account of dialectical method in *Republic* 6–7 and the critique of writing and the two *logoi* in the *Phaedrus*)—and thus probably also no philosophy either (see Bechtel 1999a, 71).

The criticism of the theory here has led some commentators to suppose that Plato either abandons forms as transcendent paradigms (e.g., Ryle 1965; Weingartner 1973) or now requires forms only to be class-concepts or universals (e.g., Rist 1970, 227); or again that he suddenly realizes Platonism to be misguided or even that he remains unaware of the supposedly fatal consequences of his own criticisms (e.g., Runciman 1965, 151–53). Ryle's view, in part, prompted Owen (1965) to date the *Timaeus*, with its evident espousal of Form Paradigms, closer to the *Republic* so that he could dispense with a theory of Forms in the late dialogues. Yet, as Guthrie argues (1978, 5:59–60), the later dialogues hardly support the thesis that Plato abandoned his view of transcendent forms and, as Constance Meinwald points out (1992b, 367), “passages from other dialogues do not contain evidence that Plato thought they had anything to do with the problems of the *Parmenides*. So does “Plato” change his mind or not? And how might one reply to Parmenides' criticisms? According to Cornford, the criticisms are directed not against Plato but against Eudoxus or by Megarian or Eleatic critics that Plato wanted to take account of (Cornford 1939, 86–87, 101). According to Guthrie, the second part of the dialogue shows that Forms can admit contrary predicates and combine with each other and meets the challenge of reconciling their transcendence with their “association” with the sensible world (1978, 5:57–60). According to Brisson, the second part presents a practical demonstration designed to give the young Socrates the tools necessary to defend the doctrine of Forms in relation not to the Neoplatonic One or Intellect but to the universe or the “all” considered as a unity or a plurality (1996, 82–107; on this see further below).

Here Brisson observes: “On pourrait déceler là une hiérarchie de catégories utilisées en cosmologie” (1996, 83). One might suggest that this more historically Parmenidean notion of the “all” is not incompatible even with much later views

such as Plotinus's notion of intellect in the broader sense, a notion that includes intellect and soul and everything else too, even bodies and matter in *Enn.* 6.2 [43].²¹ Of course, the distinction between intelligible and sensible realities is Platonic, not Parmenidean; but the cosmological and the metaphysical surely go together whether one deals with the "historical" Parmenides, Plato's *Parmenides* or Plotinus's inclusive notion of intellect or the "all. If the second part of the *Parmenides* is to provoke us to think, then the dialogue of forms, as it were, perhaps operates on several levels simultaneously.

Fifth (and finally), the dialectical method displayed in the second part applies a gymnastic exercise to Parmenides' central principle, that what is, is one, an exercise consisting (after the manner of Zeno's argumentation) of sections of argument arranged so that the conclusions of the first section contradict those of the second. The actual number of these "hypotheses" or "series of deductions" (Brisson 1996, 83) is still much debated and their purpose even more so. In fact, do they have any purpose? How could they represent actual views of Parmenides and Zeno? Do they not simply destroy or rupture not only the extremely fragile "historical" frame of the dialogue but also its highly unstable "rational" frame? Why then should the complete subversion of any strict meanings in the dialogue be possible in this striking fashion?

These five sets of questions represent only the tip of an iceberg (I cannot here, for example, tackle other questions such as the generation of numbers in the second part), but any interpretation should probably attempt to grapple with them. They may in fact have very reasonable answers, but preliminary suggestions or trajectories of thought towards answering them must be left until we have examined briefly something of the history of interpretation of the *Parmenides* itself, for even a small portion of that history will get us closer to a better understanding of the problems of the dialogue and its first thousand years of interpretation.

For Hegel, the difficulty of the *Parmenides* (as of the later dialogues in general) is that it represents dialectic ("simple thought determinations without imagery," *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* 1955, 1:88) as a movement through "pure notions" (2:48–49), but represents them negatively and not in their unity, or "as the negation of the negation, expressive of true theology" (2:59–60). Nonetheless, just as the *Timaeus* represents the essence of Plato's natural philosophy, and the *Republic* his ethics, so in Hegel's estimation—despite his contemporaries' dismissal of Neoplatonist views as "wild extravagances," the Neoplatonists, and Proclus in particular, rightly regarded "the result arrived at in the *Parmenides* as the true theology, as the true revelation of all the mysteries of the divine essence" (2:60)! Compare Guthrie: "that the dry antithetical arguments of the *Parmenides* about the One, sophistic in form at least and inseparable, one would have thought, from fifth–fourth century controversy, should have been seen as an exposition of the sublimest truths of theology, is surely one of the oddest turns in the history of human thought" (1978, 5, 33–34).

4. SOME MAJOR PROPOSED INTERPRETATIONS

One may usefully provide a sketch of at least ten major interpretations of the purpose and goal of the *Parmenides* starting from the time of Proclus:

- A1 a) logical exercise, polemic; b) argumentative, polemic/expository
- A2 logical, propaedeutic;
- A3 metaphysical enquiry into being;
- A4 metaphysical enquiry into everything that gets its reality from the One, an enquiry on many different levels;
- A5 demolition job against Megaric and Eleatic adversaries (modern version of A1);
- A6 game, exercise, logic-chopping (another version of A1, if not A2 which is more like Cornford's or even Guthrie's views);
- A7 an expression of Plato's own spiritual crisis;
- A8 neither logical nor metaphysical, but historical;
- A9 comprehensive interpretation based on the distinction between absolute and relative predication;
- A10 a movement from the naturalist to the ideal plane based upon the unwritten teachings;

Proclus, in fact, lays the foundation for a very reasonable history of interpretation in his *Parmenides Commentary* (630.15–645.81) by distinguishing between four basic kinds of interpretation:

A1 a and b) Two first logical types that see the goal of the dialogue as a) either logical exercise (γυμνασία), according to some interpreters, or b) argumentative (λογικὸν) in several different ways, according to others, with the overall aim of polemic against Eleatic metaphysics. In the case of the former, logical exercise, Proclus argues that such interpreters fail to take sufficient account of the very ancient subtitle “On Forms”; in the case of the latter interpretation, argumentation, Proclus argues that these interpreters fail to notice the dialogue's emphasis upon theory or insight into things (τὴν τῶν πραγμάτων θεωρίαν). Here, by contrast with the “logical exercise” interpretation, there does seem to be a deeper expository purpose at work, for Proclus observes that some of these interpreters suppose that “Plato wrote it against it Zeno, to put to the test the working of his subtle new methods of argument on a more difficult theme, that of the intelligible; for Zeno had been occupied with applying these techniques to the sense-world” (631.15–19). Proclus does not specify who held such views in antiquity but, as Bechtle suggests, the most reasonable starting point is with the philosophers of

1. See Proclus, *In Parm.* 1051.34–1064.12; Saffrey and Westerink 1:lxv–lxxxix.

the sceptical New Academy. Certainly too, this view is common in the contemporary world.

A2) A second logical type (633.12–635.27) that sees the second part not as polemic but as instructive and preparatory, as a means of learning the technique of argumentation, formulating Platonic positions, rebutting objections and so on. Again, Proclus does not give names, but Alcinous (*Didask.* 6 and *Intr.* 3) and Thrasyllus (Diogenes Laertius, *Lives* 3.58) held such views, as Bechtle points out, and again there are modern variants on this theme.

A3) A metaphysical interpretation (635.31–638.2), according to which the aim is to expound the truth about being (in Parmenides' sense) by accepting some of the hypotheses and rejecting others, for example, by rejecting the first hypothesis as having no subject matter and seeing the second hypothesis as the real subject of the dialogue. As Dillon remarks (Morrow and Dillon 1987, 8), the best candidate for this view is Origen the Platonist (and certainly no one in antiquity later than Plotinus). Again, there are modern adherents (Halfwassen 1992, 270 n 18; Bechtle, 1999a, 75).

A4) Finally, a second metaphysical interpretation (638.2–640.16), according to which what is under examination is “all things that get their reality from the One” (638.19–20: *περὶ πάντων τῶν ἀπὸ τοῦ ἑνὸς ὑποστάντων*) in different ways according to different hypotheses, the first hypothesis concerning the negative theology of the One and so on down the chain of being in the following three hypotheses until we come to the final four hypotheses (if the One is not), which may be given, according to Proclus, a positive interpretation (e.g., by Amelius, Porphyry, and Iamblichus: *In Parm.* 1052.31–1055.25) or a negative interpretation “as refutations of false arguments which thus negatively confirm the necessity of an absolute principle like the One” (Bechtle 1999a, 76). This is the view of Proclus himself (*In Parm.* 1055.25–1057.5) and also of Theodorus, Plutarch, and Syrianus (*In Parm.* 1057.5–1064.12). A4) is therefore, the “typical” Neoplatonist interpretation (which also has modern adherents, see Halfwassen 1992, 274 nn. 30–31; Bechtle 1999a, 76). And in relation generally to A4, two further modern interpretations among many others (e.g., Sayre 1983; M. H. Miller 1986; Turnbull 1998) for a positive metaphysical reading are worth adding: those of Constance Meinwald (A9) and of the Tübingen school (A10), interpretations very different in character.

Several notes should be added to this picture of A1–A4.

a) First, Proclus's apparent view that there is no metaphysical interpretation of the *Parmenides* prior to Plotinus seems unlikely, for surely the “episodic” system of Speusippus requires just such an interpretation, as do a) what we know of Moderatus, Eudorus, and Nicomachus of Gerasa, b) the Sethian Gnostic “Platonizing texts,” which appear to be pre-Plotinian, c) Middle Platonic thought in general and especially the *Anonymous Commentary* attributed to Porphyry by Hadot, but probably Middle Platonic (Bechtle 1999a; Corrigan 2000). It is equally

reasonable to suppose therefore that traditions of substantive interpretation, in one sense or another, go back even to the Old Academy.

b) Second, the weakness of the polemical interpretation (A1) or of modern views of the *Parmenides* as a series of largely fallacious contradictions designed to parody the sort of logical deductions proposed by Zeno or Euclides—a demolition job against Megaricizing and Eleaticizing Plato's adversaries (A5)—is that it trivializes the playful but serious form of the “question mark” itself that the dialogue represents, quite apart from the question of the appropriateness of putting such a polemic into Parmenides' own mouth. A2 is more reasonable, but its weakness may perhaps reside in the nice, tidy distinction it supposes between preparatory gymnastics and substantive philosophy. In one sense, (that of the *Phaedrus*' criticism of writing), all written dialogues are preparatory instruments, yet surely this does not prevent them being substantive in principle. A2, therefore, in modern times tends to devolve into the view that the *Parmenides* is a pure intellectual game, a sly scholastic exercise or just logic-chopping (A6), a view that contrasts with another modern interpretation of the dialogue as an expression of Plato's own spiritual crisis (and rejection of the theory of Forms; Ryle 1965) and therefore as a form of self-criticism (A7). Guthrie does not accept exactly A2 or A6 (and certainly not A7) because his interpretation is more subtle (and positive; see Guthrie 1978, 5, 56–57), but gymnastic emphasis in the text leads him to adopt a no-nonsense view: “as a verb or noun, the word ‘exercise’ (*gymnazō*, *gymnasia*) is used five times to describe it (sc. the second part), and it is strange that some have seen in the coming section a promise of more” (1978, V, 53). Guthrie's point is telling, but strictly speaking it could equally be applied to the kind of exercise involved in the dialectical *mathêma* of the good in *Republic* 7 (e.g., at 526b), which plainly does not preclude more substantive content beyond the positive outcome Guthrie envisages. Cornford's interpretation is more positive than that of Guthrie, but he sees the *Parmenides* as an exercise in the different meanings of the terms “being” and “one” and as a kind of “think for yourself if you can” exercise; and this is true enough, one might argue, of the dialogues, in general.

c) Third, on the view of A4, the hypotheses are divided into two groups, five affirmative and four negative as in the following schema (in which I follow Brisson's line numbering amended to fit the schema of Diès 1932, and Séguy-Duclot, 1998, on which see immediately below):

A.	<i>Affirmative</i>	
I	<i>ei hen estin</i>	137c3
II	<i>hen ei estin</i>	142b3
III	<i>to hen ei estin</i>	155e4
IV	<i>hen ei estin</i>	157b5
V	<i>hen ei estin</i>	159b2

B. Negative

VI	<i>hen ei me estin</i>	160d3
VII	<i>hen ei me estin</i>	163b7
VIII	<i>hen ei me estin</i>	164b4
IX	<i>hen ei me estin</i>	165c2–3

Some modern scholars (e.g., Diès and Séguy-Duclot) follow the nine hypotheses division, others like Amelius and Cornford find only eight—a problem undoubtedly rooted in Plato's text itself, which gives some support to both possibilities, though the overall structure may favor eight—as for example does Scolnicov (2003), according to the following schema:

I. Affirmative: if the One is:

1. consequences for the One in relation to itself	137c–142a6
2. consequences for the One in relation to the others	142b–157b4
3. consequences for the many in relation to the one	157b–159a9
4. consequences for the many in relation to themselves	159b–160b3

II. Negative: if the One is not

5. consequences for the one in relation to the others	160b–163b5
6. consequences for the one in relation to itself	163b–164b3
7. consequences for the many in relation to the one	164b–165e1
8. consequences for the many in relation to themselves	165c–166c6

Brisson (A8), in a series of articles and at least two books over a thirty-year period, has reluctantly rejected the Neoplatonist view (A4) in favor of a more neutral interpretation, arguing that the *triton ... to hen ei estin ei* at 155c4 does not refer to a third hypothesis, but to a division of the second hypothesis into three parts (Brisson 1994 [2nd ed. 1999], 46). He therefore holds to only eight hypotheses and develops an interpretation that plumps for neither a logical nor a metaphysical interpretation (1996), but one “foncièrement historique,” according to which the second part presents not a description of the universe, but the theoretical “armature” on which Parmenides’ and Zeno’s conception of the universe rests. Socrates finds himself in the dilemma that either sensible things participate in a part of the form or they don’t, and if they do, then they must participate in a part of the form or the whole. If not the second, then the first, but Socrates is not ready to take up the question yet and so needs “dialectical training” (Brisson 1996, 106). Like R. E. Allen (1983), Brisson situates the *Parmenides* against the background of Plato’s later writings, where these difficulties will be in part solved by the *Timaeus*’s view that sensible things have a relative existence between forms and the *chôra*. In general, therefore, Brisson insists on the historical situation of the dialogue and particularly upon the poem of Parmenides himself where he speaks not of the being of the One, but of being or “the all,” prior to the Platonic

distinction between the sensible and the intelligible. He therefore rejects the Neoplatonic interpretation that makes *hen* the subject of *esti* and takes *hen* to be an attribute of *esti* instead so that the hypothesis *ei hen esti* means “if the world is one” and does not refer to any metaphysical entity or even to a Form, but to the one whole that is the world.

Brisson's neutral thesis (perhaps somewhere in between A2–A3 but neither of them) is attractive, especially since it is based on a balanced reading of the whole dialogue and an intertextual view of the middle to late dialogues. If A8 has any weaknesses at all, perhaps they may lie in the consideration (i) that A8 doesn't really read the *Parmenides* fully against the background of the earlier “middle” dialogues, (ii) that a more substantive interpretation should still perhaps not be eliminated, for the “series of deductions” challenge one to read them singly and together in different ways and they also foreground the problem of the level of interpretation or the question of what “universe” of discourse is at stake and (iii) that the ambiguities of the *ei hen esti* cannot and should not be eliminated in a *Platonic* dialogue.

d) Finally, in relation generally to A4, we may add as positive metaphysical readings two further modern interpretations among many others (e.g., Sayre 1983; M. H. Miller 1986; Turnbull 1998; and Sayre 2007): those of Constance Meinwald (A9) and of the Tübingen school (A10), interpretations very different in character.

Meinwald (1992b, 367) argues that the second part of the *Parmenides* displays a distinction between two kinds of predication, *pros heauto* and *pros ta alla* predications, by which we can see that the exercise consists of good arguments to conclusions, not contradictory at all (Meinwald 1992b, 367). According to Meinwald, the use of two senses of “is” with participation, what she calls “tree” predication (*pros heauto*) and “ordinary” predication (*pros allo*) gives us a new reading of the whole dialogue in a fuller and more comprehensive fashion and a way of relating it to the later dialogues. Turnbull (1998) takes her to task (along with Cornford, Sayre, and M. H. Miller) for not making a serious effort to fit the *Parmenides* into the pattern of Plato's later thought (Turnbull 1998, 199), but in fact Meinwald is attempting to do just that and her interpretation is attractive.

Modern interpreters of the Tübingen school, by contrast, conceive the *Parmenides* to be a reflection of Plato's unwritten teachings, which are indispensable to making sense of the dialogue. According to Giovanni Reale's view (1997), for instance, neither the monistic conception of the Eleatics nor the purely pluralistic position of the Atomists can survive scrutiny. What emerges instead is a synthesizing middle way between monism and pluralism, which admits a bipolar structure of reality headed by the two principles, the One and the indefinite dyad. The *Parmenides*, therefore, moves dialectic from the naturalist Eleatic plane to the realm of ideas and suggests that the relation between sensible things and forms ought to be reexamined in the light of the bipolar structure of unity and plurality. While there is much to be said for A10 (i.e., it tries to take account of

all the available evidence), it seems to take the play out of Plato and to impose a blueprint from outside of the dialogues to explain everything in them, thereby rendering them sometimes shadows of an external structure. The play of textuality and intertextuality is lost or seriously diminished. Against A10, therefore, if not A9, the Neoplatonist reading itself may well seem preferable, even perhaps for its perceived playful extravagances.

On the whole, however, one may quite reasonably argue (in relation to the perspectives of A3, A4, A8, and A10) that a major consideration of the questions of being and unity, forms and sensibles, in relation to the paradigmatic figures of physical-intelligible monism (Parmenides and Zeno), makes good sense for Plato to undertake after the earlier middle dialogues, in which we see Socrates immersed (and yet never entirely so, of course) in the movements of life and death (i.e., *Phaedo*, *Symposium*, *Republic*, and *Phaedrus*) and in the oscillation between names, things, and their significations or lack of them (*Cratylus*). What would dialectic look like, as it were, from the side of unity and being as opposed to the conversational movements towards ideas, through ideas and voices of the earlier dialogues? Hegel's interpretation too, that in the *Parmenides* we have a negative representation of dialectic, is perhaps not far from the point, even if it is wrapped up in the identity and difference of his own conception of dialectic, which, incidentally, he developed anyway from *Resp.* 8 (see 563e–564a).

The *Parmenides*, in sum, therefore, tends to yield at least twelve basic, general and specific interpretations:

- A1 a) logical exercise, polemic; b) argumentative, polemic/expository
- A2 logical, propaedeutic;
- A3 metaphysical enquiry into being;
- A4 metaphysical enquiry into everything that gets its reality from the One, an enquiry on many different levels;
- A5 demolition job against Megaric and Eleatic adversaries (modern version of A1);
- A6 game, exercise, logic-chopping (another version of A1, if not A2 which is more like Cornford's or even Guthrie's view);
- A7 an expression of Plato's own spiritual crisis;
- A8 neither logical nor metaphysical, but historical;
- A9 comprehensive interpretation based on the distinction between absolute and relative predication;
- A10 a movement from the naturalist to the ideal plane based upon the unwritten teachings;

And we may add:

- A11 the view more common in the nineteenth century that the dialogue could not be authentic or at least that its authorship is dubious and;

- A12 the view of Hegel that it represents the apogee of Platonic dialectic but in negative form.

5. TOWARDS A SOLUTION

Out of this rather bewildering variety (very far from being complete), let me make the following suggestions:

a) First, there is a real need for a close reexamination of the early history of interpretation from Aristotle and Speusippus to Proclus and Damascius, partly because Proclus's account of the early history is sketchy and because it leaves out too much of critical importance and partly because our contemporary accounts have also naturally been partial to the orthodox side of the Platonic equation, omitting the hidden, implicit appropriations that we find clear evidence for in Gnostic texts and perhaps also in Patristic texts (e.g., the Cappadocian Fathers, especially Basil and Gregory of Nyssa, not to mention Philo and Origen).

b) Second, as the frame, the transposition of Parmenides as major interlocutor for Socrates, and the critique of forms strongly indicate (see above section 4 a, b, and d), the *Parmenides* has to be read not only as a comprehensive whole in itself, but intertextually against the background of the earlier middle dialogues, particularly the *Phaedo* and the *Republic* (in the case of the forms), and even more so, I suggest, the *Symposium* (in the case of the frame and the transposition), since there is only one dialogue before the *Parmenides* in which Socrates appears partly in minor key and that is the *Symposium*, as the junior interlocutor to the (ever so delicately fictional) figure of Diotima and, more deeply, as an apprentice in pursuit of the beautiful. This transposition and the theme of apprenticeship in the *Symposium* clearly pave the way for the presentation of the *Parmenides*, just as the figure of Diotima, the Mantinean stranger-woman, foreshadows the emergence of *strangers* in the later dialogues. So too does the speech of Socrates-Diotima, a speech that is a dialogue of ideas composed indirectly from no single conversation (as Socrates observes) and one that is strictly speaking outside the framework of the *Symposium*'s own *synousia*—so too does Socrates-Diotima's speech anticipate the far sparser dialogue between ideas that is the second part of the *Parmenides*.² By "sparser," I mean that whereas in the *Symposium* myth and character (Eros, Penia, Socrates and Diotima—eventually disrupted by the entry of Alcibiades) are integral parts of what is essentially a dialogue of ideas, in the second part of the *Parmenides* the dialogue is a directly *intelligible* presentation in the direct speech of a philosophical present in which we lose sight (almost) entirely of the characters of Parmenides and Aristotle and in which Socrates disappears. The question of the frame is too complex to be taken up here, and my point anyway is more restricted, namely, i) that the *Parmenides* has to be read

2. On the *Symposium* generally see Corrigan and Glazov-Corrigan, 2004.

intertextually against and into the background of the earlier middle dialogues as well as forward into the *Theaetetus/Sophist* progression which appears to refer to it; ii) that since the frame, the critique of forms, and the second part call themselves into question, while indeed the dialogue has to be read as a whole, it cannot be represented as a closed rational system, for its very nature is fundamentally subversive; but just as intratextuality in the case of the *Parmenides* means that we have to read it forwards, backwards, and sideways, so intertextuality would seem to demand a radical open-endedness and provisional character that both resists overdetermination of the text and yet provokes it. A finite *range* of interpretation is therefore natural for such a text, but it is a range that cannot exclude what appear to be the metaphysical interpretations of a Speusippus, Moderatus, Plotinus, or Proclus. This is another strong reason for a reexamination of the earlier tradition.

c) Finally, if the above makes sense, then the fundamental importance of the second part of the *Parmenides* for its apparent earliest manifestation in Speusippus's multilayered, episodic (according to Aristotle) universes may perhaps emerge more clearly as trajectories of possibility or different universes of discourse that foreground the problem of how to interpret, how to read, and at what level to situate representations of ideas bound together in argumentative form. Representations cast light or shadows in at least two different dimensions: 1) in the direction of their potential logical deconstruction—their coming apart at the seams as it were—and of their disappearances into the great, but long vanished bedrocks of time and place (e.g., Parmenides and Zeno, but two figures who are still capable of initiating living dialogue into their “future”), on the one hand, and 2) in the direction of their various imaginative possibilities, on the other. If the Platonic Parmenides is playing a “serious game” (ὄλως δῆλός ἐστιν ὄντως πραγματειώδη παιδιὰν παίζων καὶ δι’ αὐτῆς ὁδεύων τῆς φύσεως), as Proclus claims (*In Parm.* 1051), and if the troublesome but serious function of contrary impressions is to call upon or wake up thought, as Socrates famously claims in *Republic* 7 (523e), then we might reasonably suppose that both above tendencies must have been at work in the first thousand years of interpretation after Plato, despite the silence of Proclus—tendencies that spring naturally out of the many-layered, highly deceptive, open-ended texts of the absent Plato himself.

SPEUSIPPUS'S NEUTRAL CONCEPTION OF THE ONE
AND PLATO'S *PARMENIDES*

Gerald Bechtle

I. PRELIMINARIES

Right from the outset I should make it clear that I do not wish to presuppose *a priori* what this paper first needs to argue for by means of detailed comparison, namely, the existence of a relation between the Platonic dialogue *Parmenides* and any Academic¹ first principles, for which our main and most direct source is Aristotle. I speak of "Academic" rather than "Platonic and Academic" or "Platonic-Academic" principles because for the sake of clarity I prefer to leave out of this paper the tricky questions concerning the relation between, on the one hand, the dialogue *Parmenides* and, on the other, Plato's own so-called unwritten doctrines, which are usually considered to be *the* decisive source of information about the Platonic first principles. Of course, provided that we can show that there is a relation between this dialogue and the Academic first principles, it has to be admitted that one of the consequences certainly would be that there must be some connection also between the *Parmenides* (and other dialogues) and the

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1. In order to impose reasonable limits upon this paper I confine myself for the most part to Plato and Speusippus and therefore mean above all Speusippus and those who by and large accept his opinion (disciples or colleagues) when speaking of "Academic" in this context. If I nevertheless continue using this term here it is because its more inclusive meaning is sometimes more appropriate.

body of indirect evidence called the “unwritten doctrines.” For it is unlikely that the Academic conception of first principles has nothing to do with Plato’s own doctrine on this point. But even though it may seem fairly clear that the Platonic conception of first principles as transmitted in the indirect evidence has something to do with the corresponding theory of Speusippus and others in the Academy, the main problem as to the exact nature of the link between the *Parmenides* and the unwritten doctrines should remain an open question here. Otherwise there is too much risk of importing information from our evidence on the notoriously problematic unwritten doctrines into our debate about the influence of the *Parmenides* (and not of the unwritten doctrines) on the Academic first principles. This in turn would undermine our wish to make some real progress in determining the exact role of the *Parmenides*. Therefore we should first of all try to keep separate things separate and not flesh out the dialogue with this indirect evidence.

Also, I believe that one should generally refrain from amalgamating the problem of Platonic with that of Academic principles, since we know that Plato and Speusippus differ greatly in their responses to many philosophical questions (e.g., Speusippus mathematizes the whole of reality while Plato works with the concept of ideas). Hence there is no reason why these two philosophers should have identical opinions as to the problem of principles.² This does not mean, however, that they are not concerned with the same philosophical questions or that dialogues such as the *Parmenides* and the *Philebus* are unrelated to Speusippus’s theory of first principles, to the contrary, as I shall try to show. But what we ought to realize is that these relations, which go back to discussions between Plato and some thinkers of his circle such as his successor Speusippus, do not at all preclude that Plato and Speusippus, for example, exchange³ critical arguments as to which

2. I think their conceptions as regards first principles are really quite different, the most conspicuous of these divergences being Speusippus’s negative theory that seems to take the principle(s) as *minima* in some way, which seems to be in conflict with Plato’s more positive conception of transcendence. See below for a fuller treatment of this point.

3. I speak of an exchange because it might for the moment be the safest and most natural hermeneutic procedure to suppose that a kind of two-way traffic runs here: on the one hand, Speusippus can be seen as developing (or changing) some of his master’s suggestions, while at the same time Plato also reacts to Speusippus’s (and other pupils’) arguments and discusses them in his own works. See, e.g., Graeser (1999, or 2004, 177–84), who has maintained for many years that the *Parmenides* is written by Plato in order to react against Speusippus’s theory of principles. In particular, one could, according to Graeser, hold that in the first hypothesis Plato wishes to point at problems inherent in both one conception that takes the principles as uncoordinated with their “products” and another one that takes them as part of the reality they generate. Hence it seems most useful to work out first of all various relevant points of contact in order to grasp better the nature and the extent of the doctrinal relations between the *Parmenides* and the Old Academy/Speusippus. This is difficult enough. To decide which way the traffic runs in each case is an even more delicate problem and it might suffice to say that the cliché of the disciple follow-

response should be adopted to a given philosophical problem or question. Thus we should not expect unanimous conclusions or solutions of major problems. It is more likely that we find both some important points of contact (concerning questions that also presuppose the comparability of certain foundations such as the postulation of a One and an indefinite dyad) and significant disagreement (concerning the answers). This is why a topic such as the one announced in my title is relevant at all. For the historical reality lies certainly beyond the extremes of a Speusippus paraphrasing such texts as the *Parmenides* or, alternatively, a Plato endorsing without major reservations his nephew's ideas in some of his dialogues (which can theoretically not be excluded). Equally unlikely is the possibility that there is no relevant connection between the writings of both philosophers, as I hope will become obvious in this paper. As far as possible, we should therefore try to be clearer about the exact nature of the doctrinal relations between Plato, here in particular the dialogue *Parmenides*, and relevant members of the Academy. If this preliminary enterprise is successful, one may proceed and consider the relation between the *Parmenides*, other dialogues and the indirect evidence (without previously fleshing out the former with the latter), so as to compare more fully the Platonic and Academic theories of first principles. In this sense the present paper is to be considered as merely a first step towards such an end.

In order to avoid any misunderstandings, the following remark should be made at this point. To hold, first, that there is a relation between the *Parmenides* and the Old Academic principles and, second, that this relation may involve some comparability of Platonic and Academic first principles does not commit one to the opinion that the Platonic *Parmenides* (more specifically, its second part, which I wish to focus on) exposes or can be read as implying Plato's own positive theory of first principles in any dogmatic way. An example of this way of interpretation would be that of later Platonist philosophers, and I am not sure whether it can really be justified. Without being able to say what the *Parmenides* is exactly about, I nevertheless try to show that—in a fairly aporetic manner—the dialogue probably explores various possibilities and impossibilities of conceiving of such things as the One and the dyad and that therefore this dialogue is of relevance also to Speusippus's theory of principles. I do not think that Plato comes to any definite conclusions in the *Parmenides* as far as these principles are concerned, and if he had come to any, I doubt that they would have been the same as Speusippus's, who seems much more determined and even dogmatic in his approach. But according to what is set out above, I do think both philosophers are involved in an active and critical debate and are therefore concerned with the same questions or problems regarding the first principles.

ing his master and uncle in all important points of doctrine has *a priori* no greater credibility to it than the suggestion that Plato reacts to some of Speusippus's tenets.

II. SHORT EXCURSUS ABOUT METHODOLOGICAL POINTS OF CONTACT
BETWEEN SPEUSIPPUS AND THE *PARMENIDES*

As to the question whether there are other philosophical doctrines apart from the theory of principles for which comparable material exists both in Plato's dialogues and in Speusippus, I merely wish to hint at the underexplored question of methodology. What is most striking is that the dichotomic method of the second part of the *Parmenides* (if the One is/is not, what follows for the One/the others, in relation to the One/the others), which aims at exhausting all possibilities, may well remind us of Speusippus's equally exhaustive semantics, as it is dihairetically classified (all words can be divided in tautonyms and heteronyms, the tautonyms can again be divided in homonyms and synonyms, etc.).⁴ For the fundamental working principle of Speusippus's methodology⁵ is the "same (identical) – other (different)" (ταῦτόν – θάτερον) distinction, which both structures the whole of the *Parmenides* and even plays an explicit role as predicated of the One at 139b4–e6 (the One will neither be identical to another or to itself, nor different from itself or from another) and at 146a9–147b8 (the One must be identical to itself and different from itself, and identical to the others as well as different from the others), and as predicated of the others at 159a6 (the others [than the One] are both identical to and different from each other; see also 164a2–7; 165d4–5; 166b4–5). Also, Speusippus seems to take a second step by working with a derived version of this distinction, that is, "similar – dissimilar" (ὅμοιον – διάφορον [ἀνόμοιον]), equally familiar from the *Parmenides* (139e7–140b5; 147c1–148d4; 158e1–159a6; 159e2–160a3; 161a6–c2; 164a2–7; 165c6–d4; 166b3–4 [i.e., it is present in all eight deduction series]). The great methodological relevance of the primary and basic binary distinction "same (identical) – other (different)" for the whole Academic—and thus also Speusippus's—philosophy is suggested, for example, by Aristotle (*Metaph.* 1003b35–36 and 1004a18–19; 21–22; see also 1054a29–32) or by Hermodorus⁶ (*apud* Simplicius, *In phys.* 9:247,30–248,20 Diels) where beings are divided into τὰ καθ' αὐτά and τὰ πρὸς ἕτερα, the latter being subdivided

4. See frg. 68a Tarán = Simplicius, *In cat.* 38,19–24. One of the major contributions to Speusippus's semantics remains, despite some general shortcomings of his monograph (see, e.g., the reviews by Edmunds [1974, 201–2] or Szlezák [1974, 453–55]), E. Heitsch (1972, in particular 49–60, section 7), attempts to outline the history of homonymy from Homer to Sophonias. For more literature and a good summary of some of the problems involved in this context (method and semantics), see Metry 2002, 102–10. To my knowledge, the link between the method of the *Parmenides* and the Speusippian methodology, as applied to his semantics, does not seem to have been hinted at yet, let alone explored.

5. At least two of his lost works must be mentioned in this context: the treatise *On Similar*s, in ten books, and *Divisions and Hypotheses Relating to Similar*s.

6. For further references concerning the categories of "absolute" and "alio-relative" see the informative note of Metry (2002, 145 n. 138).

into τὰ πρὸς ἐναντία and τὰ πρὸς τι, the latter being in turn subdivided into τὰ ὠρισμένα and τὰ ἀόριστα (Simplicius, *In phys.* 248.2–5). Aristotle, in the passages just cited (in particular *Metaph.* 1004a1, 10), makes it especially clear that the basic methodological distinction “same (identical) – other (different)” and its derived versions are of course dependent on the two fundamental principles εἶν and πλῆθος (thus opting for Speusippus’s terminology). Furthermore, since for Speusippus the basic methodological distinction is valid for and applicable to all possible ontological levels, it is consistent that the universal categories “same (identical) – other (different)” themselves completely transcend these ontological levels; being logical categories, they are thus desubstantivized. Unfortunately, we cannot pursue this topic further and have to leave aside here the possibility of a relation between the Parmenidean and the Speusippian methods, intriguing though it may be.

What I wish to deal with in this paper, then, is first of all the question of whether there exists a relation between the Platonic dialogue *Parmenides* and any Academic (above all Speusippian) first principles (which I think is a probable option) and, if yes, of what kind it is, that is, which doctrinal aspects such a relation comprises, and how they are related in terms of similarities and dissimilarities. This question can only be decided through careful argumentation and a positive response to it should, as I said, not be taken for granted.⁷ In order to carry out this project we should now turn to a relatively brief reconstruction of Speusippus’s doctrine of first principles, which is indispensable in order to have some idea of what we are looking for in the deduction series of the *Parmenides*.

III. SPEUSIPPUS’S FIRST PRINCIPLES: GENERAL PROBLEMS

There are many and often insoluble problems attached to attempts at reconstruction of virtually any aspect of Speusippus’s philosophy, for it is well-known that we do not have much more than some traces of what must once have been a very large oeuvre.⁸ Additionally, these traces—given that we find the most important of them mainly in Aristotle—are often very difficult to understand conclusively because of their integration into Aristotelian philosophy. This means that it is hard to penetrate to the actual Speusippian core of any of these extracts. Also later, for example, Platonist, testimonies are far from providing us with clear-cut and unambiguously transmitted fragments and also bring problems of their own,

7. It often seems as though either a positive or negative response concerning the existence of a link between the Platonic dialogue *Parmenides* and the Academic first principles is used as a kind of axiom or guideline for further interpretation that needs no additional examining in itself.

8. See *test.* 1.35–66 Tarán = *Diogenes Laertius* 4.4–5; according to Tarán (1981, 191, 198–99), the already long list Diogenes gives in this passage is very incomplete. At any rate there are numerous problems in the textual transmission of this list of Speusippus’s works

so that it is always necessary to understand prior to the testimonies/fragments themselves the contexts in which they are embedded. Therefore it is practically impossible to establish a definitive account of Speusippus's theory of first principles, and we must be content with achieving a reasonable amount of probability as far as the overall picture of this theory is concerned. In this respect, the fact that we adduce for the sake of comparison the Platonic *Parmenides* might on the one hand complicate things further. But on the other hand it might also be considered as hermeneutically helpful in providing an additional criterion against which the overall probability of the Speusippian conception of first principles can in some way be measured, provided that the relevance of this comparison and therefore a certain relatedness between the *Parmenides* and the Speusippian first principles is accepted beforehand.

Let us now proceed to an analysis of some relevant texts concerning Speusippus's theory of first principles. This analysis has to leave aside here other interesting aspects of Speusippus's philosophy raised in these texts. Furthermore, it cannot even give a complete account of Speusippus's theory of first principles but has to concentrate on elements useful for our comparative purposes. In my opinion, enough material comparable with the *Parmenides* can be found in these texts and therefore some relation between the dialogue and Speusippus's doctrine must exist.

A few words about the most problematic of these texts: the last decades have seen a very lively discussion about specific later Platonist material that seems to confirm and elucidate further some of the information about Speusippus's philosophy (and also about his conception of two first principles) as found mainly in Aristotle.⁹ The most hotly debated question concerning this material is how

9. This discussion has been kicked off by Merlan (1968), who identified a long passage in chapter 4 (15,6–18,12 Festa) of Iamblichus's *De communi mathematica scientia* as being a Speusippus fragment. This text, not accepted by Tarán as a source for the reconstruction of Speusippus's tenets and therefore not forming part of his *testimonia* or *fragmenta*, receives an *in extenso* treatment by him on p. 86–107 of his edition. Another very problematic text usually added to this discussion is frg. 48 Tarán = Proclus, *In Parm.* 38,32–40,7 Klibansky-Labowsky (= 2.501,61–67 Steel), a text that, though constituting an actual fragment in Tarán's edition (the name "Speusippus" is actually mentioned), can according to him not be used in order "to reconstruct the doctrine of Speusippus and/or that of Plato and the early Pythagoreans" (*Speusippus of Athens*, 356). In this context it is astonishing that two other Platonist texts, frg. 49a and b Tarán, discussed below, seem to pose virtually no problems at all, although, to my mind, they underline the drift of some of the doctrines about the One found to be unacceptable in both the Iamblichus and Proclus texts, i.e., especially the One's negativity that excludes it from the subjacent ontological levels and therefore from being, making it something beyond that (though not positively so). As far as the relation Speusippus/*Parmenides* is concerned, it may be of relevance to note that out of the four Platonist texts just mentioned (Iamblichus, *Comm. math. sc.* ch. 4; frg. 48, 49a, 49b Tarán), which, I believe, transmit important testimonies on Speusippus's theory of first principles, two are from actual commentaries on the *Parmenides* (the anonymous

much of it, if anything at all, goes back to Speusippus (else it would be an expression of the tenets of the later philosophers who transmit this information, or of their sources), and, provided that there is a Speusippian core in this material, what would follow therefrom in terms of doctrine for Speusippus. I should say that, for the following reconstruction, I accept the most important parts of this information as genuine.¹⁰ For I remain convinced by the strong parallels between the Aristotelian material and the Platonist texts, parallels that are most naturally explicable if they go back to one author, that is, Speusippus. Certainly we do not know of any other ancient philosopher who holds doctrines of the sort we find here. Thus the following reconstruction is never based solely on the Platonist material, and each important point of Speusippus's doctrine can be attested from Aristotle as well, even if less fully and directly developed.

IV. SPEUSIPPUS'S "NEGATIVE" CONCEPTION OF THE ONE IN PARTICULAR, AND THE PRINCIPLES IN GENERAL¹¹

There are two passages in particular that are significant in our context. Before quoting them, I wish to insist on the obvious but important fact that very often our testimonies might draw conclusions that their authors considered to be a logical continuation of Speusippian ideas, or otherwise warranted. Such draw-

Taurinensis and Proclus), one is from a treatise closely related to a *Parmenides* commentary (Damascius) and the passage in *Comm. math. sc.* I have shown to be relevant in the context of a *Parmenides* interpretation (Bechtle 1999a, 390–91).

10. In an earlier work (1999b, 74–75), I explained the reasons for accepting only *Comm. math. sc.* 15,6–17,29 as Speusippian, but not 18,1–12, which is most probably a summary written by Iamblichus (by the way, the passage at 18,13–23 does not form part of this summary nor does it have a summarizing function). Furthermore, in the case of both *Comm. math. sc.* and Proclus's *Parmenides Commentary* (frg. 48 Tarán = Proclus, *In Parm.* 38,32–40,7 Klíban-sky-Labowsky) one cannot, I hold, isolate the Speusippian core of the transmitted texts without analyzing first of all the Platonist contexts of these "fragments" in order to understand how much of what we take to be Speusippus can really be claimed for him, and in what way exactly. Iamblichus certainly adapts his source's text to fit into his context, which makes it difficult to accept every single word as original Speusippus (even though I am confident that the essentials of the doctrines presented are Speusippian). And in the case of Proclus, we need to be clear about not only the Proclan context, which I think is possible, but also whether the Speusippus citation reflects Speusippus's own doctrine or whether it should be counted as a report of Platonic doctrine. This latter question is to my mind a very difficult one, especially as a parallel text in Theophrastus (*Met.* 11a27–b7) seems to present explicitly Platonic, and not Speusippian material (for 11a18–26 is a Speusippus fragment: frg. 83 Tarán). It is therefore with proviso that I give in the rest of my paper references to these two passages. Nevertheless I think that at least some of the material contained in these two texts probably reflects also Speusippian doctrine, which is, however, read with a Platonizing overtone (especially concerning the transcendence of the One-principle whose formulation seems too positive to be Speusippian).

11. For the following section I selectively draw on Bechtle 2002, 281–306.

ing of conclusions is neither dishonest nor even poor reporting, for one wants to say what Speusippus *thought*, a task that involves far more than a repetition of the words he himself set down. The stranger the doctrine, the more necessary it will be to elaborate its consequences. It is very rare that an ancient author indicates that he is elaborating rather than citing or paraphrasing. Unsurprising as all this is, it means for us historians that we should always be very cautious when we evaluate this embellished Speusippian (or other) material. We must (or: can) therefore allow for a certain degree of incoherence or even contradiction in these reports, which requires an (interpretative) effort at recovering Speusippus's thought from them.

First, a passage from Damascius (frg. 49a Tarán = Damascius, *Princ.* 1:3,9–11 Westerink-Combès):

- 9 οὐ γὰρ ἐν ὡς ἐλάχιστον, καθάπερ ὁ Σπεύσιππος ἔδοξε
 10 λέγειν, ἀλλ' ἐν ὡς πάντα καταπιόν· τῆ γὰρ ἑαυτοῦ ἀπλό-
 11 τητι πάντα συνανέλυσεν, καὶ ἐν τὰ πάντα ἐποίησεν.

Second, a passage from the anonymous commentator on Plato's *Parmenides* (frg. 49b Tarán = *Anon. in Parm.* I.17–24):

- 17 οἰκεία οὖν αὕτη πα-
 18 σῶν τῶν ἄλλων προσηγοριῶν τῷ ἐπὶ πᾶ-
 19 σι θεῷ καὶ τ<.> περὶ αὐτοῦ <.....> σύμ-
 20 φυλος, εἰ μὴ τις διὰ σμικρότητα ὡσπερ Σπεύ-
 21 σιππος καὶ † Τιμάλιος ἀνοντ <.. > αν <.. > ας † δι-
 22 ἄ τὸ πᾶν σμικρὸν καὶ μὴ δ<ια>ιρετὸν εἶναι
 23 καταφέροίτο ἐπὶ πρᾶγμα ἄλλοτριώτατον τοῦ
 24 θεοῦ ἀκούσας τὸ ἔ<ν>.

In both texts we deal with the doctrine of the One's minimalism as upheld by Speusippus (who is named in both texts). This minimalism, taken at its face value, only means that the One is a smallest of some sort, an ἐλάχιστον, as Damascius says. Now if we look at the context in which this Speusippian doctrine is inserted (in particular *Anon. in Parm.* I.3–2.15), we realize that the anonymous commentator means that Speusippus calls the highest principle "One" because of smallness or indivisibility (τὸ πᾶν σμικρὸν καὶ μὴ διαίρετον εἶναι 1.22) and that this implies a deficiency of its nature (διὰ παρέλλειψιν τῆς φύσεως 1.5), the absolutely non-existent (τὸ μηδαμῆ μηδαμῶς ὄν 2.6–7),¹² or a kind of empti-

12. The idea that indivisibility (ἀδιαίρετον) entails non-existence/non-being with respect to the One is reported by Aristotle in the context of the Zenonian axiom that that which neither makes things greater by being added to them nor smaller by being subtracted from them is not

ness (κένωμα 2.15). Of course he rejects this opinion because he thinks that it is diametrically opposed to God's infinite power and causal role (1.25–27 and *passim*), which excludes the inferior notion of a principle so small that it is lacking, therefore being imperfect and deficient. In a similar way, the Damascian text also rejects the One's superlative smallness, attributed to Speusippus, because it would imply that the One could not absorb and assimilate the All. This once again hints that the citing author, Damascius, conceives of this extreme smallness (ἐλάχιστον) as of something imperfect, or deficient; for a One so characterized cannot possibly constitute Damascius's One–All, ἐν πάντα, which is one, simple, first, and the origin of all things. If we try to determine more closely exactly what the One's deficiency implies, then these two testimonies seem to hint at a lack of being, an idea that is brought up already by Zeno, but is rejected, in its Zenonian form, by Aristotle on the grounds that something indivisible and smallest (like a Pythagorean monad) still makes a thing πλεῖον and therefore must exist. Thus Aristotle probably does not think—this should be said by anticipation—that Speusippus's One could really be such a monad. For the non-being of the Speusippian One speaks against it according to Aristotle's own criteria, who does not present Speusippus's doctrine in the way he refutes the *reductio ad absurdum* implied by Zeno. Instead of arguing that the Speusippian One should be existent after all, Aristotle is concerned with showing that, by all means, a conception like the Speusippian non-being, a seed-like One that is the origin of everything is completely absurd (and cannot be rectified by conceiving of it as existent, like a Pythagorean monad). And the reason for this is that non-being is what primordially characterizes Speusippus's One, which means that Speusippus himself must have insisted on this point. And to Aristotle such a principle cannot work, is deficient, and represents an absurd construction.

Both the anonymous commentator and Damascius thus agree on the fact that Speusippus's smallest One is somehow negative (in a pejorative sense), or deficient, and therefore must be rejected. This reading constitutes a first possibility of understanding Speusippus's One-principle, from which a second, Neoplatonizing, and a third, “neutral,” reading must be distinguished. In what follows I will argue

a being, because obviously being is a μέγεθος (see *Metaph.* 1001b7–10 and also the following lines, in which Aristotle shows against Zeno that adding something indivisible does perhaps not make a thing greater [μεῖζον], but more [πλεῖον], and that therefore the indivisible must be something and can very well exist). This implies that the One attacked by Zeno is not just indivisible but a small indivisible (as in the anonymous commentator: τὸ πᾶν μικρὸν καὶ μὴ διαίρετόν), which is the reason why one usually thinks that Zeno criticizes here the Pythagorean conception of monads/units. And since the claim of a Pythagoreanizing Speusippus is a traditional one (since Aristotle) it is not astonishing that we find this old Zenonian critique here once again, as mediated by Aristotle. Hence there can be no doubt that the anonymous commentator is at least indirectly under the influence of this Aristotelian passage from the *Metaphysics* here.

for the third as the most probable reading. Concerning the first way of understanding Speusippus's doctrine, I stated in an earlier work that it is indeed likely that the anonymous commentator and Damascius just repeat in the context of their own philosophy a well-established traditional opinion about Speusippus's supposed doctrine of the One. As to the origin of this tradition, it is probably sufficient to turn to Aristotle,¹³ who must have been the initiator of that specific doxographic version concerning Speusippus. The most likely scenario is that after Aristotle the specific doctrine of the One's smallness becomes for the later Platonists the standard reference for what is not acceptable when trying to come to grips with the One, probably because it implies a lack of being. It almost seems to serve as a rhetorical antithesis that hammers home these philosophers' own, and opposite, point. This makes it likely that a certain degree of exaggeration and one-sidedness should be allowed for, present certainly already in Aristotle and perpetuated by the later Platonists. Therefore it can be claimed with good reason that the true Speusippian core of these texts is not quite as wrong as they suggest. It is particularly comprehensible that the claim of inferiority or deficiency implied in these reports goes back to material in Aristotle and his way of presenting this material. But to realize this is not the same as committing oneself to the opinion that historically Speusippus cannot have conceived of his One as a smallest (he probably held this opinion in some form), though we should doubt the possibility that Speusippus's One really is a completely immanent Pythagorean monad.¹⁴ For if the reason for the Aristotelian rejection of the kind of smallness that characterizes the Speusippian One really is the lack of being (its seed-like character), then the Speusippian One cannot be a Pythagorean monad that to Aristotle is a being. Aristotle of course wishes to convince his audience that if Speusippus really held that the One is an ἐλάχιστον, then this would make the One inferior or deficient, which leads to absurdity both for him and the later Platonist philosophers. But there is quite a step from superlative smallness or minuteness to deficiency and it might be argued that Aristotle thinks that this inference is warranted, but that Speusippus needs by no means think so himself. For the tenet of a small-

13. See in particular Aristotle, *Metaph.* 1056b5 (τὸ γὰρ ἔν ὀλίγον ἢ ὀλίγα ἔσται); frg. 39.9–10 Tarán = 1087b32 (ἔσται γὰρ τὸ ἔν ὀλίγον). See also passages such as 1084b27–28 (ἐκ τοῦ ἐλάχιστου τὰ ὄντα συνετίθεσαν, sc. the Atomists, and the Platonists alike) and 1088b9 (<τὸ> ὀλίγον, οἶον ἢ δυάς [εἰ γὰρ πολὺ, τὸ ἔν ἂν ὀλίγον εἴη]).

14. Theophrastus, *Caus. plant.* 1.1.1.12–16 also feels the need to distinguish carefully, when talking about the first and most important (πρῶτον and κυριώτατον), here seed (σπέρμα), between what is merely undeveloped (seed) and what is inferior, or deficient (seed that would not be capable of producing; for it would then be in vain, but nature does nothing in vain, especially when its first and most important things, seeds, are concerned): seed is merely undeveloped, not imperfect. A discussion of the passage can be found in Merlan 1968, 105–6. No doubt Speusippus is capable of making such a distinction, too, despite what Aristotle seems to suggest.

est principle does not automatically lead to deficient negativity and therefore to incoherence. In order to understand what Speusippus means by ἐλάχιστον and to penetrate to the true Speusippian core of this doctrine, it is important to see what it implies in terms of content. For this we have to gather a little more information concerning the One.

Speusippus in all probability works with a concept of two first principles. His system is essentially dualistic: in addition to the One there is the opposed principle of multiplicity, πλῆθος, or multiplicity *tout court*, which has, at least for the most part, the same status as the One, from which it is independent.¹⁵ These principles' function can only be understood in relation to the reality of which they are supposed to be principles. If we take for granted that that reality is co-extensive with being, then Speusippus's conception seems to be that the entities responsible for originating being cannot themselves be. That is to say, they cannot be determinate, existent things if what they originate is existent.¹⁶ Such a theory partly avoids, or at least partly restates several problems that are usually involved when inferior ontological levels have to be derived from superior ones, on which they somehow depend.¹⁷ If we interpret this conception with regard to the One's

15. See frg. 38 Tarán = Aristotle, *Metaph.* 1092a35–b3; frg. 39 Tarán = Aristotle, *Metaph.* 1087b4–9, 26–33; frg. 40.1–5 Tarán = Aristotle, *Metaph.* 1085b4–10; frg. 45a.4–6 Tarán = Aristotle, *Metaph.* 1091b30–32; frg. 46a.1–2 Tarán = Aristotle, *Metaph.* 1075a32–33. In all five passages Speusippus's conception is compared to the Platonic one. See also frg. 48 Tarán = Proclus, *In Parm.* 38,32–40,7 Klíbanky-Labowsky and *Comm. math. sc.* 15.6–11, 15–17 and the passage Theophrastus, *Met.* 11a27–b7 (i.e., the text just after frg. 83 Tarán = Theophrastus, *Met.* 11a18–26): both of these texts should be mentioned in this context since their explanation of the necessity of a duality of principles (with a “strong” πλῆθος-principle) works especially well from the Speusippian point of view, which implies a very reduced One. The fact that the genesis of being seems to start with and from the One (F 29a.3–8 Tarán = Aristotle, *Metaph.* 1028b18–24: ... Σπεύσιππος ... ἀπὸ τοῦ ἐνὸς ἀρξάμενος ...; see also passages like frg. 34.2–4 Tarán = Aristotle, *Metaph.* 1083a21–24; frg. 44.9–10 Tarán = Aristotle, *Metaph.* 1091b2–3; frg. 45a.2–3 Tarán = Aristotle, *Metaph.* 1091b23–25; frg. 48 Tarán = Proclus, *In Parm.* 38,32–40,7 Klíbanky-Labowsky) and that therefore also the reduction process must end with the One should not lead one to postulate an overall monism of any form for Speusippus, since the opposed πλῆθος-principle can in no way be derived from the One. Nevertheless it has to be admitted that since the non-temporal beginning of all genesis “starts” with the One it might be considered to have a special status as representing the very beginning of it all (cf. the formula “the One itself”; see also note 17). On Academic monism/dualism see also Metry 2002, 181–82.

16. The (onto)logical difference between principles and principiated (elements and that of which they are elements, i.e., that which is composed by them) is brought out by, e.g., Aristotle in passages such as *Metaph.* 1070b5–8, 15–16, 1088b4–5, *Eth. eud.* 1248a27–28, and perhaps also by Theophrastus, *Met.* 11a27–b1.

17. E.g., the problems of how to make sure that a derived subsequent level is not identical to the superior one; that its dependence on or participation in the superior level does not lessen the latter; or, finally, that the second principle retains its primary role within the duality of highest principles.

(and the *πλήθος*) superlative smallness or minuteness, it could mean that the One-principle is so small that it excludes itself from what it produces (i.e., of what it is a principle), which means that the higher an ontological level is, the “smaller,” less complex, and less additive it must be, so that the highest ontological level depends on that which is the smallest, least complex, and so on, to the point of no longer being even of the same kind, no longer being “ontic” anymore, that is, simply not being any more. Thus Speusippus probably holds that the highest principle has to be non-being in order to produce being, but this non-being is achieved by successive reduction and only represents the culminating point of this analytical process so that by no means is there any “natural deficiency” or inferiority implied in such a non-being principle.¹⁸ For in order to be deficient and inferior to being, the principle would somehow have to be less than being, or its contrary, whereas the extreme point of the reduction process is just neutral non-being as the summit of the “simplification” of being. This kind of negativity is therefore not pejorative at all because non-being in this sense only means pure

18. For the non-being One see in particular frg. 43 Tarán = Aristotle, *Metaph.* 1092a11–17: οὐκ ὀρθῶς δ' ὑπολαμβάνει οὐδ' εἴ τις [sc. Speusippus] παρεικάζει τὰς τοῦ ὄλου ἀρχὰς τῆ τῶν ζῶων καὶ φυτῶν, ὅτι ἐξ ἀορίστων ἀτελῶν τε αἰεὶ τὰ τελειότερα, διὸ καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν πρώτων οὕτως ἔχειν φησίν, ὥστε μηδὲ ὄν τι εἶναι τὸ ἐν αὐτό. εἰσὶ γὰρ καὶ ἐνταῦθα τέλειαι αἱ ἀρχαὶ ἐξ ὧν ταῦτα ἄνθρωπος γὰρ ἄνθρωπον γεννᾷ, καὶ οὐκ ἔστι τὸ σπέρμα πρώτων. Equally clear is the parallel in *Comm. math. sc.* 15,7–10. But other parallels are more problematic, this time because they bear too positive an overtone; see in particular frg. 48 Tarán = Proclus, *In Parm.* 38,32–40,7 Klibansky-Labowsky (τὸ ἐν γὰρ βέλτιον/κρεῖττον τοῦ ὄντος ἡγούμενοι καὶ ἀφ' οὗ τὸ ὄν, ...) and *Comm. math. sc.* 16,10–11 (... τοῦ καλοῦ καὶ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ ὑπεράνω ...). But here again I think, first, that we need not claim that every single terminological detail is original Speusippus and, second, that our testimonies might draw conclusions that their authors considered to be warranted: to them, if non-being can cause being, then certainly this cause is different/beyond/transcendent of that which it causes, which is why it is not even being (thus Iamblichus has no problem summarizing at *Comm. math. sc.* 18,1–3 both passages 15,7–10 and 16,10–11, transcribed by him, using the words τὰ δὲ στοιχεῖα ... οὐδέπω ὑπάρχει οὔτε καλὰ οὔτε ἀγαθὰ). Speusippus, however, may only maintain that such a cause cannot be at all of the same kind as that which is caused, without introducing, indeed avoiding, any axiological or transcendence criteria, at least insofar as they are used in a strong sense and are thus supposed to reveal the real nature of such a cause. Thus we might have here to a certain extent some later Platonist interpretation, and one that is not far-fetched or fantastic, but Platonizing in the sense of being closer to some aspects of Plato's (rather than Speusippus's) theory of principles, with which that of Speusippus is to be combined. If however Iamblichus were forced to read Speusippus here the way we do, not being allowed to Platonize, he would perhaps reject the Speusippian view in the way Damascius and the anonymous commentator on the *Parmenides* do, taking neutral non-being for a kind of deficiency and thus following Aristotle. But of course, the doctrine of non-being is much easier to integrate into the Platonist system (utilizing a distinctly Platonic concept of transcendence), whereas the tenet of superlative smallness (though for Speusippus these doctrines are intimately related) poses a problem impossible to resolve, especially as it is read by the Platonists in an Aristotelian frame of mind.

potentiality. When we are asked the question how it is possible for a principle that is removed as much as possible from the fullness of what it brings forth—that is, from (mathematical) being—to produce this fullness, then we are referred to the idea that such a principle is because of its very potentiality able to contain this being in a nuclear and very compressed form, like a seed.¹⁹ I think it is not problematic to assume that a principle capable of such a performance should not be of the same stuff as that which it brings forth. It might instead be considered a prerequisite of being a principle that it not be that which it originates, so that a principle that is to create being has to be non-being in some sense. This non-being, derived from quantitative smallness, is not the deficient kind of non-being that Aristotle implies, else we could not make sense of our remaining—mostly Aristotelian—information on Speusippus's first principles. And it is also not a transcendent non-being in either the later Platonists or in any idealistic sense of “transcendent,”²⁰ else they would not reject Speusippus's thought the way they apparently do.²¹ Instead this “neutral” way of reading “non-being” presents us with another, alternative way of comprehending Speusippus's theory. A natural consequence of these lines of thought is of course the tenet of the non-goodness of the principles: if generated being is good (and beautiful, etc.), then its principles cannot be good (beautiful, etc.), too.²² Again, this does of course neither mean that the principles are bad (ugly, etc.),²³ nor that they are “the Good” *tout*

19. Thus non-being implies for Speusippus the conception of potentiality/seed: see above all frg. 42a Tarán = Aristotle, *Metaph.* 1072b30–1073a3 and frg. 43 Tarán = Aristotle, *Metaph.* 1092a11–17. Aristotle's own viewpoint is best exposed in *Metaph.* Θ 8.

20. A more ordinary sense of “transcendent” might nevertheless be acceptable in the context of Speusippus's highest principles.

21. As we have already seen an alternative to outright rejection would be to Platonize Speusippus's thought by introducing or suggesting a more idealistic concept of transcendence.

22. Apart from passing references to Speusippus such as Aristotle, *Metaph.* 1092a9 (just before frg. 43 Tarán = Aristotle, *Metaph.* 1092a11–17), see above all frg. 42a Tarán = Aristotle, *Metaph.* 1072b30–1073a3; frg. 44 Tarán = Aristotle, *Metaph.* 1091a29–b3; frg. 45a Tarán = Aristotle, *Metaph.* 1091b22–26 and 30–35; frg. 46a.5 Tarán = Aristotle, *Metaph.* 1075a36–37; *Comm. math. sc.* 16,10–14.

23. As causative of beauty in numbers the One is certainly neither ugly nor bad itself. This point is clearly (again with too positive an overtone) brought out in the Iamblichan testimonium (cf. *Comm. math. sc.* 16,2–4: εἰ γὰρ δὴ καὶ τὴν τοῦ ἐνόου τις φύσιν ἐπαινῶν τυγχάνοι δι' αὐτάρκειάν τε καὶ τὸ καλῶν τιῶν ἐν τοῖς ἀριθμοῖς αἴτιον εἶναι ...). And, of course, even the πλῆθος-principle is neither bad nor ugly according to *Comm. math. sc.* 15,23–24 (κακὸν δὲ ἢ αἰσχρὸν τὸ τοιοῦτον οὐ προσήκον ἴσως ἐστὶ τιθέναι ...); 15,26–27 (οὔτε γὰρ ἐν τοῖς ἄλλοις τὸ τοιοῦτο γένος εἰς κακὴν μοῖραν εἰθώμεν τιθέναι ...); 16,1–2 (ὥστε πολλοῦ δέον ἂν εἴη κακὸν προσαγορεύεσθαι αὐτό); 16,4–9 (πῶς οὐκ ἄλογον ἂν εἴη λέγειν τὸ κακὸν ἢ τὸ αἰσχρὸν δεκτικὸν κατὰ φύσιν τοῦ τοιοῦτου πράγματος [sc. the One/formal principle] εἶναι; οὐ γὰρ ἂν ἔτι πάντῃ συμβαῖνοι ψεκτὸν εἶναι τὸ κακὸν καὶ τὸ αἰσχρὸν, εἴπερ τὸ δεκτικὸν τινος ἐπαινετοῦ [sc. the One/formal principle] καὶ αὐτὸ δεῖ ἐπαινετὸν προσαγορεύειν). But the fact that it is even envisaged that the material principle could be praiseworthy (ἐπαινετόν), particularly when taken

court (the ἔν is not the ἀγαθόν);²⁴ instead “good” simply cannot be predicated of them, just as “being” cannot be predicated of them because it is not in these principles’ nature to be good, or just to be. It is obvious that the doctrine of non-goodness as such is diametrically opposed both to Plato and to any orthodox form of Platonism. For these reasons, I think it is very problematic to defend with regard to Speusippus the second, Neoplatonizing, understanding of the One-principle, which reads “non-being” in the sense of “metaphysically transcendent of being.” And since the first, “pejorative,” reading, which takes non-being as if the principle were deprived of or lacking being, seems also to be out of the question, our way of interpreting the evidence appears as a necessary third possibility of understanding Speusippus’s first principles.²⁵

together with the passage 15,27–29 (... ἔστιν ὅτε δὲ τοῦ μεγαλοπρεποῦς καὶ ἐλευθερίου μετὰ ποιότητος συμπλεκόμενον τινος τὸ μέγα [sc. the material principle; for the One is the smallest] αἴτιον λέγομεν ἂν ἴσως ἀληθεύοντες), can only be understood if it is linked to passages such as frg. 48 Tarán = Proclus, *In Parm.* 38,32–40,7 Klubansky-Labowsky or Theophrastus, *Met.* 11a27–b7 (especially 11b5–7). For there the role of the material principle is described in conspicuously positive terms: without it, i.e., only with the One, there would not be any generative process or coming into being.

24. Frg. 47a Tarán = Aristotle, *Eth. nic.* 1096b5–8 (the Speusippian One is placed in the συστοιχία of goods) might well be partly responsible for some of the “positive overtones” in our testimonies concerning the Speusippian One. But even if this positive appreciation of the first principle might therefore to a certain extent go back to Speusippus himself (we also should not forget that the generative process takes its departure point from the One), this does not mean that the One is good or the “Good” in any significant sense (perhaps some part of its role for others is expressed in the συστοιχία classification, but certainly nothing is implied about the true nature of the One).

25. Regarding my point that “good” simply cannot be predicated of the principles, and yet that the principles are, of course, not therefore bad, Jonathan Barnes asks me two questions: “(i) This is different from the “Platonist” interpretation of the non-being of the principles; but is it incompatible with it? More precisely, isn’t the “neutral” view a presupposition of the Platonist view? (ii) Why or in what way is “good” non-predicable of the principles? Various bits of contemporary philosophy make me think that you mean that it makes no sense to say “This principle is good” (or “... bad”), just as—allegedly—it makes no sense to say “This number is green” (or “blue” etc). Such a predication would be a “category mistake.” On the other hand, I also can’t help thinking of the late Platonist view on genera and divisive differences: animal, say, is not rational (nor yet irrational)—not because it makes no sense to predicate rationality of animal but because animal is, potentially, both rational and irrational. I confess that the second of these two notions seems to me pretty close to a contradiction; and I wonder if the first finds any antique echoes?” I would reply to this as follows: “The “neutral” view (i.e., “non-being” not opposed to “being” as “bad” would be to “good”) is not as such, I think, incompatible with the Platonist view (“non-being” means “beyond being” in a positive sense). But since the neutral view seems, in Speusippus’s case at least, connected to the theory of the principles’ non-goodness it is un-Platonist at least in this sense. For the Platonist non-being (i.e., the “beyond being”) is closely connected to the “Good”. Of course, you could say that the Platonist “Good” really has to be non-good because it is beyond the opposition of good and bad (thus it would indeed be a

Speusippus's concern with reducing his principle(s) to utter smallness or minuteness in order to have a new starting point that is not a part of being can be well explained by the background of Speusippus's mathematizing project. The highest levels of Speusippian reality are occupied by mathematical, the lower ones by the soul and sensibles/bodies. It is obvious that we make geometricals smaller if we move from stereometric (tridimensional) to planimetric (bidimensional) and eventually to linear (unidimensional) entities. Arithmeticals can be considered to be even "smaller" since they no longer have dimension at all.²⁶ Beyond numbers we do not have any more "reduced" mathematical, and since mathematical are already the highest form of being for Speusippus, a further reduction does not yield another level of beings or existents (logically the number one, the monad, must then be the smallest being), but rather of non-existents, with which the reduction process comes to an ultimate end: smaller than smallest (non-existent) is not possible. For Speusippus, this level is therefore a plausible one for positing general principles of all that is, themselves beyond that which is, because they are not part of that which is. "Quantitative" (i.e., concerning *πλήθος*) smallness seems to correspond in this case to implicit greatness or superiority in *δύναμις*, with the principles marking the extremes in both cases (they are the "quantitatively" smallest, especially as non-existents, as well as the greatest in terms of *δύναμις*).

This overall picture of Speusippus's minimal One, as I argue, nevertheless leaves traces in the later Platonist authors' own system. First, it should be said that their understanding of "smallest" in this context, and therefore their rejection of Speusippus—both based upon Aristotle—depends on one account on the fact that the term "smallest" is taken with reference to *δύναμις*. But the interpretative possibilities inherent in the distinction *πλήθος/δύναμις* can be used, and indeed are used, to resolve the—apparent, since induced by Aristotle—controversy between the Old Academic philosophers and the later Platonists that is already

category mistake to predicate either "good" or "bad" of the "Good," i.e., the principle). And that is where Platonists and Speusippus would agree. But just as a Platonist in a *Parmenides* context wouldn't say that the first principle is the "Being," and instead prefers to talk of "non-being," Speusippus wouldn't even say that it is the "Good," preferring the concept of non-goodness (although this, like the "Good," implies that we are beyond the opposition of actual "good" and "bad"; also note that he does not say "non-badness"). So perhaps one could say that Speusippus was more consistent than the Platonists when he joined "non-good" to "non-being," something the Platonists would not express that way (because of their peculiar interpretative approach to Plato). But I agree that Speusippus is much closer to the Platonists than Damascius and the *Anonymous Commentary*, both following Aristotle, seem to think.

26. I must admit that taking away dimensions is not the same as making things smaller. In particular, it does not make sense to suggest that the number 57,896,432,109 is smaller than a pyramidal solid. But my point here is historical and there are passages in Iamblichus (and also elsewhere) that strongly suggest a connection between augmenting smallness (to the point of maximal reduction of greatness) and reducing dimensions.

foreshadowed by the formers' philosophy, properly reconstructed. But once this is clear, there is, on another account, still a problem, though not dependent on Aristotle, which concerns Speusippus's and the later philosophers' diverging conceptions of transcendence. It is astonishing that they consider Speusippus's One as in conflict with (and therefore basically comparable to) their own super-principle characterized by infinite power and by its role as cause of everything existent. For this "super-principle" is only a secondary and already dyadic moment that in the Platonists' system is characterized positively (the One insofar as it is relevant to others) as infinitivally being. But Speusippus's not even existent One seems, despite its implicit great δύναμις, more comparable to these later philosophers' first One, that is, the One as it is in relation to itself. Nevertheless it can be shown that the Speusippian One is by most prominent later Platonists taken to be comparable to—this is why it cannot be accepted in the end—the active principle that pre-contains everything, something that even in a "quantitative" sense is—not a smallest, but a greatest and largest as encompassing all determinate being and being itself infinitivally. All of this consequently leads these philosophers to reject Speusippus's notion of—even if only "quantitative"—smallness with reference to the One. The reason for this later identification with the positive principle must probably be sought in the fact that the Speusippian principle is opposed to a dyadic principle, so that it is out of the question for a later monistic Platonist to place such a principle at the summit of a system in which there is only one principle and not a duality of principles. Thus a place for the Speusippian principles must be found just below the highest later Platonist principle. There, however, the simple, but great and all-encompassing second moment or henad contradicts the smallness of Speusippus's One.

V. SPEUSIPPUS AND THE *PARMENIDES*

1. THE ONE-PRINCIPLE

Let us ask our question again: are there any similarities between this Speusippian theory of principles and the Platonic *Parmenides*? Or, in other words, is the *Parmenides* about the same kind of topic as the Speusippian theory, that is, the problem of how to conceive of principles that will satisfactorily fulfill their function as principles? We have systematically distinguished three possibilities of conceiving of Speusippus's principles: 1) the "pejorative" reading, which attributes to Speusippus deficient or imperfect principles that actually "lack" being; 2) the positive reading, which claims for Speusippus highest transcendent principles that are beyond and above (ὑπέρ) being; and 3) the neutral reading, which attributes to Speusippus functional principles that are simply non-being because what is originated is being. Of these possibilities, the third is, according to what

precedes, the most probable one.²⁷ But what is its relation to the Platonic *Parmenides*, if there is any?

First of all, I think we need not presuppose that Plato discusses himself a full-blown theory of metaphysical principles in the *Parmenides* in order to have a link to Speusippus. All that is required is that we admit that Plato explores logical possibilities of such causally fundamental things or concepts as (1) the One and (2) the many/others, which are the logical subjects of our series of eight deductions in the second part of the *Parmenides*. We can leave open the exact status the One and the others have for Plato in the *Parmenides*. But what is clear is that they are the *subjects* of the deduction series since results are derived for them, that is, both for the One and for the others, in as complete a manner as possible. Thus in relation to the One and to the others, we have all four possible combinations (i.e., for the One in relation to the One, for the One in relation to the others, for the others in relation to the One, for the others in relation to the others). These results are derived each time on the hypothesis that the first of the subjects, that is, the One, either is (the first four deduction series) or is not (the last four deduction series), so that we have a total series of eight deductions. Thus the One (in particular) and the others are clearly the center of philosophical interest and must be very important things or concepts. And since all predicates (inclusive of being, which is the primary predicate because it is either attributed or not attributed to the One in each of the eight premises of the deduction series) are discussed with respect to them, as subjects, they must be something other or of a different kind than any potential predicates. Thus before any predications there are just two things, or concepts: the One and the others. Logically they can thus be taken as the very beginning of our discourse; they are the first things given from which our argument starts, provided that the One either is, or is not, which is the premise in each case.

In this (logical and/or metaphysical) sense, then, the One and the others are ἀρχαί, beginnings or principles, in the *Parmenides*. The dialogue's second part's main concern thus seems to be to consider possibilities of how these principles are to be conceived so as to be workable, that is, functional as principles. As we have seen, this is a concern shared by Speusippus, who reflects upon the conditions that need to be fulfilled if the principles are to work. I am not sure if Plato arrives at any definite results in the *Parmenides* as to what is possible and what is impossible concerning the conception of these principles, and I am even less certain about what these results would be if there were any definite ones. But it

27. Armstrong (1967, 21–22 and note 1) also thinks that Speusippus “may have asserted that his One was prior not only to the Good (which is fairly certain) but to being, [and] was not existent” (Armstrong here refers to Aristotle, *Metaph.* 1092a14–15: ὥστε μηδὲ ὄν τι εἶναι τὸ ἐν αὐτό), although he says in the footnote to this that “there is reason to doubt whether this is Speusippus’s own teaching or a conclusion drawn from his premises by Aristotle.”

seems that Plato lays out the material that must be the basis for any further discussion of this topic. And one can argue that Speusippus (and others) take up the challenge and elaborate the topic further, giving a response that somehow takes the exploration of the *Parmenides* into account. Granted that we have in Speusippus's theory of principles an account that so reacts to Platonic material in the *Parmenides*, the question is whether further details confirm that what Plato treats in the *Parmenides* as "the One" and "the others" is comparable to the Speusippian principles of One and multiplicity, πλῆθος.

To answer this question we should revert to the three possibilities of conceiving of principles given above. We have rejected the first two with regard to Speusippus in order to accept the third, which seems reasonable after consideration of the evidence relevant to Speusippus. All three possibilities can, as far as the One is concerned, be taken as an interpretation of the first deduction series of the *Parmenides*. The first deduction is, as we know, an attempt at determining, on the hypothesis that the One is, what follows for the One in relation to itself. The possibility of a deficient first principle lacking being is a conclusion easily drawn from a *prima facie* reading of the Platonic text. For the first deduction makes a point about eight topics or items that must all be denied with respect to the One, which is taken to imply that nothing at all can be truly affirmed of this One, not even being in any sense. For from the fact that the One is (defined as being) only and simply one, and therefore in no sense many or a whole of parts, (137c4–d3) follows successively that it is without (1) limit (137d4–8: ἄπειρον), (2) extension or shape (137d8–138a1: ἄνευ σχήματος), (3) place (138a2–b6: οὐκ ἄρα ἐστὶν που τὸ ἐν, μήτε ἐν αὐτῷ μήτε ἐν ἄλλῳ ἐνόν), (4) motion and rest (138b7–139b3: οὔτε ἔστηκεν οὔτε κινεῖται), (5) sameness and difference (139b4–e6: οὕτω δὴ ἕτερόν γε ἢ ταυτὸν τὸ ἐν οὔτ' ἂν αὐτῷ οὔτ' ἂν ἐτέρῳ εἴη), (6) similarity and dissimilarity (139e7–140b5: οὔτε ἄρα ὁμοιον οὔτε ἀνόμοιον οὔθ' ἐτέρῳ οὔτε ἑαυτῷ ἂν εἴη τὸ ἐν), (7) equality and inequality (140b6–d8: οὔτε ἴσον οὔτε ἄνισον ἔσται οὔτε ἑαυτῷ οὔτε ἄλλῳ), (8) temporal relations/order (140e1–141d6: οὐδὲ ἄρα χρόνου αὐτῷ μέτεστιν, οὐδ' ἔστιν ἐν τινι χρόνῳ). From this it follows that the One in no way partakes of being (οὐσία) and thus in no sense is, not even being one (141d7–142a8). The conclusion that even being cannot be attributed to the One is sound, considering the definition at the outset that the One is truly one, in no sense many, thus being nothing else whatsoever (and not even being, nor a being/entity, not even a non-existent one), but only "one." The hypothesis from which the whole deduction starts ("if the One is") is thus contradicted, since the One in no way is. Hence Plato says that on the hypothesis that the One is, for the One in relation to itself, it follows that it in no sense is.

The first way (corresponding to the first of the three possible conceptions of principles as distinguished above) of reading this conclusion is that the One, as a principle, apparently lacks being, and therefore is deficient since it cannot be said to "be" one. For a One that cannot be said to "be" one, but can only be said "one," is deficient from a (common sense) point of view that requires being for a One

that is supposed to fulfill some function like that of a principle: without a One that “is” one, there is no proper principle because there “is” no One. To conceive the principle “One” without being necessarily leads to a minute or deficient principle at best, or even to no principle at all, since there “is” not such a principle.²⁸ This first possibility of reading the *Parmenides* is not, I think, the Speusippian reading. But a reading of the first deduction series of the *Parmenides* it nevertheless is, so it is not astonishing that this reading could have been suggested as representative of the Speusippian conception, provided that Speusippus’s One-principle actually corresponds to something like the One in the first deduction series.

The second way (corresponding to the second of the three possible conceptions of principles distinguished above) of reading the conclusion of the first deduction of the *Parmenides* is the later Platonist interpretation, also called the “Neoplatonic” interpretation. The conclusion—that the One in no sense is—must according to this standpoint be read so as to yield the metaphysical transcendence of the One over being (the One would thus be above and beyond being). I think it is unlikely that we can read our evidence in such a way that Speusippus in dealing with the *Parmenidean* problems already holds this view in a way that would prefigure its later Platonist form.

Instead, Speusippus may have tried to solve the *Parmenidean* dilemma of how to conceive of a fundamental principle “One” that in no way can be said to be by taking this denial of being quite literally as “not-being” and making it equivalent to the nature of this principle: to be One thus means quite simply “not to be.” That the nature of the One is only “one,” but not “being” in any sense (since this would be in conflict with the One’s oneness and utter simplicity), implies that “not-being” may be taken to express the same characteristic as “one.” Thus “not-being” does not attribute anything second to the One, like “being,” but is identical to the utter simplicity that the One of the first deduction is supposed to have. Playing the role of One and of a principle thus means for Speusippus not being an originating principle. If this, that is, all other things apart from the principles, is being, then the One (principle)—as well as the second principle—is simply not-being. Speusippus may thus have prepared the way for what is later known as “negative theology,” and perhaps even for the second and Neoplatonic way of understanding the One and the first deduction of the second part of the *Parmenides*. But this third Speusippian understanding is nevertheless a unique and independent interpretation, which has the merit of making sense of the

28. One may object (rightly, I think) that the first way of taking Plato’s conclusion evidently leads to the denial of any principle, and that it does not at all suggest some sort of deficient principle. Thus the “defective” interpretation of Speusippus would not have anything to do with Plato’s *Parmenides*. But the fact remains that Speusippus’s “deficient” principle turns up in Damascius and in the Anonymous in the context of an interpretation of the first hypothesis of the *Parmenides*.

paradoxical situation of the first deduction in a fairly straightforward and philosophically credible way that plainly avoids the absurd conclusion (inferiority, less than being) we are confronted with if we are to accept the first way of reading the conclusion of the first deduction.

2. THE MULTIPLICITY-PRINCIPLE

But there is not only the One in Speusippus's theory of principles. We have seen that the principle of multiplicity or *πλήθος*-principle plays a basically equally important role so that Speusippus's conception must be characterized as dualistic. Again the question should be asked whether somewhere in Plato's *Parmenides* material comparable to this specific Speusippian principle can be detected so that we would find in both places reflections on possibilities of conceiving of a functional second principle. If this question can be answered in the affirmative, then the possibility that Plato's *Parmenides* and Speusippus's theory of principles are concerned with comparable questions would become even more likely.

As far as the details of Speusippus's design of the second principle are concerned, it is perhaps sufficient to point to the accounts in the literature that stress both the proximity of the Speusippian principle to the Platonic-Academic material principle, habitually known as the "indefinite dyad," the "great-and-small," the "unlimited," and so on, and Speusippus's own contribution that can best be seen in his designation of this principle as "multiplicity," that is, *πλήθος*. This latter term stresses the *πλήθος*' character both for itself (absolute) and for others (relative), namely, first, its being opposed to and other than the one and only One and, second, as *principium individuationis*.²⁹ This principle in its absolute aspect is multiplicity in general, multiplicity *tout court*, and not any specific form of multitude; thus it is opposed to unity in general, that is, to the One. And we know that Speusippus needs both these principles and some interaction between them—making the *πλήθος* relative, in order to start off the *individuation*—for being, that is, mathematics, to come about. It is exactly this topic of how to conceive of multiplicity in general, multiplicity as such (i.e., absolute), in its opposition to unity taken by itself (i.e., absolute), together with the problem of the relation between the two (that is to say the relation of the many/the others to the One) that is discussed above all in the third deduction series (157b6–159b1) of the *Parmenides*' second part. More specifically, the third deduction is the obvious place to look for the second principle and its double, absolute/relative aspect, since—in the context of this argument, if we want any results for a second principle after the One, the hypothesis that the One is means that basically the second principle cannot be discussed alone, without presupposing the One and that the One is—it derives results for the many/the others (the second principle) in relation to the

29. For a recent account and more literature on this point I refer to Metry 2002, 125–28.

One. Thus the third deduction informs us above all about the others' relation to the One, features that the others display in relation to the first principle. These features comprise both the absolute and the relative aspect of the others, since both are relevant only with respect to the One (in this sense the others can be said to be both unlimited and limited etc.). The others are thus looked at with respect to their role as 1) a principle other than the One-principle and 2) a principle for the whole of reality. This latter point implies that the others (as a "plurality of other ones" according to Cornford's expression) display unity and are themselves unified/one (both as a whole and individually), when considered as involved with the One serving as the other principle.³⁰ Without involvement in the latter (but still taken in relation to it) the others cannot be a principle of derived reality, or anything determinate at all, like a definite plurality (i.e., with units or unity). For they are in this case purely unlimited multitudes or stuffs, ἄπειρα πλήθει (since that is what they are when taken by themselves, being just a principle other than the One), or πλήθη. And even the smallest bit of them is not one but πλήθος, that is, ἄπειρον πλήθει.³¹ This is what it is to be multiplicity in general, that is, the principle in an absolute sense conceived before any principiated being and before any participation or involvement of the One. Therefore the others' relation to the One is vital: they could not be determinate or "limited" others,³² that is to say they could not play the role of an organized principle of multiplicity without participating in/presupposing unity in some sense. Various scholars have given basically comparable accounts of what is going on in the third deduction of the *Parmenides*³³ and most of them³⁴ have also realized how close these "others"—after the abstraction of the One (158b–c)—are to the "unlimited" of the *Philebus* and to what is known as the great-and-small or indefinite dyad, so that we can expect to obtain some information on the Platonic material principle also here in the *Parmenides*.

With regard to Speusippus's theory of principles and its link to Plato's *Parmenides*, according to what has been said we should keep in mind the common account of a radical opposition between the principles (in the large, not strictly metaphysical sense) of ἓν and πλήθος, the latter being as such pure multitude,

30. *Parm.* 157b6–158b1.

31. *Parm.* 158b1–c7. "Illimité en pluralité" (and not "illimité en nombre") is the translation of Brisson (1994, 213–14; see his explanation in note 391 on p. 277: "pluralité, qui ne peut être nombrée" must be understood here).

32. *Parm.* 158c7–d8.

33. See Cornford 1939, 204–13; R. E. Allen 1983, 268–73; Sayre 1983, 62–67; Meinwald 1992a, 131–39. See also Bechtle 1999a, 210–14. To be sure, there are important differences between these authors, e.g., concerning the precise identification of the One and the others, but their analysis of the structure of the argument of the third deduction seems to me similar.

34. The exception is Allen who thinks that the similarities between the *Philebus* and the third *Parmenidean* deduction do not reflect a doctrinal continuity.

without any unity. As in the case of the One, so also for the second principle, one may point at both the verbal and doctrinal parallel between Speusippus and the *Parmenides*. For we have both in the third deduction of the *Parmenides* and in Speusippus a conception of πλῆθος that dispenses with all unity whatsoever, amounting to something like multiplicity or multitude *tout court*, with absolutely nothing “one-ish” about it. In both authors the gap between the two principles—both of which cannot, however, be thought one without the other—must in a next step be bridged in such a way that the unlimited multiplicity is somehow combined with unity so that a determinate plurality or limited multitude (the *principium individuationis* or principle of mathematical reality in Speusippus, the plurality of other ones, or just the determinate/limited others, in the *Parmenides*) can be conceived. The principles thereby become relative because they are involved with each other.

It is easy to see now why Speusippus's second principle (in its absolute aspect) has often been compared—rightly I think—to the Platonic indefinite dyad. But it has to be said that the *Parmenides* is usually much less discussed in this context than the *Philebus* or Aristotle's testimonies about the Platonic material principle. In contrast, I hope to have shown how the *Parmenides* and the third deduction in particular can reasonably be said to be about the same philosophical topic as Speusippus's πλῆθος-principle and that therefore a detailed comparison of all the texts relevant to the second principle would make sense. Of course, such an enterprise would have to take account of much more material than presented here concerning the Old Academy, and of all our evidence on Plato (the dialogues and the indirect testimonies). But for the time being, it may suffice to realize that, according to what has been set forth, on the one hand, the first and the third *Parmenidean* deduction (about the One in relation to itself and the others in relation to the One, on the hypothesis that the One is), and on the other, Speusippus's theory of principles, are comparable and even concern the same topic. For they explore possibilities of how to conceive of, and render functional, the philosophical items, that is, principles, that are needed to explain the coming about of reality.

THE FRAGMENT OF SPEUSIPPUS IN COLUMN I OF THE
ANONYMOUS COMMENTARY ON THE PARMENIDES

Luc Brisson

After a translation of the first column of the *Anonymous Commentary on the Parmenides*, where some lines mention a doctrine attributed to Speusippus, I will propose a commentary on these few lines which, following C. Steel, I will try to show to be a later fabrication.¹ If this is right, it means that the commentator is criticizing a Neopythagorizing interpretation of the second part of Plato's *Parmenides*, proposed in the first two centuries C.E.

TRANSLATION

[1] ... he who suspects that² misses the correct viewpoint. For although the god who is above all beings³ is unspeakable and unnamable to the highest degree [5], it is nevertheless not through some defect in his nature that the notion⁴ of one applies to him. For this notion allows us to separate all plurality from him,

1. This article is a critical response to Bechtle 2002.

2. The verb is καθυπονοῶν. I believe the expression of the argument on the knowledge of the One, which has just been developed and which we have lost, can be found in Damascius: "in the same way, to be sure, as by the straight we are said to know what is twisted, so by what is knowable we suspect (καθυπονοοῦμεν) the unknowable. Nevertheless, this is still a matter of knowledge. (Damascius, *Princ.* 1:83,19–21 Westerink-Combès).

3. See *Anon. in Parm.* I.18 and 10.14 and Porphyry, *Abst.* 1.57; 2.34, 49; 3.5. See also *ibid.*, *Vit. Plot.* 23.16. Obviously, the first god, the One.

4. The ἐννοιαί are the innate notions awakened by the effort of rising back up to god. This is an adaptation of a Stoic doctrine. See Plotinus, *Enn.* 5.3 [49].10.41 and Porphyry, *Sent.* 26: "As for non-being, one type we engender when alienated from being, the other we acquire a preconception (προεγνωοῦμεν) of when cleaving close to being. For if we should by chance be alienated from being, we do not have a preconception (προεγνωοῦμεν) of the non-being which is beyond being, but we engender non-being as a bogus experience, which happens to someone who has departed from his proper state" (26.1–5, trans. Dillon).

all composition and all variety, and to conceive that he is simple, that is, that there is nothing before him and that this one is somehow the principle⁵ [10] of the other things.⁶ To be sure, if they were completely dispersed and isolated from one another, and if, from one single thing, they had become a plurality and a multitude, rejecting what they had been previously,⁷ the other things would not even be a plurality.⁸ For if it so happened that the very thing⁹ that plays the role of a border [15] were taken away from them, they would be without limit and determination, and would no longer be in any way;¹⁰ if this were so, they would no longer exist as beings. Among all others, this appellation is the one that is appropriate to the god who is above all beings, and ... with regard to him ... it is suitable, [20] as long as one <does not do what Speusippus does>¹¹ and <sees in the One only the> ... and because of its smallness¹² and its indivisibility, one lets oneself be brought when hearing the word "one" toward that which is most alien¹³ to god.¹⁴ For if <we apply to him> the notion of One, [25] it is in order to make understood his infinite power, the cause of all beings and principle of all the things that come after him, because this power refuses ... and it leaves behind it [30] even the notion of One, not because of the smallness <that it would imply>, ... but because of the radical strangeness of this inconceivable hypostasis,¹⁵ which has nothing to do with plurality, activity, intellection, or simplicity, or any other notion that could be associated with it, because it is superior to them and is considered as such; or else perhaps precisely because of a certain smallness that escapes our conception because of its scantiness.¹⁶

COMMENTARY

Since the lines that mention Speusippus are gravely damaged, and since I refuse to fill the lacunae and correct the text as it stands, I will try to reconstruct the

5. The ancient Greek term here is ἀρχή.

6. The formula τὰ ἄλλα goes back to the *Parmenides*, where τὰ ἄλλα are opposed τὸ ἓν, perhaps in the context of an ontological interpretation.

7. That is to say, "one."

8. There is a textual problem here. I shall not fill the lacuna.

9. That is to say, in arithmetic (the number one) and in geometry (the point).

10. All multiplicity must be made up of basal units and be expressed in a number which thus gives it an overall unity. If the one does not exist, no multiplicity can exist, for it no longer has a basal unity nor an overall unity. See also Plotinus, *Enn.* 6.9 [9].1.3; 3.8 [30].10.16; 5.3 [49].15.11–15.

11. Speusippus, frg. 49b Tarán = 61 Isnardi Parente.

12. ... διὰ σμικρότητα. From the viewpoint of geometry we might think of the point, to which the one corresponds in the context of arithmetic. See also Plotinus, *Enn.* 6.9 [9]. 5.1–16.

13. That is, matter.

14. That is, the One.

15. That is, the One since Plotinus.

16. This is how I understand δι' ὀλιγότητα.

incriminated doctrine through recourse to the testimony of Damascius, Proclus, Iamblichus, Porphyry, and Plotinus, all of whom seem to refer to it.

Let us begin with Damascius. Two passages from his *Treatise on First Principles* seem to allude to this doctrine.

Next, the one, for its part, is not one of the many; otherwise, it too would contribute to the constitution of the many, as does each of the other things. Yet however many things the many are according to some kind of division, so many is that one before the division, because of its complete indivisibility. For it is not the one in the sense of an absolute minimum (ἐλάχιστον),¹⁷ as Speusippus seemed to say, but it is the one in the sense that it has absorbed all things.¹⁸ Indeed, it has resolved all things in its simplicity, and has made all things one.¹⁹ This is why all things proceed from it,²⁰ because it is all things before all things.²¹

This passage has a parallel a bit further on in the *Treatise on First Principles*:

So it is by no means the one, if we are to speak truly. But <we call it the all> in order that we may conceive not the least (μὴ τὸ ἐλάχιστον ἐννοῶμεν), but that which is most inclusive and greatest—not in the sense of the world, but that which is simplest of all; nor in the sense of something in the world, such as the outer edge of the sphere of fixed stars, but in the sense that all things are dissolved into its simplicity, and no longer wish to be all things.²²

The exposition of Speusippus's interpretation of the one and its refutation by Damascius in these two passages correspond to the position criticized by the anonymous commentator on the *Parmenides*: the one in the sense of an absolute minimum is appropriate to god, because it makes it obvious that god is alien to all multiplicity. Yet Damascius criticizes Speusippus's position as follows: the One must not be understood in a negative but in a positive way, because in it, as in the Orphic Zeus, all things are present, since it is the source and principle of all other things. To which fragment of Speusippus, however, could such an interpretation possibly refer?

17. On the level of arithmetic, it is the smallest number, while on the level of geometry, where the one corresponds to the point, it is the smallest magnitude.

18. An allusion to the Orphic Kronos who swallows his children (Phanes, *Orph. Frag.* 146 Kern = 200 III, V Bernabé), and especially to the Orphic Zeus (Phanes, *Orph. Frag.* 82, 129, 167 Kern = 129 II, 240 I, 241 I, II Bernabé) who, by swallowing Phanes, swallows all things before returning them to the light, by producing our world.

19. Speusippus, frg. 49a Tarán = 60 Isnardi Parente = 36 Lang.

20. See the "Orphic Hymn to Zeus" (*Orph. Frag.* 163 Kern = 243 Bernabé).

21. *Princ.* 1.1, 1:3,4–12 Westerink-Combès.

22. *Princ.* 1.62, 1:93,15–21 Westerink-Combès.

We find an allusion to this interpretation attributed to Speusippus in the final section of Proclus's commentary on Plato's *Parmenides*,²³ which has been preserved only in the medieval Latin translation by William of Moerbeke.²⁴

If the One is prior to and cause of being, then, according to its own existence, it is itself not being, though constituting it, and it does not participate in being. And that is what we were searching for. For if the first One were to participate somehow in being, even if it were superior to being and producing it, it would be some One, taking up the existence of being. For since it is not *some* One, the One surely will not be the cause of being, but of all things, though of being before the other things. And if it is necessary for each thing to participate in its cause, there will exist some other One, belonging to being, making it exist from the simple One. That is also what Speusippus says, reporting the views of ancient men.²⁵

For considering the One as superior to being and as that from which being comes, they delivered it even from the relation a principle has. Assuming that, if someone were to posit the One itself, grasping it in thought as separate and alone by itself without the other things (*si quis le unum ipsum seorsum et solum meditatam sine aliis secundum se ipsum suadere, nullum alterum elementum ipsi apponens* = εἴ τις τὸ ἐν αὐτὸ χωρὶς καὶ μόνον διανοούμενος ἄνευ τῶν ἄλλων καθ' αὐτὸ τιθεῖν), and did not add to it another element, nothing of the other things would come to be, they introduced the Indefinite Dyad as principle of being.²⁶

So he too witnesses that this was the opinion of the ancients about the One, that it has snatched itself up beyond being and that after the One comes the Indefinite Dyad. In this section also Plato reveals that this One is beyond both being and the One in being and the whole One being. In the second hypothesis, he will call the One being a sort of whole, being composed of dissimilar elements, namely the One and being, beyond which he says is the One itself.²⁷

Upon reading this fragment of Speusippus replaced within its context, we may note the following two points. 1) Speusippus adopts a doctrine that comes from elsewhere, quite probably from the Pythagoreans.²⁸ This does not initially pose an insurmountable problem for the authenticity of the fragment, for we know that Speusippus was interested in the doctrines of the Pythagoreans, especially concerning number. 2) However, an attentive reading of the Latin translation placed in parallel with a Greek text obtained by retroversion makes the Neopy-

23. For what follows, see Steel 2002, 469–76.

24. See Klibansky and Labowsky 1953.

25. This must be the Pythagoreans; see the remarks by Steel (2002, 472), on *antiquis* (= τοῖς παλαιοῖς [ἀνδράσι]).

26. Speusippus, frg. 48 Tarán = Isnardi Parente 62.

27. In *Parm.* 38,22–40,7 Klibansky-Labowsky = 3:288.8–290.5 Steel 2007–2009.

28. On this type of interpretation, see Romano 2002, 197–248.

thagorean and consequently Neoplatonic tenor of the alleged fragment apparent. This is illustrated by the beginning of the fragment: *Le unum melius ente* (*kreïtton toû óntos*) *putantes et a quo le ens* (ἐξ αὐτοῦ τὸ ὄν). The expression κρεῖττον τοῦ ὄντος is found in Proclus,²⁹ and ἐξ αὐτοῦ τὸ ὄν in Plotinus.³⁰ The clause *unum melius ente* (κρεῖττον τοῦ ὄντος) is contradicted by Aristotle in fragment 42: “All those philosophers who, like the Pythagoreans and Speusippus, consider that the most Beautiful and the Best are not in the principle, on the grounds that the principles of plants and animals are causes, whereas the beautiful and the perfect are found only in derivative entities, do not have a correct view.”³¹ Moreover, the formula (ἐξ αὐτοῦ τὸ ὄν) is contradicted by the information according to which the Indefinite Dyad is *entium principium*. What is more, for Aristotle the one and duality do not engender being, but numbers, and since numbers take the place of Forms in Speusippus, the reasoning was developed by saying that numbers enable the appearance of the rest of beings. This, however, is a debatable extrapolation. From this point forward we are in doubt, but we cannot conclude to an adaptation before we have accumulated more proofs.

The element that denounces the fabrication is found in the reading *liberaverunt* at the end of the first sentence of the fragment: “they delivered it even from the relation a principle has; *et ab ea que secundum principium habitudine ipsum liberauerunt*. The corresponding verb to *liberauerunt* in Greek is ἀπαλλάσσω. But this verb is found in a similar context in the *De communi mathematica scientia* attributed to Iamblichus.³² For Iamblichus, mathematics is subdivided according to its subjects. The subject of arithmetic is quantity, of which there are two types: on the one hand, there is quantity in itself, free from all relation with something else (τῆς πρὸς ἄλλο πως ἀπελλαγμένον σχέσεως), for instance the even and the uneven, and, on the other, there is quantity in relation to something else, for instance, the similar and the dissimilar. The first branch of the dichotomy corresponds to the position that Speusippus is supposed to have maintained in the above-mentioned fragment.

Consequently, the One is cut off from all relation with what follows it, as is explained in the continuation of the fragment: (*si quis le unum ipsum seorsum suadere, nullum alterum elementum ipsi apponens* = εἴ τις τὸ ἔν χωρὶς καὶ μόνον διανοούμενος ἄνευ τῶν ἄλλων καθ’ αὐτὸ τιθείη).

This is an adaptation of *Parm.* 143a6–9:

29. Proclus, *Elem. theol.* 138,13 Dodds and *In Parm.* 6.1039.23 Cousin = 3:2.6 Steel, 1040.2 Cousin = 3:2.11 Steel, 1073.3 Cousin = 3:43.17 Steel; *In Tim.* 2.162.24. In his new retroversion, C. Steel has printed ἄφ’ οὗ τὸ ὄν, also found in Plotinus, *Enn.* I.6 [1].7.10.

30. Plotinus, *Enn.* 6.5 [23].12.24–25.

31. Speusippus, frg. 43 Tarán = Aristotle, *Metaph.* Λ.7.1072b30–34.

32. *Comm. math. sc.* p. 30.9–10; see *In Nic. arith.* 8.9–11 Pistelli 1894.

PARMENIDES — Well then, this one (ἓν), which we say participates in being, if, in thought, we take it in itself alone, independently of that in which, we say, it participates (μετέχειν), will this one in itself, too, appear as one or as many?

YOUNG ARISTOTLE — One, at least in my view.

Although we are now at the beginning of the second series of deductions of the second part of Plato's *Parmenides*, this remark may be valid for the One of the first series of deductions in general.

But how are we then to explain that the other things come from the One, which is so radically separate? The answer follows: *nichil utique fiet aliorum, interminabilem dualitatem entium principium inducens*. The clause is very hard to understand. The strangest question is the following: why would Proclus speak of the Indefinite Dyad as “the principle of beings (*entium principium*),” since what precedes leads us to think that there are two of these principles, the One and the Indefinite Dyad? This is why Tarán (1981, 354–55) suggested the hypothesis of a corruption of the text. Secondly, this is the only fragment in which Speusippus considers the One and the Indefinite Dyad as principles, rather than the One and Plurality (πλῆθος). In Speusippus, according to Aristotle, the One and plurality are the principles of numbers, not of beings (frg. 39 = Aristotle, *Metaph.* N1.1087b4–9 and 26–33). The interpretation given here is more akin to Xenocrates than it is to Speusippus.

At this stage, one might still think that in order to develop his doctrine, Speusippus borrowed from Plato and answered Aristotle. In this case, however, why did he insist on tracing this doctrine back to the Pythagoreans? Such a reference to the Pythagoreans makes a borrowing from Plato and Aristotle unlikely. There remains the solution, proposed by C. Steel, which seems to me the most likely. This fragment is a Neopythagorean *apocryphon* used by the Neoplatonists, and it is this *apocryphon* that is criticized by both Plotinus and Porphyry.

Cyril of Alexandria reports the following testimony from Porphyry:

Porphyry says in the fourth book of his *History of Philosophy* that Plato not only professed a god who is one, but that he even expressed himself with regard to him, [saying] “that one could not attribute to him any name, that no human knowledge could grasp him, and that what are called his ‘appellations’ are predicated of him improperly on the basis of inferior beings. If, however, one must absolutely have the audacity to utter one of the names from here down below with regard to him, then one must rather attribute to him the appellation of One and that of Good. The former appellation manifests his simplicity and consequently his self-sufficiency; in fact, he needs nothing, neither parts, nor reality, nor powers, nor activities, but he is on the contrary the cause of all things.”³³

33. Cyril of Alexandria, *Against Julian* I (PG 76, 549a5–b6) = 220F Smith = frg. 14a Jacoby = 15 Segonds (see the translation with commentary in Segonds 1982, 189–90).

As Pierre Hadot has already remarked (1968, 1:112 n. 3), it is hard not to see the numerous points of similarity between this passage and several lines of the first fragment of the *Anonymous Commentary*.

In Plotinus's ninth *Treatise* (*Enn.* 6.9 [9]1–8), the critique is even more precise:

— In what sense, then, do we use “One,” and how can we accord it with our intellection?

— We must understand “one” in more numerous senses than those that make us say that the unit and the point are made “one.” For in both these cases, the soul, by removing magnitude and numeric multiplicity, reaches what is smallest (σμικρότατον), and then relies on something that is indivisible, but which was in the divisible and is in something else, whereas the One is neither “in another” nor in the divisible, nor is it indivisible like that which is smallest. Indeed, it is the greatest thing of all, not in size, but in power, so that even its lack of size depends on its power.³⁴

According to Plotinus, the kind of unity possessed by the one on the mathematical level (the unit) or on the geometrical level (the point) has nothing to do with what characterizes the One and indicates its absolute simplicity, which makes it different from all things.

Hence the following conclusion. In the first fragment of the *Anonymous Commentary on the Parmenides*, a Neoplatonist who could be Amelius or Porphyry takes up a critique formulated by Plotinus against an interpretation attributed to Speusippus, according to which the One is described negatively in the first series of deductions of the second part of the *Parmenides*, because the one is a minimum on an arithmetical, geometrical, and even physical level. An attentive study of the fragment and the testimony that ascribe this interpretation to Speusippus reveals the fraudulent character of the fragment. It follows that the position criticized in the first column of the anonymous *Commentary* does not go back to the historical Speusippus, but to an *apocryphon* placed under the name of Plato's successor at the head of the Academy. The commentator is therefore criticizing, from a Neoplatonic viewpoint, a Neopythagorizing interpretation of the *Parmenides* proposed in the two first centuries C.E., and using this *apocryphon* to interpret the first series of deductions of the second part of Plato's *Parmenides*.

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34. See Aubry 2006.

SPEUSIPPUS AND THE ONTOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION
OF THE *PARMENIDES*

John Dillon

One of the ways, I think, in which the speculations attributed to Plato's immediate successors in the Academy, Speusippus and Xenocrates, can most profitably be considered is as interpretations (however bizarre or perverse they may sometimes appear) of various of Plato's later dialogues, and in particular the *Timaeus*, *Philebus*, *Sophist*, and *Parmenides*.¹ My concern on this occasion is to focus on the possibility that certain key elements of Speusippus's metaphysics are based on an ontological interpretation of the hypotheses propounded in the second part of the *Parmenides*. In particular, I am interested in exploring whether he may have based his doctrine of the derivation of number from his first principles of One and Multiplicity on the account of the generation of number at *Parm.* 142d–144a—and, if so, whether these speculations of his may have left some traces in Plotinus's doctrine in his tractate on numbers (*Enn.* 6.6 [34]).

One of the notorious “facts” about Speusippus's metaphysics derived from the tendentious testimony of Aristotle is that he abandoned the Platonic forms (or rather, form-numbers) in favor of mathematical numbers, whereas Xenocrates conflated mathematical numbers with form-numbers,² but I would maintain that these Aristotelian testimonies have to be taken with many a grain of salt, as constituting, at the least, gross oversimplifications of the positions of both Speusippus and Xenocrates. It is more profitable, I would suggest, to begin from a sympathetic postulate as to what problems Speusippus felt himself to be presented with

1. This is not to suggest, of course, that the dialogues were the sole source of inspiration for these men. We must also assume a vigorous tradition of oral debate within the Academy. But interpretation of these dialogues in particular does seem to have been important. I have advanced this view at some length in Dillon 2003.

2. This is what seems to emerge from *Metaph.* M.6.1080b11–30 (= Speusippus, frg. 33 Tarán). Aristotle refers to the form-numbers here as ἰδέαι, but the context shows that he is thinking of types of *number*.

in working out the implications of the Platonic position, and then to consider how he might have gone about solving them, consistent with such other (non-Aristotelian) evidence as we have; only then should we turn back to Aristotle, to see if his account could be viewed as a plausible “dialectical” distortion of the position we have arrived at.³

My reconstruction of Speusippus’s position is, I must admit, dependent to some extent, though not by any means entirely, on acceptance of a key piece of evidence which is controversial, that is, the contents of ch. 4 of Iamblichus’s *De communi mathematica scientia*. That this can (whether directly or indirectly) reflect nothing other than the doctrine of Speusippus is something that I have argued previously (Dillon 1984), in opposition to the scepticism of Leonardo Tarán.⁴ The relevant part of the chapter runs as follows:

Of mathematical numbers⁵ one must postulate two primary and highest principles (ἀρχαί), the One (which should not even be called existent, by reason of its simplicity and its position as principle of everything else, a principle being properly not yet that of which it is the principle⁶); and another principle, Multiplicity (πληθος), which has the capacity in itself to generate division (*diairesis*), and for which for this reason we might, if we are to give the most suitable possible characterisation of it, liken to a completely fluid and malleable raw material (ὕγρᾳ τινι παντάπασι καὶ εὐπλαδεῖ ὕλῃ). From these there arises—that is to say, from the One and the principle of Multiplicity—the first class (of beings), that of numbers, from both of these when combined in accordance with a certain degree of persuasive necessity (μετὰ τινος πιθανῆς ἀνάγκης⁷); and one must say

3. I am much indebted, in this investigation, to the thought-provoking article of Jens Halfwassen (1993), though I would phrase my conclusions somewhat more cautiously. Also useful has been Dancy 1991,

4. Expressed most fully in a section of the introduction to ch. 5 (“Speusippus, Aristotle and Iamblichus”) of his *Speusippus of Athens* (1981, 86–107).

5. “Mathematical numbers” are mentioned here, I would suggest, simply because that is what Iamblichus is concerned with in this treatise. Speusippus did indeed hold that numbers are the first product of the union of his two principles, but he would have included all other things as well in this general assertion.

6. This is an important principle of Speusippian metaphysics, echoed in the passage of Proclus which introduces Speusippus, frg. 48 Tarán (discussed below), and also, polemically, in a passage of Aristotle (*Metaph.* Λ.7.1072b30–1073a3 = frg. 42 Tarán), which accuses Speusippus of denying goodness and beauty to the first principle, on the ground that it is the “seed” of those qualities in all other things, and so cannot possess those qualities itself.

7. This seems like a rather arcane reference to Plato’s language in *Tim.* 47e–48a, about the persuasion of necessity by reason. If so, however, Speusippus is giving the concept a different twist—the rational persuasiveness inherent in the system he is presenting has itself the force of necessity! This has some relevance, I think, to a point made by Carlos Steel (2002; discussed below) about the apparent “misuse” by Speusippus of a line from the second hypothesis of the *Parmenides* in the passage from Proclus to be examined in a moment.

that, for each of the numbers as it goes forth, this nature⁸ provides every division for every number and, to speak generally, magnitude (μέγεθος),⁹ while the undifferentiated and indivisible principle, by impressing itself, stamps out each of them so as to be of a certain quality (τὸ δὲ ποιὸν εἶναι), and again determinate and one.

We seem to have here a description of the generation of number, and of the individuation of entities, linked to a process of division. In connection with this, I would like to adduce a curious notice of Proclus in his *Commentary on the Parmenides* (38,32–40,7 Klibansky-Labowsky). He is completing the exegesis of the first hypothesis (on 141e), and producing proofs that the primal One cannot participate in Being. In this connection, he introduces a distinction between this One and the “one” of the second hypothesis which does participate in Being—and, à propos of this, adduces a passage from a work of Speusippus (whom he has mentioned nowhere prior to this) on the relation between the One and the Indefinite Dyad.

The question we must ask ourselves is why he should think that Speusippus’s views on this latter question should have any relevance to the former topic. First of all, let us consider the passage:

For if the first One participated in Being in some way, although it is higher than Being and produces it, it would be a one which took over the mode of reality which belongs to Being. But it is not *a* one, and it is the cause not just of Being but of everything, though of Being before the rest. And if everything must participate in its cause, there must be a “one,” other than the simply One, in which Being participates; and this “one” is the principle of Beings. This is also what Speusippus says, presenting his views as the doctrines of the ancients:¹⁰

For they held that the One is higher than Being and is the source of Being; and they delivered it even from the status of a principle. For they held that, if one postulates the One, in itself, conceived as separated and alone, without anything else,¹¹ with

8. That is, the principle of multiplicity.

9. Presumably by this is meant something like quantitateness (πόσων); cf. ποιὸν below, as being the contribution of the One.

10. That is, the Pythagoreans. Speusippus, indeed, may be regarded as the father of “Neopythagoreanism,” in the sense of the manoeuvre of referring Platonic doctrines (or one’s own interpretation of Platonic doctrines) back to Pythagoras. I accept, by the way, a small emendation proposed here by Carlos Steel, in the article mentioned above (n. 8). It does not greatly affect the sense, but it eliminates an oddity in Proclus’s phraseology, which is welcome.

11. As Steel (2002) acutely observes, this phrase is only a light adaptation of a phrase from the second hypothesis of the *Parmenides* (143a6–9). He triumphantly seizes on this, however, as a proof that the Proclus passage cannot be genuinely Speusippian. I would say, on the contrary, that Speusippus might naturally be expected to have the text of the *Parmenides* very much in mind, even as he seems to have the *Timaeus* in mind in the *De communi mathematica scientia*

*no other element added to it, nothing else would come into existence. And so they introduced the Indefinite Dyad as the principle of beings.*¹²

So he too testifies that this was the opinion of the ancients about the One; it is snatched up beyond existence, and next after it comes the Indefinite Dyad.

Why, as I say, does Proclus think Speusippus's view of the role of the Dyad relevant to the exegesis of the "one" of the second hypothesis of the *Parmenides*? In the passage that he quotes, what we observe is that "the ancients" first describe the One "in itself" as being very much the One of the first hypothesis. When it becomes apparent that from such a One nothing else whatever can arise, they then adduce another entity with all the opposite characteristics, and from the action of the One on that they derive the essential structure of the universe. The disturbing, but it seems to me unavoidable, conclusion that one must draw from this is that Speusippus not only adopted a "metaphysical" interpretation of (at least) the first and second hypotheses of the *Parmenides*, but took the subject of the second to be the Indefinite Dyad—or rather, to be a portrayal of the interaction of the One with the Dyad to generate, first, Number, and ultimately the whole ordered universe.

This conclusion is disturbing, first, because a metaphysical interpretation of the second part of the *Parmenides* (as opposed to the idea that it is some sort of logical exercise or *jeu d'esprit*) is not meant to antedate Plotinus, or, perhaps, the Neopythagorean strand in Middle Platonism represented by such figures as the first-century C.E. Moderatus of Gades.¹³ This conjecture¹⁴ would carry the interpretation right back into the Old Academy, to a man who should have known pretty well what the Master himself meant by it. But secondly it is disturbing because the second hypothesis does not seem at first sight to concern the action or nature of an Indefinite Dyad.

If we turn to Plotinus, after all, we seem to observe that he considered the subject of the second hypothesis to be Intellect, as One-Being, being a whole of parts, and a unity embracing multiplicity (see, e.g., *Enn.* 6.1 [42].4–7). However, when one looks more closely at Plotinus's concept of Intellect and in particular its (theoretical or logical) genesis, as set out, for, instance, in *Enn.* 2.4 [12].1–5, we observe a curious thing. At the back of the concept of Intellect there actually lurks the Indefinite Dyad, as "intelligible matter" (ὄλη νοητή). Even in 5.1 [10].5.3–9, we find a very significant passage, which seems to me to show that Plotinus has

passage quoted above (see n. 8). But then Steel would have his doubts about the *De communi mathematica scientia* passage as well!

12. Speusippus, frg. 48 Tarán.

13. This is the conclusion come to by E. R. Dodds, in his ground-breaking article "The Parmenides of Plato and the Origin of the Neoplatonic 'One'" (1928).

14. Which is essentially that of Jens Halfwassen (1993), to give credit where it is due.

very much in mind what I would see as a Speusippian scenario. He has been leading us upwards, from the physical world to the One, and he has just ascended from Soul to Intellect, which he describes as “the god which is over the soul”:

Who is it, then, who begat this god? The simple god,¹⁵ the one who is prior to this kind of multiplicity (πλήθος), the cause of this one’s existence and multiplicity, the maker of number. For number is not primary: the One is prior to the Dyad, but the Dyad is secondary and originating from the One, has it as definer (ὀριστής), but is of its own nature indefinite; but when it is defined it is already a number, but a number as substance (οὐσία). (trans. Armstrong)

If we now turn to consider what is being set out by Plato in the second hypothesis from this rather unfamiliar perspective, we can, I think, understand how it could be seen as portraying the action of a One on a Dyad, or alternatively the effect of a Dyad on a One. We start, at 142bc, with the principle that the postulation of the One as *existing* immediately involves the importation of duality, as “unity” is not identical with “being,” nor “being with “unity”: each must therefore participate in the other, and the One, thus viewed, becomes a whole of parts. Further, each of these parts must contain the two components of unity and being, and thus can be divided further (142cd).

It might seem that, in consequence of this, “what is ‘One Being’ must be unlimited in multitude” (143a2). But in fact that is not what emerges. What we see instead is the generation of Number (143c–144a). From juggling with the terms “one,” “being,” and “different,” we derive, first, the idea of a *pair* of entities, and so of duality, and then we can build on that:

And a pair that can properly be called “both” must be *two*. And if a pair of things are two, each of them must be *one*. This applies to our terms: since each set forms a couple, each term must be one. And if so, then, when any one is added to any pair, the sum will be *three*. And three is odd, two, even. Now if there are two, there must also be *twice times*, if three, *three times*, since two is twice times one and three is three times one. And if there are two and twice times, three and three times, there must be *twice times two* and *three times three*. And if there are three which occur twice and two which occur three times, then there must be *twice times three* and *three times two*. Thus there will be even multiples of even sets, odd multiples of odd sets, odd multiples of even sets, and even multiples of odd sets. That being so, there is no number left, which must not necessarily be.

Therefore, if a One is, there must also be number. (trans. Cornford)

I quote this at some length, as I regard it as a passage of great importance for the understanding of how Speusippus generated his universe. The first consequence

15. That is, the One, as subject of the first hypothesis.

of the union of the One with Being is a process of dyadic division, addition and multiplication that leads to Number. There is still “an indefinite multiplicity of beings” (πλήθος ἄπειρον τῶν ὄντων, 144a6), but it is now numbered and ordered. Number is ἄπειρος πλήθει, because the number series is infinite, but it is no longer chaotic; it forms the basis for an ordered universe.

Let us turn back now briefly to *Comm. math. sc.* 4. At the end of the passage quoted above, we note that the principle of multiplicity (“this nature”) “provides every sort of division” for every number, while the One, imposing on each of them σφραγίς and a τύπος (ἐπισφραγιζομένην ἀποτυποῦν),¹⁶ gives each number a particular *quality*, and renders it determinate and one (ὠρισμένον καὶ ἓν). It is just this process, I would suggest, that is being portrayed in the second hypothesis of the *Parmenides*.

These conclusions, however, as I say, may prove to be rather disturbing. The general consensus, after all, seems to be that earlier generations of Platonists took the *Parmenides* simply as a logical exercise (and that they were right to do so). Proclus, in his commentary (pp. 630, 37–635, 27), in his survey of past opinions on the subject matter of the dialogue, begins with the view that it is “a logical exercise” (λογικὴ γυμνασία), and that it is directed against Zeno, to show that Plato can do a better job of producing contradictions about unity than Zeno can about multiplicity. And indeed from the little evidence we have as to mainline Middle Platonic views such a judgement seems to be confirmed. Albinus in his *Isagoge* (ch. 3) presents it as an elenctic dialogue, while Alcinous, in the *Didaskalikos* (ch. 6) treats it as a logical exercise, discerning in the first two hypotheses in particular most of the figures of the (Aristotelian) syllogistic.

On the other hand, if we turn to what one may term the “Pythagorean wing” of the Platonist tradition, in the person of the early-second century Moderatus of Gades, we find a different picture, as E.R. Dodds (1928) was the first to show. We do not, admittedly, see much trace of Moderatus’s exegesis of the depiction of the generation of Number in the second hypothesis, but it is plain that from a consideration of the first three hypotheses of the *Parmenides* (in the ancient reckoning) he derived¹⁷ a system of hypostases that appears to anticipate that of Plotinus—a series of three “Ones”—that are derivable from the contents of the first three hypotheses respectively. The middle “One” is declared to be “truly existent (ὄντως ὄν) and object of intellection (νοητόν),” and to be the realm of the Forms. This in itself has nothing to do with number, but elsewhere¹⁸ Moderatus is reported

16. Both these verbs are Platonic, but it is a little disturbing that ἀποτυπώ is only found otherwise in much later Greek *in the active*—in Plato it is always middle. It is interesting in this connexion that, in an important passage of *Enn.* 6.6.10.1–4, to be discussed below, Plotinus characterizes the One-Being, in its initial aspect (“at rest,” ἐστώς), as a προτύπωσις of τὰ ὄντα.

17. As reported in an important passage of Simplicius, *In phys.* 9:230,34–251,5 Diels, where Simplicius himself is quoting from a work of Porphyry’s *On Matter*.

18. *Apud* Stobaeus, *Anth.* 1.8.1–11 = 21 Wachsmuth.

as declaring number to be “a system of units, or a progression of multiplicity (προποδισμός πλήθους) beginning from unity, and a regression (ἀναποδισμός) ending in unity.”¹⁹ This, again, is not very specific, but can, I think, be taken with reasonable plausibility as an extrapolation of the description of the genesis of number in *Parm.* 143c–144a.

We must bear in mind, however, that Moderatus (as we are informed by Porphyry in his *Vit. Pyth.* 53) assumed an attitude of rather aggressive Pythagoreanism, criticizing Plato and his followers for stealing all Pythagoras’s best ideas and leaving the Pythagoreans merely with “what was superficial or ridiculous,” so that he is more likely to be basing himself on interpretative works of the real founders of Neopythagoreanism, Speusippus and Xenocrates, who were happy to father their theories on Pythagoras, than upon an unvarnished consideration of Plato alone. Encouraged by them, however, he could come to regard the exposition of “Parmenides” in the second part of the dialogue as a revelation of Pythagorean esoteric wisdom. If we may assume that Moderatus had some access to the speculations of Speusippus, in particular, on the question of the mechanics of the generation of numbers from the One and primal multiplicity, then his position becomes more comprehensible.

If we turn back now to Plotinus, and specifically to *Enn.* 6.6, we find an interesting situation.²⁰ The treatise *On Numbers* is primarily concerned with the problem of the proper status within the cosmos of the second principle of Pythagoreanizing Platonism (and of Plato’s so-called “unwritten doctrines”), the Indefinite Dyad, or, in Speusippus’s terminology, Multiplicity (πλήθος).²¹ Plotinus begins (ch. 1) by raising the question whether Multiplicity, insofar as it is a falling away from the One (which is to be identified with the Good) in the direction of infinity and indefiniteness, is as such evil. The answer is that it would be, were it not in fact constantly being delimited and made good by the imposition of Form.

19. It is not quite clear to me here, I must say, what Moderatus has in mind by the phrase ἀναποδισμός εἰς μονάδα. Does he mean a regression to the monad itself (which does not convey much sense to me), or might he rather mean that each distinct number is formed by a process of reversion upon itself, which then forms a unity? The idea would then be that the number five, say, would be formed by a sort of “reversion,” which constituted a pentad as a unity. Unfortunately, there is no guidance to be derived from this rather bald doxographic text.

20. I should specify here that I do not wish to maintain that Plotinus had firsthand acquaintance with the writings of Speusippus (although he could well have had, after all, if Iamblichus did), merely that he is reflecting a tradition of exegesis that can be traced back to him. More probably his immediate sources are such Neopythagorean authorities as Moderatus and Numenius, whose works we know from Porphyry that he made use of.

21. This has been well dealt with by the CNRS team, Janine Bertier et al. (1980), but has also received attention from H.-J. Krämer (1967, 292–311).

This leads (ch. 2) to a puzzle as to what Plato can have meant by talking of a “number infinite in multiplicity” (ἄπειρος ἀριθμὸς πλήθει), or, as Plotinus terms it, “number of infinity” (ἀριθμὸς τῆς ἀπειρίας) at *Parm.* 144a6.

This is, I fear, a case of later exegesis making rather too much of the text it is faced with, though with creative results. What Plato actually seems to have meant is simply that, once you start the process of division, you cannot logically stop before you reach the indefinite (rather than strictly *infinite*) plurality of individual beings. However, Plotinus, taking the expression ἄπειρος ἀριθμὸς in its strict sense as a paradox, makes it the basis, in this and the following chapter, for a penetrating analysis of the nature of number. Number, he reminds us, only arises when limit is imposed on multiplicity, and that is what happens, both in the intelligible world and in the sensible, in spite of the great multiplicity of individuals. There is multiplicity, and even infinity (ἀπειρία), in the intelligible world, but it is not an evil thing (κακὸν),

because the multiplicity is unified and not allowed to be altogether multiplicity, being a one-multiple (ἐν πλήθος). And because of this it is less than the One, because it has multiplicity, and in so far as it is compared with the One, it is worse; and since it does not have the nature of that One, but has gone out from it, it has been diminished, but it keeps its majesty (τὸ σεμνὸν) by the one in it, and it turned back its multiplicity to one and there it stayed. (6.6.3,4–10)²²

Speusippus too was anxious to maintain that multiplicity was not evil, and this led him to assert that the One was not good, or rather that the concept of goodness was not relevant to the One.²³ Plotinus, like all Platonists subsequent to Speusippus, is firmly committed to the goodness of the One, so that he must provide a different reason for the non-evilness of multiplicity, and this he discerns in its submission to limiting by the One. However, Plotinus and Speusippus would be at one in seeing this process of limiting as in the first instance generating Number.

The next five chapters of the tractate are not fully relevant to our theme, since they dwell on various preliminary or peripheral topics, largely devoted to countering the vulgar opinion that number supervenes upon things and is posterior to them. Only in ch. 9 do we reach the central question, at precisely what stage in the development of the intelligible universe are we to place the genesis of number? It is here, I think, that we may discern Plotinus, in his meditations on the second hypothesis of the *Parmenides*, approaching very close to the problematic of Speusippus.

The problem, for him as (I think) for Speusippus, is to decide “whether Being (οὐσία) generated Number by its own division, or whether rather it is Number

22. We see here Plotinus making use of the concepts of reversion and remaining (ἐπιστροφή and μωνή) to characterize the process of the limiting of multiplicity.

23. *Comm. math. sc.* 4:15,23–17,1 Festa.

that introduced division into Being (9.1–3). In other words, which is the more basic concept, Being or Number? Plotinus sees the two entities as very closely allied, but concludes (9.10–13) that, after all, Being is prior to Number, in the sense that it is the addition of Being to One (at the beginning of the second hypothesis), and then the distinguishing of One from Being, that produces the initial concepts of “one,” “two,” “three,” and thence, by stages, the whole sequence of natural numbers (see *Parm.* 143de)—but Number must in turn be taken as prior to the multiplicity of “beings” (τὰ ὄντα), that is, the Forms.

It is this priority of Number to the Forms that is the important principle: Number is inherent in Being, in its capacity as generator of the Forms, and the intelligible world. In a notable phrase at the beginning of ch. 10, Plotinus declares number to be “Being at a stand” (or “at rest”) in multiplicity (ἔστώς ... τὸ ὄν ἐν πλήθει ἀριθμός),²⁴ which I take to mean that Being in its essence, even prior to its activity, contains the seed of multiplicity inherent in it, which will express itself as number as soon as it turns to the generation of beings (all this, of course, to be conceived as a purely logical, not a temporal, process!). Plotinus goes on to describe Being, in equally remarkable language, as “waking up to many-ness” (πολὸ μὲν ἠγείρετο), but being still at this stage “as it were, a preparation for beings and a preliminary sketch (προτύπωσις). Through all this obscurity of expression, however, shines the insight, derived ultimately, I would maintain, from Speusippus, that the first product of the union of the primal One and Multiplicity is not Forms, but Number. Where the two thinkers differ is in that Plotinus, following a long tradition in Platonism subsequent to Speusippus, wishes to find room at this same level of reality for forms as well as numbers, whereas Speusippus seems to have been prepared to relegate forms as such to the level of the World Soul (with whom he will have identified the Demiurge of the *Timaeus*).

We are not therefore concerned, as was Plotinus, with the problem of the relationship between forms and numbers; our only concern is with the relationship of number with Being itself, and its role in the production of the universe—the topic being alluded to in the mysterious Speusippian passage from Proclus’s *Commentary on the Parmenides* quoted above. How far Plotinus’s speculations can be drawn upon to throw light on the theory of Speusippus is a question, of course, on which I would not wish to be too definite. Part of Plotinus’s distinctive genius, I believe, is to pursue with much greater rigor issues in Platonism that had been left, to all appearances, quite vague by his predecessors. Precisely how the One interacts with the Indefinite Dyad, or Multiplicity, to generate the world, is one of

24. Theiler (Harder, Beutler, and Theiler 1964), we may note, takes exception to what he sees as the oddity of this expression, and would emend ἔστώς to the harmless ἔστω, but I think that he misses the point here. Plotinus seems to me to be making a distinction (borrowed, perhaps, from Numenius) between Being “at rest” and Being “in motion,” as it activates itself to generate the Forms.

those problems. Clearly Speusippus addressed this problem, and put forward the creation, and then the productive activity, of Number as a solution, and I consider it probable that Plotinus had some access, probably indirect, to his speculations. But Plotinus's particular proposals are very probably his own. That said, however, I feel that the following passage from later in 6.6 [34].9.23–32, throws some light, not only on the doctrine of Plotinus, but also on that of Speusippus:

Number as a whole, therefore, existed before the beings themselves.²⁵ But if it is prior to the beings, then it is not itself to be counted among the beings. Rather what we should say is that Number is in Being, not as being the number of Being—for Being is still at that stage one—but rather the power of Number, substantially existent as it is (ὑποστᾶσα), divides Being and makes it, so to speak, to be in labor with (ᾠδίνειν) multiplicity. For Number will be either the substance (οὐσία) or the activity (ἐνέργεια) of Being, and the Absolute Living Being and Intellect are Number. May we not say, then, that Being is Number in a unified state (ἡνωμένος), beings are Number in its developed aspect (ἐξεληλυγμένος), Intellect is Number moving in itself (ἐν αὐτῷ κινούμενος), and the Living Being comprehensive Number (ἀριθμὸς περιέχων).²⁶

This is a remarkable assertion of the basic function of Number in the creation and administration of the intelligible world.²⁷ The verb ἐξελίττειν is used repeatedly by Plotinus for the process of an hypostasis “unfolding” into its component parts, or into what is below it,²⁸ and that is the function that Number performs here. It is presented as the ἐνέργεια of Being, its self-actualizing activity, without which the intelligible world would not have come into being.

This is all rather more sophisticated than anything we know of Speusippus's theory, one must admit. In the passage quoted, at the outset from *Comm. math. sc.* 4, all we learn is the role of Multiplicity in generating Number, not Number's role in generating either individual numbers, or the level of reality below it (which in Speusippus's system is that of geometricals). But it was never my purpose to

25. τὰ ὄντα, the contents of the intelligible world—for Plotinus the Forms, for Speusippus the whole system of natural numbers.

26. This appears to be a reference to a number that includes all other numbers, which would be the number proper to the intelligible universe. Speusippus, we know (from the extract of his treatise *On Pythagorean Numbers*, preserved in the pseudo-Iamblichean *Theol. Arith.* 82,10–85,23 = frg. 28 Tarán), identified this number simply as the decad, and there is some evidence, from various references made by Plotinus in the course of this treatise (e.g., 6.6 [34].10.33–39; 14,44–50), that he may have accepted that.

27. Repeated, in slightly different terms, in 6.6 [34].15.24–29. There, Being is described as “producing the beings when moving according to Number” (κινούμενον κατ' ἀριθμόν).

28. E.g., 3.7 [45].11.24: the *logos* in Soul “unrolls” what is at rest in Intellect; 3.8 [30].8.34: Intellect “unrolls itself” while contemplating the One; 5.3 [49].3.5: the διάνοια “unrolls” an image presented to it by φαντασία.

attempt to extrapolate back to Speusippus anything like the full complexity of Plotinus's reasonings. All I wish to suggest is that an ontological interpretation of Plato's argumentation in the second hypothesis of the *Parmenides* may have been behind the theorizing of Speusippus in the Old Academy on the mode in which the universe is generated from a radically unitary and simple first principle, as it was behind that of Plotinus in the third century C.E.

If, however, we are prepared tentatively to postulate that Speusippus assigned an ontological value to the first two hypotheses, the question inevitably arises as to what his attitude was to the rest of them. One cannot, it seems to me, just leave it at that. There are, after all, three more "positive" hypotheses, by the ancient reckoning (taking the "corollary" to Hypothesis 2, *Parm.* 155e–157e, as the third, as was done by all ancient Platonists);²⁹ and then there are a further four "negative" ones. What ontological values, one wonders, could Speusippus have assigned at least to the remaining three "positive" ones?

We are admittedly here deep in conjectural territory, but there are possibly some clues to be discerned. Since Speusippus seems to have posited a five-level universe (if we may draw this conclusion from the very elliptical mention of "the fourths and fifths," among which evil may first be discerned, in *Comm. math. sc.* 4:18,9–10 Festa),³⁰ it might follow that—like the later Neoplatonists, at least, such as Syrianus and Proclus—he took the first five hypotheses as representing levels of reality, while the last four did not, but simply reinforced negatively the necessity of there being a One.³¹ The fact that the fourth and fifth hypotheses concern the consequences for "the Others" of there being a One makes it easier, I think, to see these two as concerning various types of physical individual.

However, I raise these possibilities only to indicate that someone, even in the period of the Old Academy, would not be entirely bereft of arguments if he wished to match at least the first five hypotheses with levels of reality. Whether

29. This, it will be recalled, concerns an entity that is both one and many, exists in time, and is subject to (at least spiritual) motion and change—a description that fits the Platonic soul passably well.

30. Speusippus has just declared that there is nothing either ugly or bad (οὐδὲν οὐτε αἰσχρὸν ἐστὶν οὐτε καλόν) in the higher levels of the universe, i.e., those of the One, Number and Being—and, by implication, Soul, which is not here mentioned—"but only at the lowest level, among the fourths and fifths, which are combined from the lowest elements, does evil come into being. It is by no means clear what these fourth and fifth levels of reality are meant to be, but I have suggested, in Dillon 2003, 54–55, that they might represent the animate and inanimate physical realms respectively (heavenly and sublunar realms will not do, I think, as there is surely no evil in the heavenly realm).

31. The earlier generation of Platonists after Plotinus, we may note, Amelius, Porphyry, and Iamblichus, tried to assign levels of reality to all nine (or in Amelius's case, eight) hypotheses, with fairly bizarre results; see Dillon 2002a. As for Plotinus, we have no idea what he did with anything lower than the third, and even its identification with the Soul is based largely on one passage only, *Enn.* 5.1.8.

Speusippus actually did this we cannot know. My chief purpose here is merely to argue that such an ontological interpretation of the first two hypotheses provides a plausible theoretical underpinning for what we otherwise know of Speusippus's metaphysics.

THE INDEFINITE DYAD IN SEXTUS EMPIRICUS'S REPORT
 (ADVERSUS MATHEMATICOS 10.248–283)
 AND PLATO'S PARMENIDES

Thomas A. Szlezák

1. THE PROBLEM

Sextus Empiricus's report in the tenth book of *Adversus mathematicos* about a theory of the principles of all things, which the Pythagoreans are supposed to have held, is one of the most problematic texts in the history of ancient philosophy. This text was considered unproblematic as long its ascription to the Pythagoreans was not in doubt. It was therefore given authoritative philosophical consideration as a source for Pythagorean philosophy equal to Aristotle's report in the *Metaphysics*¹ in the first volume of Hegel's "Lectures on the History of Philosophy" (1955, 1:238–50).

The unproblematic use of this text as a critical source came to an end when it was realized that Sextus reports things that other sources attribute to the Old Academy and thus indirectly to Plato himself. In this vein, Richard Heinze wrote about the doctrine of categories of Xenocrates in 1892 (Heinze 1965), and determined that it was very close to Hermodorus's testimony about Plato—and also to Sextus Empiricus 10.263–269, a passage that for Heinze shows "how closely certain tendencies of Neopythagoreanism were connected to those of the Old Academy." For Heinze this was "a fact, which is not yet acknowledged widely enough" (1965, 38).

This has changed radically in the 117 years since Heinze. Paul Wilpert, in an essay from 1941 (1972, 172–80, 187–97), emphasized the agreement of Sextus's report not only with Hermodorus,² but also with the classification of categories

1. Aristotle, *Metaph.* A5.985b23–986b8 and 987a13–28.

2. See below n. 10.

in Alexander of Aphrodisias's commentary on the *Metaphysics* (56,13–21 Hayduck) which the commentator explicitly traces back to Aristotle's transcript of the Περὶ τὰγαθοῦ. The following year, Wilpert gave a detailed interpretation of the entire report as a fragment from Aristotle's Περὶ τὰγαθοῦ.³

Because of its delayed publication, H. Cherniss (1944) could not have known of Wilpert's analysis when he wrote his extensive book about Aristotle's criticism of Plato; for his own purposes Cherniss merely drew on Sextus's report for particular linguistic peculiarities and as a Neopythagorean parallel to the classification of categories in Hermodorus.⁴ He did not attempt a source-critical analysis. His assessment probably would have been the same as that of G. Vlastos, who radically challenged the applicability of the report as a testimony of Platonic philosophy (1963, 644–48). Wilpert's claim that the entire report was from the Περὶ τὰγαθοῦ was assessed differently by Werner Jaeger, Hans Joachim Krämer, Walter Burkert, Willy Theiler, and Konrad Gaiser, who highlight the linguistic and factual revisions from the Hellenistic period, but do not doubt that the core is Platonic.⁵ Burkert saw in Sextus's report "an exact transcript of the lecture *On the Good*."⁶ Concerning the question *whose* transcript could have been the last source, Theiler, like Wilpert, tended to name Aristotle (Theiler 1965, 208–9).

The obvious and most important reason against attributing the theory of the "principles of all things" (of the τῶν ὅλων ἀρχαί; Sextus, *Math.* 10.262) as presented here to Plato is undoubtedly that the text itself names a different origin: Pythagoras or, respectively, the Pythagoreans or their successors.⁷

But what does "Pythagorean" mean in the post-Platonic era? Everyone knows that Plato had Socrates—as a character in the dialogues—present his own philosophical concerns in his early and middle works. And as is well known, he did this with such dramatic intensity that to this day, especially in the early works, it is not easy to separate the specifically Platonic from the supposedly Socratic. At least nowadays there is a consensus that the doctrine of the Forms, always presented by "Socrates," is completely Plato's. Plato employed a similar camouflage in his late works: he presents the dialectical-methodological aspect of his philoso-

3. 1949, 128–21. (The book was written in 1942, but was not published until 1949, due to a paper shortage at the time.)

4. Paragraphs 258, 265, 268, 271–273, 272 and 281 of Sextus's report are cited very sparingly by Cherniss, merely as proof for his interpretation (1944, 503, 170 n. 96, 286 n. 192, 287 n. 192, 256 n. 166, and 396 n. 322).

5. The most precise analysis to date is provided by Gaiser (1968, 63–84; 2004, 240–62). Detailed information on the evaluation of the report in the scholarship is offered by Gaiser (1968, 64 with n. 83, 73 with n. 95–101; 2004, 240 with n. 83 and 250–51 with n. 95–101).

6. Burkert 1972, 94: "und doch liegt eine genaue Nachschrift von Περὶ τὰγαθοῦ zugrunde."

7. ὁ Πυθαγόρας 261, οἱ περὶ (τὸν Σάμιον) Πυθαγόραν 248, 250, οἱ Πυθαγορικοὶ 255, 262, 282, Πυθαγορικῶν παιδες 270.

phizing in the dialogues *Sophist*, *Statesman*, and *Parmenides* through the visitor from Elea and Parmenides, the main characters in these dialogues, while his cosmology and his view of the ἀρχαί—insofar as these enter into the dialogues—are put into the mouths of the Pythagorean Timaeus and “the people of old,” who are easily recognizable as Pythagoreans in the *Philebus* (16c). Undoubtedly, on essential issues, Plato was adopting Eleatic and Pythagorean approaches. However, the way that Plato and, along with him, the Old Academy interpreted themselves, or rather presented themselves as the heirs of Pythagorean wisdom, goes far beyond what would have been required for intellectual honesty.⁸ The consequence of this was that, just as the Platonic doctrine of the Forms could appear to be “Socratic,” so the Platonic theory of principles could appear to be “Pythagorean.” The Academy, having become “skeptical” by the third century, certainly did not want to burden itself with the dogmatism of the doctrine of principles; thus Burkert suspects that it was at that time that this theory got the label “Pythagorean,” which it still has in Sextus (Burkert 1972, 94). This is quite plausible, although Gaiser’s suggestion—that, in the light of Burkert’s own exposition of the “Pythagorization” of the Old Academy, the integration of the doctrine of principles into the tradition of this “school” could undoubtedly have been possible before the skeptical turn—is also noteworthy (Gaiser 1968, 73; 2004, 251).

The justifications we have for affiliating Sextus’s report with Plato can be summarized briefly.⁹

1. The names of the principles are ἐν and ἀόριστος δυάς, which according to Aristotle are Platonic, not Pythagorean (*Metaph.* A6.987b25–27).
2. The reduction of the categories to these principles (Sextus Empiricus 10.263–275) is attested to as Platonic by Hermodorus’ fragment in Simplicius, as well as by Alexander of Aphrodisias.¹⁰
3. The reduction of the dimensions to these same principles is attributed to Plato by both Aristotle and Alexander.¹¹
4. The structure of the report: the (twofold) description of the ascent to the principles is followed by a descent from the principles to the things; the whole report has three parts, like Aristotle’s *Περὶ τὰ γαθῶν*, and there is evidence that the discussion of opposites was in book 2,¹² while in the

8. The connection of the Platonic Academy with Pythagoreanism is presented and analyzed in detail by Burkert (1972, 53–96).

9. The list follows Gaiser 1968, 70–71; 2004, 248–49, who also makes use of the conclusions of Wilpert 1949 and Heinze 1965.

10. Hermodorus, cited in Simplicius, *In phys.* 1:247,30–248,15 Diels = *test.* 31 Gaiser 1963; Alexander of Aphrodisias, *In metaph.* 56,13–20 Hayduck = *test.* 22B Gaiser.

11. Aristotle, *Metaph.* M.9.1085a7–14; A.9.992a10–13 and often beyond this; Alexander of Aphrodisias, *In metaph.* 55,20–56,5 Hayduck = *test.* 22B Gaiser 1963.

12. Gaiser 1963, *test.* 39B, 40B.

present scheme it would belong (if the categorical reduction were performed more broadly) to the categorical reduction and, as such, to the middle part.

5. In the introductory part of the report (10.249–257) several motifs appear, which can also be found in *Tim.* 48a–c.¹³

These agreements doubtlessly carry more weight than the objection that the report itself claims to be “Pythagorean”—which, as Wilpert realized even before Burkert, means little—and even more weight than the fact that the report is revised linguistically and with respect to its content. The revisions mostly have to do with inserting doxographical claims about other “schools” and positions. Konrad Gaiser has quite convincingly shown that these references, which probably also include the section on the Platonic forms (10.258), can be taken out without forfeiting the development of the thought.¹⁴

Thus, we have good reasons for considering Sextus’s report as a “Neopythagorean” version of an older report on Plato’s lecture “On the Good.”

The interpretation of the Platonic *Parmenides* that we find in Simplicius’s quotation taken from Moderatus, and that seems to contain the key to the Neoplatonic hierarchy of hypostases is also considered to be Neopythagorean. This raises the question of whether one might be able to find a connection between Sextus’s report and the *Parmenides*, or a certain interpretation of the *Parmenides*. Clearly the challenge stems from the fact that there is no clear reference in the one text to the other, nor an easily recognizable concurrence. I intend to determine the position of Sextus’s report relative to Plato and Neoplatonism more precisely by considering the ἀόριστος δυάς in both texts.

2. THE INDEFINITE DYAD

We first encounter the indefinite dyad at the end of a drawn out ascent from the corporeal to the incorporeal (from the σώματα to the ἀσώματων). In this context we find the remark that not everything which, being incorporeal, is ontologically “prior” to the corporeal, is to be considered on that account an element and first principle: although Plato’s Forms exist before bodies (προυνφεστᾶσιν τῶν σωμάτων), they are not something ultimate, since they partake of numbers, which thus transcend them (ὥστε εἶναι τι ἐπαναβεβηκός αὐτῶν τῆς ὑποστάσεως, 10.258). This is followed by a second ascent to the numbers, beginning from physical bodies. These are preceded by three-dimensional (geometrical) bodies, which are preceded by planes, which are preceded by lines. But before lines one has to consider numbers (even the simple line connects *two* points). All the num-

13. Gaiser 1968, 71; 2004, 249.

14. Gaiser 1968, 76–78; 2004, 254–56.

bers, however, fall under the ἕν, since every number is *one* number (260). In this way “Pythagoras,” the text asserts, arrived at the conviction that the monad is the principle of things. By partaking of it, everything is called *one* (261).

Thus far, the reduction of the physical world to its principles through dimensions and numbers has led to only *one* principle. A second is now introduced, in that the monad is considered with respect to the oppositional pair of identity—difference (αὐτότης - ἑτερότης). In light of its identity with itself the monad is simply the monad, but added to itself in accord with ἑτερότης, it brings forth the so-called ἀόριστος δυάς. It is called this, however, because none of the definite dyads are identical to it (261). The second principle is thus *brought forth* (ἀποτελεῖν) by the first due to a difference (otherness). The text does not tell us where this ἑτερότης itself comes from. All definite dyads partake of the dyad as principle, and this is why it is called “indefinite dyad”—but according to this, the monad would have to be called the “indefinite monad” as well. The two principles explain the countable units and the definite dyads in the world—how far the totality of things is supposed to be explained (the αἰ τῶν ὄλων ἀρχαί were being sought; 254) is not made clear.

In §270 a new line of reduction begins, because the Pythagoreans exhibited their principles in many ways (ποικίλως). An arrangement (classification) of all things into καθ’ αὐτά (that which is “in itself”), κατ’ ἐναντίωσιν and πρὸς τι ὄντα (263–265) leads to the same principles. The genus (γένος) of things that are “in themselves” is the ἕν (270). The opposites all fall under the most fundamental opposition “equal – unequal” (ἴσον – ἄνισον), where the equal is to be counted under the ἕν (since the One as the first is equal to itself [275]), while the unequal falls under excess and defect (under ὑπεροχὴ καὶ ἔλλειψις). This conceptual pair serves at the same time as a generic term or genus (γένος) for all *relativa* (273). Since the first excess and defect takes place between two things—the surpassing and the surpassed—this γένος again leads to the indefinite dyad. Again, the character of indefiniteness in this dyad is neither deduced nor explained.

It is stated, probably in a summary of both sequences of reduction, that the monad and the ἀόριστος δυάς have shown themselves to be the highest ἀρχαί of all things (276).

What follows is a deduction or construction of things from first principles, during the course of which numbers are the first product. But not all numbers, since the number 1 seems to be brought forth by only the first monad (276). To begin with, for its doubling the number 2 is missing and with it the “twice,” δις. In contrast to §261, where identity and difference, αὐτότης and ἑτερότης, simply existed in addition to the monad in order to generate the dyad, here there is an awareness that at first nothing can exist besides the principle of oneness. However, the consequences of this are not drawn out consistently, since otherwise the number 1 (τὸ ἐν τοῖς ἀριθμοῖς ἕν) could not exist independently from the second principle. This is only used for the generation of the number 2, from which the δις, the “twice,” is derived. Following a train of thought one would expect, this

“twice,” δίς, which comes from the second principle, should produce the number 2 from the number 1. Instead of this, and probably accurately with respect to the Platonic generation of numbers, the definite number 2 is brought forth through the indefinite dyad and the monad (276). The exact role of the principle of oneness is only specified in the subsequent generation of further numbers: τοῦ μὲν ἐνὸς αἰὲν περατοῦντος, τῆς δὲ ἀορίστου δυάδος δύο γεννώσης (277). Although ἕν is used here instead of μονάς (the term usually used in this text to designate the first principle), one must assume, because of a very similar statement in Aristotle, that here the function of both principles is designated: the one limits, the indefinite dyad duplicates, and this continues to infinity (277). According to Aristotle, the Platonic ἀόριστος δυάς is “two making” and multiplying: “what it grasped, it made into two,” τοῦ γὰρ ληφθέντος ἦν δυοποιός (1082a14–15; see also 1083b36, as well as 1083a13).

Finally, it is also mentioned at the end of the report that the current of Pythagoreanism mentioned first (in contrast to a second current, which explains the dimensions through the “flow” of the point) explains everything from two principles, namely, the monad and the indefinite dyad: first numbers, then lines, surfaces and (geometrical) bodies (282). This leads on to the generation of the world, which is touched upon in a very summary way: the four elements, the cosmos, and the harmony that determines it and, in turn, is based on numerical proportions (283).

These are the passages on the indefinite dyad in Sextus’s report.

This Principle is here a product of the first monad, and in this respect the entire design is to be called “monistic.” Yet the derivation from the monad (261) is philosophically unsatisfying, since the opposition of αὐτότης – ἑτερότης is already presupposed, which, in all reality, robs the indefinite dyad—as something generated—of the characteristic of being an ultimate principle. The characteristic of the “indefiniteness” of this dyad is neither explained (except in an unsatisfying way in 261), nor is it employed in the generation of either the numbers or later things. One gets the impression here that a concept that was not understood philosophically is being carried along doxographically.

With respect to the generation of the indefinite dyad from the monad (or the one), Sextus’s report is in agreement with the “*Pythagorika Hypomnemata*,” which Alexander Polyhistor read, with Eudorus in Simplicius, and with Moderatus.¹⁵

One could call this kind of monism of principles “Neopythagorean.”

All four texts—Sextus Empiricus, the *Hypomnemata*, Eudorus and Moderatus—have this in common: they are strongly abridged doxographical reports and

15. Alexander Polyhistor cited in Diogenes Laertius 8.25: ἐκ δὲ τῆς μονάδος τὴν ἀόριστον δυάδα. Simplicius, *In Arist. Phys.* 181.10: ὡς ἂν καὶ τῆς ὕλης καὶ τῶν ὄντων πάντων ἕξ αὐτοῦ (sc. τοῦ ἐνός) γεγενημένων. Moderatus cited *ibid.* 231.7–10: ὁ ἐνιαῖος λόγος ... κατὰ στερῆσιν αὐτοῦ ἐχώρησε τὴν ποσότητα πάντων αὐτὴν στερήσας τῶν αὐτοῦ λόγων καὶ εἰδῶν.

they take very clear positions on central questions, but without giving reasons that can be understood philosophically.

3. THE INDEFINITE DYAD IN PLATO'S *PARMENIDES*

In this respect, these texts stand in stark opposition to Plato's *Parmenides*. It is never stated unambiguously here what the actual object of the statements is, even though the steps by which the conclusions are reached are detailed and understandable.

Nowhere in the *Parmenides* is the ἀόριστος δυάς mentioned. If we were dealing with any other thinker, this fact alone would put an end to the inquiry. But not so in the case of Plato: he warns the reader not to get hung up on the ὀνόματα. Establishing a fixed terminology was far from Plato's intention. The choice of words is nowhere of concern to him; he is only concerned with understanding the intended subject.¹⁶ This entitles us to search for the thing designated by the expression ἀόριστος δυάς in the *Parmenides*, even in the absence of the term itself.

In fact, many passages of the *Parmenides* have been claimed for understanding the indefinite dyad of the Platonic doctrine of principles. I will briefly discuss those of which I have become aware in this context.

Two lines of argumentation (or "hypotheses"),¹⁷ that deal with the "others than the one" (τὰλλα τοῦ ἑνός), could be understood as descriptions of the *aoristos dyas* according to its own nature.

1. Supposing (*hypothesis*) that the one is not (εἰ μὴ ἔστι τὸ ἕν, 160b5) or that one is not (ἕν εἰ μὴ ἔστι, 164b5) it is shown in the seventh deduction ("*hypothesis*"), that "the others" would then *seem* to have all qualities without actually having any one quality. If one is not, then the "other" things would be others for each other, because they could not be other than the one. Thus they could only be grasped, that is, "thought," κατὰ πλήθην, or as ὄγκοι (masses), each of which would merely appear to be one, but under closer inspection would dissolve into other, smaller ὄγκοι: ἕκαστος ... ὁ ὄγκος αὐτῶν ἀπειρός ἐστι πλήθει. (164c8–d1) This multitude of "masses," which lacks unity will also appear to have a number

16. See, e.g., *Charm.* 163d; *Men.* 87bc; *Resp.* 533e; *Theaet.* 184c, 199a; *Pol.* 261e.

17. It is well known that *Parmenides* only investigates two hypotheses in the dialogue named after him: that one (or the one) is and that one (or the one) is not. From these suppositions, conclusions are drawn from closed chains of reasoning for the one and for the other than the one, first with respect to each in its own terms, then in relationship to the opposite concept, which leads to a total of eight such sections. Yet it is customary to call these lines of argumentation or deductions (of consequences from the original supposition) "hypotheses," as if *Parmenides* were working with eight hypotheses, or—if one counts the corollary 155e–157b—even with nine. Mindful of this misleading, but sadly widespread usage, the lines of argumentation will occasionally be called "hypotheses" here as well.

and, furthermore, determinations such as “even/uneven” or “equal,” although there will only be the appearance of equality (φάντασμα ισότητος, 165a5). Seen in relation to one another they will seem limited, without having beginning, end, and middle, since, of course, one cannot grasp anything precisely, because there is no unity anywhere. Whatever part of the ὄν one takes in thought (ὁ ἄν τις λάβῃ τῆ διανοίᾳ, 165b5) is again dispersed into masses (ὄγκοι) without the one. From a distance such things may appear to be one; but when closely and clearly perceived (ὁξὺ νοοῦντι) each individual thing shows itself to be an indefinite multitude (πλήθει ἄπειρον ἔν ἕκαστον φανῆναι, 165c2). Also likeness and unlikeness will apply to these things, but only apparently so. Yet unlikeness there will be only because of the appearance of difference (τῷ τοῦ ἑτέρου φαντάσματι, 165d1; “this semblance of difference” Cornford 1939). All in all, if the one does not exist, but plurality does (εἰ ἐνὸς μὴ ὄντος πολλὰ ἔστιν, 165d8), then “the other” will appear to contain all contradictory predicates.

This “hypothesis” thus reckons with a plurality (πολλά, 165e1) that cannot clearly be grasped anywhere and eludes thought. Attempts at grasping this are mentioned three times (ὅταν τίς τι λάβῃ τῆ διανοίᾳ, 165a7–8, b5–6, see also 164d1–2), and every attempt fails: this multitude eludes thought, which ἐγγύθεν δὲ καὶ ὁξὺ νοῶν (165c1–2) seeks to grasp something determinate and unique, but instead is offered an ἄπειρον πλήθει. It also seeks to grasp sameness and difference, but is only offered the φάντασμα ισότητος, or ἑτερότητος. (165a2, d1) This indefinite multitude, thus, only offers appearance and is not accessible to thought—is it perhaps ἀπτόν λογισμῷ τινι νόθῳ, μόγις πιστόν, as it is said of the χώρα in *Timaeus* (52b2)?

Still, it is not simply nothing, since πᾶν τὸ ὄν (165b5) disperses here when it is more closely grasped—this only apparently determinate multitude does have some kind of being after all.

2. These “others than the one” (τᾶλλα τοῦ ἐνός, 165c5) of the seventh deduction (“hypothesis”) do not partake of the one, because it does not exist. The “others” can also be without the one supposing that while it is, it is strictly separated from the other things (χωρὶς τὸ ἐν τῶν ἄλλων, 159b6). This is rehearsed in the fourth deduction (159b–160b). In this option the other things do not partake of the one in any way (159d1) and, consequently, do not have a one (οὐδ’ ἔχει ἐν ἑαυτοῖς ἐν οὐδέν, 159d3–4). But then they are not many either, since they would have to be parts of a whole, which is not possible if the one is completely separated from them (159d4–7). In the same way, number, and determinations such as like/unlike, identical/different, moved/unmoved, etc. do not apply. All in all, they will not be able to exhibit any of these determinations, since this would already imply partaking of a one, or two, or three (159d7–160b1).

Is the same thing being described in the seventh and fourth deductions? In both cases the “other things” are considered by themselves *without* the one. In each case, the presupposition is a different one—in the one case, the one does not even exist; in the other, it does exist, but remains separate. On the other hand,

the situation seems to remain the same for the other: it is completely left to its own resources; it is completely without the one. The result, however, does not appear to be the same: in the one case an “other,” that is neither one nor many, nor anything else, remains completely undetermined and undeterminable; in the other case there is an “other” that can never be one, but which is not denied its multiplicity and has not too few, but rather too many determinations—although only apparently so. In actuality the “other” of the seventh deduction also has no determination either. Both considerations of the other “by itself,” that is, without connection to the one, might be demonstrating two aspects of one and the same substrate. In the fourth deduction the question is, *what* “the other than the one” is without the one and, of course, the answer is that it has *no* determination. In the seventh deduction the question rather seems to be what it is that thought grasps when it sets aside the one and turns to the “others than the one” exclusively, “by themselves.” The answer is, that the *διάνοια* now finds *everything* in the “other”; this is, however, only apparently everything, and so is actually nothing. Perhaps one could say that the *aoristos dyas* is being considered ontologically in the fourth deduction, and, in comparison to the existing one, reveals itself as undeterminable and as such not existing—but without being the pure nothing of the eighth deduction. In the seventh deduction—perhaps—one could see the same *aoristos dyas* considered gnoseologically: then it “is” everything, but only apparently so, since, as long as it is by itself, it is lacking the one, which would make of one of its possible determinations an actual one.

3. So much for the “other than the one,” considered by itself. However, the third “hypothesis,” which assumes the one as being (ἐν εἰ ἔστιν, 157b6) and considers the consequences for the other in light of this presupposition, insofar as it is not separate from the one, but rather partakes of it, is possibly more revealing. This gives rise to the conception of the “other than the one” as *one* complete whole, which has parts (157e4–5). That this whole, because of its completeness and unity, has made many interpreters think of the cosmos is not surprising. That the parts of this whole, in turn, are each many (158b1–4) corresponds to this idea nicely.

At 158b5, Parmenides now takes up the way in which the multitudes can come to partake of the one (μεταλαμβάνει). At the moment at which they come to partake (μεταλαμβάνειν), the multitude does not yet have the one: there are *πλήθη ἐν οἷς τὸ ἐν οὐκ ἐνι* (158c1). Even the smallest part, were we able to separate it in thought (τῆ διανοίᾳ, 158c2), would be *πλήθος* (158c4). This is followed by the decisive, and surprisingly clear statement: if we consider “the nature other than the Form” always by itself, then whatever part of it we take into consideration will be *ἄπειρον πλήθει* (158c5–7). When such a thing becomes a part of a whole, it will receive *πέρας* with respect to other parts and the whole. The nature of the “others than the one,” by itself, only gives them *ἀπειρία* (158d6, e2), but through a communion (*κοινωνησάντων*) of the one with the “others than the

one" something more comes to be (ἕτερόν τι), which provides them with limit in relation to one another (158d3–5).

Here, too, "the other than the one" is first considered by itself, namely in that moment in which it attains oneness. Here *its own nature* reveals itself, ἡ ἐαυτῶν φύσις (158d6, see also κατὰ τὴν ἐαυτῶν φύσιν, 158e2), and this nature stands for ἀπειρία, unlimitedness. This is clarified even further by the opposition: αὐτὴν καθ' αὐτὴν τὴν ἑτέραν φύσιν τοῦ εἶδους (158c5–6). The other than the one thereby has an ascertainable nature—the word φύσις is used three times—even if it can only be defined in contrast to the Form (εἶδος). Limit and Form come from the one, which "communes" with the other. If in conclusion it is said that the other than the one is both as a whole and in its parts unlimited as well as partaking of limit (158d6–8), it is clear that this refers to the two levels of a γένεσις; prior to partaking of the one, the other is without limit; afterwards it has both limit and form; it does not have the two contradictory determinations at one and the same time.

4. The doubling of the existing one in the second "hypothesis" has also been seen as referring to the *aoristos dyas*. Here the ἔν and ὄν are considered parts, μέρη, of the ἐν ὄν, which in this way becomes a whole, ὄλον (142d1–9). The two parts of the existing one, in turn, are each one and existing, so that again each part is composed of at least two parts (142e4). Since this consideration applies to every new "part," the existing one unexpectedly turns into an indefinite multitude, ἄπειρον τὸ πλῆθος (143a2).

Since Aristotle explicitly asserts that both of Plato's principles are effective in the intelligible as well as the sensible realms,¹⁸ those interpreters who find the main features of the realm of the Forms in the second deduction, see the *aoristos dyas* here as the intelligible matter of the Forms. Doubling (as a specific effect of the dyad, which continuously "makes two") can certainly be found here; and the indefiniteness of the result is also accentuated. Some will object that there is no reference to the concept of matter or the "other than the one." Others will insist that the formulation underlying the whole deduction at least suggests something like a principle opposed to the one: ἔστι δὲ οὐ τὸ αὐτὸ ἢ τε οὐσία καὶ τὸ ἐν (142d2–3). The nonidentity or difference of being and the one presupposes a principle of difference.

5. Lastly, let us take a look at the negation of the determinations μεῖζον καὶ ἕλαττον of the one in the first "hypothesis" (140b–c). The one can be neither the same as itself, nor different from itself, since then it would have to have the *same* measure, or the *same* measures as itself or the others. It cannot be the same, because it does not partake of sameness. The exclusion of difference follows from the exclusion of "greater" and "less"—we are reminded of Aristotle's

18. Aristotle, *Metaph.* A.6.987b17–22, 988a7–14.

assessment that for Plato the second principle was also called the ἄνισον.¹⁹ That it is the nature of this principle to fluctuate or oscillate between the more and less, the excelling and being excelled, between the large and the small or the μέγα καὶ μικρόν, is sufficiently well known. Denying the dissimilarity of the one would, thus, be akin to distinguishing between the first principle and the second. (A possible objection to this tentative interpretation would be that paragraph 140b6–d8 does not indicate that it is supposed to be of such fundamental significance.)

4. THE INDEFINITE DYAD AND PLATO'S METAPHYSICS

The *aoristos dyas* is perhaps the most difficult concept of Platonic metaphysics, and the problem that this concept offers is perhaps the most controversial and, at the same time, the most important problem for interpreting Plato.

It is easy to reach a consensus on the fact that for Plato the Form of the Good was the presuppositionless τοῦ παντὸς ἀρχή (*Resp.* 511b2). Yet at the same time the *Republic* states very clearly that it would be wrong to consider God the cause of bad things in the world: for these *other causes* must be sought (τῶν δὲ κακῶν ἀλλ' ἅττα δεῖ ζητεῖν τὰ αἴτια, 379c5–6).

Is the *aoristos dyas*, which we only know from sources outside of the dialogues, this other cause? Aristotle affirms this with all the clarity one could wish for in many places.²⁰ Is he contradicting what is said in the dialogues then? By no means, since no place in the dialogues claims to name the last cause of evils.

The *Timaeus* speaks of a further cause (in the Aristotelian sense) besides the activity of the demiurge, who is ἀγαθός. This other cause is the χώρα, but it is certainly not easy to equate this with the *aoristos dyas*. The χώρα is not at the same time the material principle of the intelligible realm, as Aristotle claims the dyad to be.²¹ But it seems one must view the χώρα as a version of the dyad, effective in a subsection of reality.

As long as we only look to the *Parmenides*, we cannot arrive at the concept of the *aoristos dyas*. But if we already know from other texts how we are to think of the initially puzzling idea of an indefinite dyad, then we find quite a bit that corresponds to it in the *Parmenides*.

Absolute certainty that we are onto the second principle of the ἄγραφα δόγματα in a written dialogue, here, cannot be ascertained, because the second part of the *Parmenides* passes itself off as mere “*gymnasia*” (135d3–7, 136c4–5). Whatever this might mean positively, this much is clear that this does not promise an analysis of things down to their principles, nor a deduction or construction

19. Aristotle, *Metaph.* N.1.1087b9–12, 1088a5; N.4.1091b35, N.5.1092b1, see also M.7.1082a23–25.

20. Aristotle, *Metaph.* A.6.988a14; A.10.1075a35; M.8.1084a35.

21. Aristotle, *Metaph.* A.6.988a12–14.

of the world from these principles. Exactly this, however, is what Sextus's report intends to offer in an abbreviated form. And this report also turns out to be Platonic, not Pythagorean, exactly because of the use of the term *aoristos dyas*.

5. THE COMPLEMENTARITY BETWEEN SEXTUS'S REPORT AND THE *PARMENIDES*

The enigmatic, dialectical dialogue and the quite straightforward doxographical report somehow complement each other regarding the *aoristos dyas*:

- The report, which aims to be an exposition of the ἀρχαὶ τῶν ὄλων, and which conceptually and in its thought process is reminiscent of the Περὶ τὰγαθοῦ, makes use of the idea of an indefinite dyad (ἀόριστος δυάς), and this can be seen as evidence for its Platonic nature. Nowhere, however, does it make this idea philosophically intelligible.
- The dialogue, which does not promise at any point to disclose the principles of things, has several passages that make it possible for us to understand what the inner nature, the essence of an ἕτερα φύσις τοῦ εἶδους (“of a nature other than the form”) might be, and to understand that the communion of two components is necessary for anything to come into being. But exactly *what* comes to be is not ontologically classified in an unambiguous way, nor are we told what the best term for that “other nature than the form” would be. It should also be clear that the derivation of the “other nature than the form” from the one—that is, the typical “Neopythagorean” and Neoplatonic monism of principles—could have no place in the *Parmenides*.

One does not get the impression that Sextus's report is indebted to the way of thinking and manner of presentation in the *Parmenides*. The report's core must be old. It divorces the doctrine of the Forms, as Platonic, from the search for the principles of the “Pythagoreans,” divorcing, in fact, the dialogues of Plato from his theory of principles. That one could attain the doctrine of the principles and unveil Plato's entire ontology using one dialogue, say the *Parmenides*—as seems to be the case in Moderatus's report—was certainly far from the intention of the author of the core of Sextus's report. Modern speculations that all of Neoplatonism could possibly be based on a (mis-)interpretation of the *Parmenides* are hardly credible.

In searching for Plato's second principle—for the ἀλλ' ἅττα αἴτια responsible for bad things—we encounter texts, which according to their letter and spirit, are miles apart from each other. It is pointless to insist single-mindedly on the authenticity of the *Parmenides* and to turn the later revision of Sextus's report against it. Both texts are Platonic in what they present, even if they differ in intention and strategy. Furthermore, the “*gymnasia*” for the inexperienced Socrates and the even more inexperienced young Aristotle cannot be viewed as the only authoritative pure source for Platonic philosophy, so long as it does not provide us with the key for its own decryption.

That we conceive of the *aoristos dyas* in such completely different ways surely has something to do with the contingencies of the tradition, but perhaps it also has to do with the *ἑτέρα φύσις* itself; only the person who hopes to find this in *one* guise alone, forgets that it is other than the Form, that is, other than what is clear and unambiguous.

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6

PLATO AND PARMENIDES IN AGREEMENT: AMMONIUS'S PRAISE OF GOD AS ONE-BEING IN PLUTARCH'S *THE E AT DELPHI*

Zlatko Pleše

INTRODUCTION

Plutarch's dialogue *De E apud Delphos* (*The E at Delphi*) is one of his better-known philosophical works, primarily because of its sublime encomium of God delivered by Ammonius, the Platonist from Alexandria and Plutarch's teacher (καθηγητής).¹ Ammonius's discourse concludes a series of solutions aimed at elucidating the meaning of a letter "E" erected on the Delphic temple of Apollo. The final position assigned to the speech seems to indicate Plutarch's endorsement of its central tenets. Although there is some truth to recent claims that Plutarch, allegedly the follower of the sceptical Academic method of argumentation, thought that argument on either side was the best method for philosophical inquiry (Brittain 2001, 227–28), it is also true that his more elaborate treatises do not lead to an aporetic impasse. Rather, they tend to move, in a slow-building crescendo, from weaker solutions to that which possesses the highest degree of probability (πιθανότης). As befits a dogmatic Platonist feeling the pressure of Plato's ultimate authority, Plutarch considers as most probable that solution which stands in agreement with Platonic philosophy. Ammonius's speech outweighs on this criterion all other explanations of the Delphic inscription. Grounded in Pla-

1. For Ammonius's life and career, see the prosopographical study by Jones (1967); on the Academy at the time, see Glucker 1976 and Donini 1986. Ammonius's connection with the Ptolemaion-Diogeneion, a *gymnasion* at Athens, where he might have served as a *strategos* in charge of the ephebes studying liberal arts, was recently explored by Brenk (2007a, 24–30, and 2007b). Among the recent analyses of Ammonius's speech, see especially Ferrari 1995, 38–68, Moreschini 1997, Teodorsson 2001, Dillon 2002b, Zambo 2002, 116–27, Hirsch-Luipold 2005, and Brenk 2005.

to's celebrated distinction between intelligible and perceptible reality, it furnishes a final verdict beyond which rational investigation (ζήτημα) cannot proceed.

The problem with Ammonius's winning argument is that it seems somewhat atypical of the metaphysical system that Plutarch develops in his other philosophical writings. Plutarch usually embraces the Old Academic doctrine of the two supreme principles, the One and the indefinite Dyad, from which a multi-layered reality gradually derives (Pleše 1999). Ammonius's praise of God yields a somewhat different model. It operates on a simple Platonic dichotomy between Being and Becoming, and it identifies the supreme God with Being and One. The Platonic ideas play no role in this system, just as there is no explicit mention made therein of Plato's intermediate soul-level. For these reasons, scholars have often argued that Ammonius's portrayal of God as One-Being reflects his genuine philosophical position, a sort of homage to a monistic current of Platonism in his native city. The main representative of this dogmatic current, commonly labeled as "Neopythagorean," was Eudorus of Alexandria who, towards the end of the first century B.C.E., apparently reinterpreted the traditional Platonic dualism of first principles in a monistic mold, perhaps as a result of his metaphysical reading of Plato's *Parmenides*.²

The present study proposes to reexamine the alleged link between Ammonius's exalted praise of God as One-Being and Eudorus's derivational monism by pointing to other sources that might have played a more important role in articulating Ammonius's position. Among these sources, one neglected passage from Plutarch's anti-Epicurean treatise *Adversus Colotem* (*Against Colotes*) deserves special attention. The appeal of this passage, in which Plutarch defends the historical Parmenides against Epicurean attacks and relates his ideas to Plato's philosophy, lies in its lexical and conceptual affinities with Ammonius's discourse. These affinities, if proven true, may seriously undermine the whole "Alexandrian hypothesis" and bring forward some other important lineages, including that of Parmenides and Plato's eponymous dialogue.

STRUCTURE OF THE DIALOGUE: PLATO'S UPWARD PATH OF GENERALIZATION

Unlike the other two "Pythian dialogues," viz. *De defectu oraculorum* (*Oracles in Decline*) and *De Pythiae oraculis* (*On the Pythian Oracles*), where the central issues in dispute are particular empirical phenomena that have to be explained by deductive demonstration (ἀπόδειξις; Pleše 2005), *The E at Delphi* is an upward-

2. *Testimonia* and fragments are collected in Mazzarelli 1985. For Eudorus's role in the development of "dogmatic" Platonism and the role played by Aristotelian tradition in this evolution, see Rist 1965; Kalligas 2004; Bonazzi 2005, 2007; for Eudorus's hypothetical involvement in the "Pythagorizing" interpretation of Plato's *Parmenides*, see Tarrant 1993, 161–73, and Romano 2002, 221–24.

moving investigation into the meaning of a religious symbol. Whereas in the former two cases the quality of individual arguments is tested on the probability of their starting hypothesis and on the amount of verifiable evidence, the value of each proposed solution to the letter E is measured by the progress it makes from effects to the ultimate noetic cause. The dialogue is, in short, a sequence of upward moves, similar to the upward path of generalization in Plato's *Symposium* or *Republic*, from the antiquarian and astrological explanations to those grounded in semantics, propositional logic and arithmology, all of them ultimately transcended by Ammonius's Platonizing insight into the symbol's focal meaning. The letter E erected on the *pronaos* of Apollo's temple, symbolizes neither the famous five wise men, as suggested by Plutarch's brother Lamprias (*E Delph.* 3.358D–386A), nor the sun that, in the opinion of the “Chaldaean stranger,” occupies the same second position in the Chaldaean planetary order as “epsilon” among the Greek vowels (4.386A–B). The mysterious E cannot stand for the interrogative εἰ, “whether,” which Nicander the Delphic priest rightly claims to be a characteristic mark of petitions submitted to the Pythian oracle (5.386B–D). Nor can the symbol be reduced to a hypothetical conjunction εἰ, “if,” a trademark of the divinatory art which, according to Theon's “dialectical” (Stoic) argument, has the structure of the hypothetical syllogism (6.386D–387D). Even the ensuing investigation by the youthful Plutarch, at the time “passionately pursuing mathematical studies” (7.387F) into the mystical properties of the numeric value of E (five), fails to do justice to the power of the symbol (8.387F–16.391E). As Ammonius states in a brief critical comment on his student's ambitious proposal, any search for the hidden numeric affinities between various aspects of reality always remains an arbitrary guess:

I will only observe that any one of the numbers will provide not a few points for those who choose to sing its praises. (17.391E–F)

Still, Ammonius is obviously “pleased at the course the conversation is taking” (17.391E). His inexperienced pupil has brought some serious philosophy into discussion, moving with a youthful ease from Xenocrates' idea-numbers and the Stoic version of Heraclitus to “the wiser people” (theologians, literary authorities of the past, Aristotle), and ending his argument about the omnipresence of the number five with an overly formalistic harmonization of Plato's fivefold classifications from the *Timaeus*, *Sophist*, and *Philebus*. The stage is now set for Ammonius to move further and go higher.

FORM AND ARGUMENT OF AMMONIUS'S DISCOURSE OF PRAISE

Ammonius's speech is an encomium with the structure of rhetorical argument (ἐπιχείρημα). It opens with the rebuttal of all preceding solutions and then puts

forward a concise provisory solution, supported by the epigraphic evidence at hand:³

In my opinion, the letter signifies neither number, nor rank, nor conjunction, nor any other incomplete part of speech. Rather, it is a self-sufficient expression of greeting and addressing God: once pronounced, it brings the speaker into apprehension of God's power. For God, as it were, addresses each of us entering here with his "Know Thyself" (γνώθι σαυτόν), which must mean the same as "Hail" (χαῖρε); and we, in our turn, answer God back with "Thou Art" (εἶ), rendering to him the designation which is true and unerring, and which alone belongs to him and to no other—that of Being. (17.391F–392A)

Taken in conjunction with the other famous temple inscription ("Know Thyself"), the Delphic E turns out to be the formula of greeting the lord at Delphi. Ammonius here tacitly assimilates Apollo to the highest god—an unwarranted assertion that will receive due attention only towards the end of the speech (20.393B–21.394B). What Ammonius undertakes to prove first is that the designation of Being befits the highest God best. The central part of the speech (18.392A–20.393B) provides a series of affirmative and negative arguments in favor of this designation.

The first argument is from the opposite. Being is the only designation worthy of God because "all mortal nature," belonging as it were to the realm of Becoming, "has no part whatsoever in what really is, but having come to be in the middle of generation of corruption, presents but an apparition and a faint and unstable image of itself" (18.392A–B). The argument stems from Plato's hypothesis about two separate orders of reality in the *Timaeus* (27d–28a):

What is that which always is (τὸ ὄν ἀεί) and has no coming into being, and that which is always⁴ coming into being and never really is? The former is apprehensible by the mind with reason, and is always (ἀεί) the same. The latter, again, is opined by opinion combined with non-rational sense perception, and it keeps coming into being and passing away, but never really is.

It is important to state from the very outset that Ammonius does not postulate God's absolute transcendence. He views God as coextensive with the real Being from the *Timaeus* and does not extol him above Being. And when he next asserts

3. Ammonius's discourse of praise is arranged into a set of carefully patterned *cola* and *commata*, written in a sententious style that favors parataxis, poignant antitheses, occasional insertions of wise sayings (γνώμαι), and the climactic progression of arguments. As the occasional "colometric" rendering of the selected passages hopes to show, all these features give Ammonius's speech a certain rhythmical lilt and an almost poetic flavor.

4. This "always" (ἀεί) is not present in all manuscripts, and is also omitted by Proclus and Simplicius.

that “we have no part whatsoever in what really is” (18.392A), he does not wish to argue that God cannot be known and attained by our intellect. Rather, he says that we have no part whatsoever in Being insofar as we are confined by our corporeal nature to the fleeting realm of perceptible phenomena and insofar as we base our opinions solely on sensory experience and empirical data. “We” cannot “attain the absolute clarity” (τὴν ἄγαν ἐνάργειαν) in the Heraclitean flux of fleeting appearances—both on account of the innate fallibility of our senses and because “so sharp and so swift is the change” that no one can “grasp mortal nature twice in the same disposition” (18.392A–B).

Ammonius’s critique of perceptual impressions and their “absolute clarity” sounds like an endorsement of the anti-empirical arguments put forward by the sceptical Academics. As he states in the concluding lines of the argument “from the opposite,”

But if one does not remain the same, then one also is not, but changes precisely insofar as becoming one from the other. And it is our sense perception that, by its ignorance of what is, falsely tells us that what appears is. (18.392E)

Yet such a sceptical stance toward sense perception does not entail the rejection of any truth-value assigned to impressions. Ammonius refutes only the “absolute clarity” of such perceptual impressions, as advocated by Stoic philosophy, hinting thereby at their limited value in shaping provisional beliefs about the physical world. This is certainly not a call to uphold Arcesilaos’s universal suspension of judgment (ἐποχή), which could easily bring about a complete denial of perceptible reality. Ammonius is a dogmatic Platonist who accepts the realm of Becoming and of objects present to the senses, but only insofar as clearly distinguished from their noetic model, the realm of Being.⁵ It is to this realm, assimilated to the highest God, that Ammonius now turns:

What, then, is real Being (τί οὖν ὄντως ὄν ἐστί)? It is the eternal, unbegotten, and imperishable, to which no time (χρόνος) ever brings change. (19.392E)

5. This is, of course, Plutarch’s own view, most clearly laid out in *Against Colotes* (15.1116A–B; trans. Einarson-De Lacy): “But he who supposes that these (sense-perceptible) things exist by participation and fall far short of what forever is (τοῦ ὄντος αἰεί) and gives them their being (τὸ εἶναι παρέχοντος), does not overlook what is perceptible, but rather does not disregard what is intelligible. He does not deny the world of becoming and objects present to senses, but indicates to those who can follow that there are other things more stable than these and more enduring with regard to being, for they neither come to be nor pass away nor suffer change. And fixing the difference more exactly by his use of term he teaches them to call the one kind things that are and the other things that come to be.”

Both the definition of what really is and the ensuing discussion of time draw again rather heavily on the *Timaeus*—more specifically, on the famous section (37c–38c) where Plato distinguishes between the eternal nature (αἰώνιος φύσις) of the living Being and time as its everlastingly (ἀίδιος) moving likeness. It is hard to find in these lines any “Neopythagorean” contribution to this classic Platonic dichotomy. The most curious innovation here is that Ammonius discusses the Platonic concept of time and its measurable aspects (past, present, future) in the Stoic terms of continuity and infinite divisibility:

For time is a thing that moves, to be imagined along with matter, ever moving and retaining nothing, a sort of receptacle of becoming and passing away. Of time we use the words “after” and “before” as well as “shall be” and “has been”—each on its face an avowal of its non-being. For to say of a thing that has not yet come into being, or that has already ceased from being, that it is, is ridiculous and absurd (see *Tim.* 37e–38b). As for the expressions on which we base our notion of time to the uttermost, to wit “it is at hand,” and “it is present,” and “now” (νῦν), this again our reason, when fully pressed, brings all to nothing. For it (i.e., “now”) is squeezed out into the future and into the past, just as the ray of light disperses before the eyes of those wishing to see it. And if it is true that nature, which is measured, is in the same condition as time which measures, then nothing in it abides or really is, but all things are coming to be and passing away according to their relationship with time (*E Delph.* 19.392E–393A)

In his polemical tract *De communibus notitiis adversus Stoicos* (*Against the Stoics on Common Conceptions*) 41.1081C–42.1082D, Plutarch criticizes the same concept of time that he now puts into the mouth of his teacher. The reason for which Plutarch as a Platonist rejects the Stoic view are rather obvious. First, time for the Stoics is an *incorporeal* “extension of bodily motion” and therefore an “accidental” attribute without “substance and potency” (*Quaest. plat.* 8.4.1007B), which contradicts Plato’s affirmation of the reality of time, “created together with the heavens” and presiding over their everlasting duration (*Tim.* 38b–c). Secondly, time for the Stoics is an *infinitely divisible* extension, as are bodies in motion that it measures, which implies that no time is exactly “present” and that there is no such thing as a single indivisible “now” (*Comm. not.* 41.1081C–1082A).⁶ Why, then, does Ammonius resort to the Stoic conception of time as a continuum? Paradoxically, because it is precisely this continuist view that confirms Plato’s verdict in the *Timaeus* that only past and future are the constituents of time (37b–38c). The indivisible now is not the specious present; it is not a point on a time line, nor is it a limit of becoming.⁷ The now belongs not to time but to God qua real Being, which is eternal and to which, as Ammonius says, “no time (χρόνος) ever

6. For a detailed discussion of the passage, see Babut 2002, 328–38.

7. See Aristotle’s *Physica* (*Physics*), books 4 and 6.

brings change” (*E Delph.* 19.392E). To be eternal is to be in the now—“timeless, changeless, and undeviating” (20.393A). Just as, in his analysis of the perceptual world, Ammonius has resorted to the authoritative judgment (κρίσις) of Heraclitus (18.392B–C), so he now seems to invoke Parmenides and his description of “what is” as being “now all together” (B 8.5–6 Diels-Kranz) in order to put forward the idea of non-durational eternity:

But God is, if this needs to be said,
and is for no fixed time (κατ’ οὐδένα χρόνον) but for eternity (κατὰ τὸν
αἰῶνα)
that is changeless, timeless, and undeviating,
to which nothing is prior or subsequent,
no future or past, no elder or younger.
But He, being One (εἷς ὢν),
has filled “always” in a single “now” (ἐνὶ τῷ νῦν τὸ ἀεὶ πεπλήρωκε).
Only what is in this manner really is,
and not what has come to be or will be,
not what has begun or will cease.⁸ (20.393A–B)

To be in the “now” excludes temporal duration as well as plurality measured by time. God qua real Being is therefore One, or the One, timeless and indivisible:

Thus, therefore, we ought to greet Him in reverence
and thus to address him as “Thou Art (εἶ),”
or even, by Zeus, as some ancient people did (τῶν παλαιῶν),
“Thou Art One” (εἶ ἕν).
For the divine (τὸ θεῖον) is not plurality
as each one of us, a variegated and gaudy mélange
made up of a myriad of ever-changing states.
Rather, Being must be One (ἕν εἶναι δεῖ τὸ ὄν),
just as the One must be Being (ὥσπερ ὄν τὸ ἕν);
whereas Otherness (ἑτερότης),
by virtue of its difference from Being (διαφορᾶ τοῦ ὄντος),
moves outward (ἐξίσταται) to produce Non-being. (20.393B)

The most interesting feature in the above passage is the alternating use of gender, masculine and neuter, to designate the divine principle: both ἕν and εἷς, both θεός and θεῖον,⁹ and both the neuter ὄν and the masculine ὢν. The same strategy of

8. *Tim.* 38a.

9. The same alternation in gender can be found in the *Timaeus*, but the masculine form, ὁ θεός, prevails over the more generic τὸ θεῖον (76b2, 90c1); see also Donini 1992, 298.

conflating ontological and theological categories has already been deployed in the opening sections of the speech, where Plato's realm of Being counter-predicates with God (17.392A) and that of Becoming with "all mortal nature," including "us" humans (18.392A–E). In a similar vein, Ammonius also employs "being" and "one" as both adjectives (ὄν, ἓν) and substantives (τὸ ὄν, τὸ ἓν), denoting respectively the attributes of God and the self-subsistent ontological categories. The fluctuation is intentional, and it appears to reflect Ammonius's (and Plutarch's) non-committal attitude towards the problem, hotly debated among Plato's ancient interpreters, of the ontological status of the divine intellect vis-à-vis the intelligible realm of the ideas.¹⁰

Curious, too, is the concluding clause, with its abrupt introduction of "Otherness" (ἑτερότης), the contrary of One-Being, which "moves outwards" (ἐξίσταται) to generate Non-being. The conjunction of Otherness and Non-being calls to mind Plato's *Sophist* and its definition of "the Other" (θάτερον) as one of the "most important kinds" (μέγιστα γένη), which, together with Being, "pervades the whole field of ideas" (255e), "making each one of them different from Being as a thing that is not" (ἕκαστον οὐκ ὄν ποιεῖ, 256d). In his other works, Plutarch comments on this differentiating power of "the Other," or "Otherness" in the realm of ideas. Thus, in his *Oracles in Decline* (*Def. orac.* 34.428C), he portrays "the power of the Other" as "producing among the intelligible beings dissimilarities in relation and form that are greater than distances between bodies." Moreover, in his commentary on Plato's account of the generation of the world soul in the *Timaeus* (35a1–b4), he emphasizes the "dyadic" character of Otherness, calling it "the principle of differentiation and dissimilitude (ἀρχὴ διαφορᾶς καὶ ἀνομοιότητος)" in a complex mixture that makes up the cosmic soul (*An. procr.* 24.1024D–E). Ammonius, however, does not pursue the same line of argumentation, for "Otherness," as he interprets it, does not exert its differentiating power among the ideas or at the soul-level. As in the other parts of his speech, so here, too, he remains loyal to a simple binary model from the *Timaeus*, built on the distinction between what really is and what incessantly becomes, and so confines the role of "Otherness" to the realm of Becoming. The Non-being that this "Otherness" generates is therefore not an idea "different from that of Being," as in the *Sophist* (258b–c), nor is it "not-being" in the sense of not existing at all. Rather, Non-being is the ever-changing realm of Becoming, or the phenomenal world, "clinging somehow to existence" (*Tim.* 52c2–5) yet devoid of the selfsame

10. The relationship between the intelligent divine cause and the intelligible forms is a problem that Plutarch tackles throughout his philosophical corpus, on which see Ferrari 1995, 1996, and 2003. However much his views differ from one treatise to another, Plutarch never subordinates his supreme God to the forms. He places God firmly "among the intelligible entities" (*Quaest. plat.* 2.2.1002B), identifying him with "the best of the intelligible and eternal beings" from Plato's *Tim.* 37a.

stability and timeless eternity characteristic of the true Being. As Plutarch states in his anti-Epicurean treatise *Against Colotes*, commenting on Plato's manner of speaking about "what-is-not,"

For Plato, there is a world of difference between "is not" (τὸ μὴ εἶναι) and "is non-being" (τοῦ μὴ ὄν εἶναι). For the former indicates the denial of all being (οὐσίας πάσης), and the latter the otherness (ἑτερότητα) of the partaken in and the partaker, one that later thinkers posited as a mere difference (διαφοράν) of genus and species or between peculiarly qualified things and those commonly qualified. . . . But the relation of the partaken in to the partaker is that of cause to matter, model to copy, and power to effect. And it is precisely by this relation that the absolute and always identical differs from what is caused by something else and is never the same. For the former will never be non-being nor has ever come to be so (οὐτ' ἔσται ποτὲ μὴ ὄν οὔτε γέγονε), and is therefore fully and really being. The latter, in turn, has no firm hold even on such participation in being as it incidentally has from something else, but departs from itself (ἐξίσταται) on account of its weakness; for matter glides round its form (τῆς ὕλης περὶ τὸ εἶδος ὀλισθανούσης)¹¹ and admits into its image of being many effects and changes that lead to its disorderly movement. (*Adv. Col.* 1115D–F)

Towards the end of his speech (*E Delph.* 20.393B–21.394C), Ammonius sets out to prove his second starting premise, namely that Apollo is the same as the highest God. The opening argument is etymological (20.393B–C): the name *Apollo* means "not-many" (the privative ἀ- and πολλά),¹² and the two traditional cultic designations of the Delphic god, viz. Ἴήϊος and Φοῖβος, symbolize, respectively, his unity (εἷς καὶ μόνος) and his unpolluted purity (τὸ καθαρὸν καὶ ἀγνόν). The next argument proceeds in a typical "zetematic" fashion, by stating and criticizing two unsatisfactory views of Apollo and by arguing for a compromise solution.¹³ The first view identifies Apollo with the sun, and is commendable for its reverential attitude towards Apollo, but it is ultimately unsatisfactory for not discerning between the "image" and its intelligible archetype—that is, between the sun's "generative force" and "the goodness and blessedness" of the superior godhead (21.393C–D).¹⁴ The second view assimilates Apollo to the Stoic deity, and is to

11. See *E Delph.* 18.392D: "No one remains nor anyone is, but we are becoming many, inasmuch as matter is driven around some single apparition and a common mold" (περὶ ἓν τι φάντασμα καὶ κοινὸν ἐκμαγεῖον ὕλης περιελαυνομένης καὶ ὀλισθανούσης).

12. As pointed out already by Plato, *Crat.* 405; In his tract *De Iside et Osiride* (*On Isis and Osiris*), Plutarch refers to this etymology as "Pythagorean" (*Is. Os.* 10.354F and 75.381F).

13. For Plutarch's dialectical handling of a *zêtêma*, viz. his searching for a compromise solution between two extreme positions, see Mansfeld 1992, 279–95.

14. Plutarch's solution to the relationship between God (Apollo) and the sun clearly finds its inspiration in Plato's famous analogy between the form of the Good and the sun from *Resp.* 7.507b–509c. See 509b: "The sun not only furnishes to what is seen the power of visibility, but

be completely rejected for making God immanent to Becoming and subject to “degeneration and change”—for such experiences befit “some other god, or rather ‘daimon,’ who has been set over dissolution and generation” in the sublunary realm (21.393D–394A). The compromise solution, then, is that Apollo is the highest God, best described as a One-Being, and that the physical world, or the realm of Becoming, is ruled by two opposite powers: the life-giving sun as the visible image of God’s regulating beneficence, and the sublunary *daimon* in charge of phenomenal flux.

“PANEUDORISM”—THE PYTHAGORIZING ELEMENTS IN AMMONIUS’S SPEECH

The ensuing source-critical reconstruction of Ammonius’s discourse of praise begins with a brief summary of the way in which his argument proceeds:

- (1) The Delphic “E” designates the highest God.
- (2) For Being is a *par excellence* designation of God.
- (3) “All mortal nature,” or the realm of Becoming, is subject to constant change and thus has no part in real Being.
- (4) Being is attainable by the mind with reason, whereas Becoming is the object of opinion grounded in sense perception.
- (5) Since the realm of Becoming is in perpetual flux, our perceptual impressions of its ever-changing constituents cannot attain absolute clarity and therefore cannot serve to secure any rational knowledge.
- (6) Inasmuch as it has no part in real Being, the realm of Becoming is Non-being.
- (7) Real Being “is,” while “was” and “shall be” are appropriately said of Becoming; the former is therefore eternal, and the latter is everlastingly moving in time.
- (8) Time implies everlasting duration and plurality, while eternity implies indivisible unity and timeless “now.”
- (9) God *qua* real Being is therefore One, or the One, timeless and indivisible.
- (10) The realm of Becoming derives from Otherness, the contrary of One-Being, and is therefore Non-being in the sense of being different from One-Being.
- (11) Apollo is the same as the highest God, for his name and cultic epithets emphasize unity and deny plurality.

also provides for their generation and growth and nourishment (τὴν γένεσιν καὶ αὐξὴν καὶ τροφήν), yet is not the same as generation.

- (12) There are two opposite forces at work in the realm of Becoming: the generative power of the sun, the image of God's providential beneficence, and the sublunary *daimon* concerned with destruction and generation.

Ammonius's argument has the structure of a normal *epicheireme*: proposition, warrant, backing or elaboration, and confirmation. In (1), he provides a solution to the problem under investigation (ζήτημα), that is, the meaning of the Delphic E. He derives this solution from an equivalent yet more general proposition, given in (2), that God is Being *par excellence*. The principal warrants in support of Ammonius's claim are taken directly from the *Timaeus*: the disjunction of Being and Becoming in (3), of intellection and sense perception in (4), and of eternity and time in (7). Each warrant is further elaborated, and their inherent obscurities elucidated, through the intercession of compatible texts borrowed either from Plato's own corpus or from past and contemporary philosophical and religious traditions. Thus, in (5), the epistemological status of the realm of Becoming is clarified both by genuine sayings of Heraclitus and by other Heraclitean-sounding analyses of phenomenal flux, including the Academic view of the limited value of perceptual impressions. The incompatibility of Being and Becoming, forcefully put forward in (3) and further radicalized in (6) with the equation of Becoming with Non-being, sounds like a Parmenidean revision of Plato's statement in the *Timaeus* that the sensible world of becoming has no real being and yet is said "somehow to cling to being" (52a1–d1).¹⁵ But (10) provides an important corrective to this radical disjunction by relating Non-being to Otherness, probably by reference to the *Sophist* and, perhaps, as will be suggested below, to the *Parmenides*. In addition, (12) even argues, on the strength of the sun-analogy from the *Republic*, that Becoming, or at least its upper domain, does take part in Being through resemblance and imitation. The claim made in (9) that Being and One are coextensive in God may be borrowed from Parmenides (B 8.5–6), if not from Plato's eponymous dialogue. Parmenidean, too, seems the equation drawn in (8) between eternity and "a single now"—probably an attempt to resolve Plato's ambiguous use of the term "always" in the *Timaeus* (37c–38c), where it denotes both everlasting duration and timeless eternity.¹⁶

If the preceding analysis is correct, then Ammonius's encomium of God is a theologically tuned version of the nascent "dogmatic" Platonism, increasingly interested in the otherworldly aspects of Plato's philosophy as found in the *Republic*, the *Sophist*, the *Timaeus*, the *Philebus*, and probably the *Parmenides*. The salient features of this "dogmatic turn" are all visible in Ammonius's speech,

15. See also *Resp.* 5.478d–e, which argues that becoming, since both is and is not, is intermediate between being and absolute not-being, and therefore participates in both.

16. For a brief but important discussion of the Parmenidean themes in Ammonius's speech—"dieser sehr parmenideische Seiten"—see Vogel 1983, 284–85.

from a forceful assertion of God's transcendence and a thorough reevaluation of the ontological status of the Platonic ideas to an ambitious intertextual reading of the *Timaeus*. It is therefore not surprising that modern source-critical studies of Ammonius's philosophical position tend to follow a trace that leads to the "revival" of Platonism in his native city at the turn of the common era.

Most source-critical reconstructions of Ammonius's speech propose the following set of assumptions:

- (1) Ammonius's position is somewhat atypical of Plutarch's.
- (2) Ammonius is consequently not just a *persona* in the dialogue reflecting Plutarch's views, but rather from a historical personality defending his own position.
- (3) Ammonius did not derive this position primarily from his own direct study of Plato and other ancient sources, let alone from conversations with friends or school lectures, but from a single intermediary source.
- (4) Direct information on Greek sources for first-century C.E. Platonism before Ammonius is scarce.
- (5) Still, there is one source that, albeit in a deplorably fragmentary state, shows striking doctrinal correspondences with Ammonius's philosophical position.
- (6) This single source is the metaphysical doctrine of the "Pythagorizing" Platonist Eudorus of Alexandria, whose basic outline is available in some of the twenty-two fragments explicitly attributed to him.
- (7) There are other texts, not directly accessible to Ammonius, which bear strong resemblances, even in matters of detail, with his position. Even though these resemblances betray no textual parallels with the extant fragments of Eudorus, their markedly "Pythagorean" ring makes a strong case for Eudoran authorship.¹⁷

17. See especially Whittaker 1969a, who points to such common features in Ammonius's praise of God as One-Being and Eudorus's metaphysical scheme as the coextension of unity and being and the identification of a personal deity with an impersonal principle. He moves next to Seneca's *Ep.* 58, an interesting medley of Platonist and Stoic ideas, which enumerates six different modes, or perhaps even grades, of being (58.16–22a), divided according to Plato's disjunction of being and becoming. The classification proceeds in a descending degree of genericity, from the highest genus, viz. "what-is," or the generic "living being from Plato's *Timaeus*," followed by god, "being *par excellence*," the Platonic ideas, and the Aristotelian immanent forms, down to sensible existents, which "are not in a strict sense," and the Stoic quasi-existents. Whittaker does not comment on Seneca's second mode, which evokes Ammonius's equation of God and Being, but moves on to Seneca's ensuing description of the sensible world (58.22b–24), organized around the same cluster of themes as Ammonius's account: the contrast between god's unchanging reality and human mutability, and the "theme of the ages of man." This particular combination of themes, as pointed out already by Theiler (1964), is "a Middle Platonic commonplace," but Whittaker goes even a step further and argues, primarily on the basis of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*

One of the extant fragments from Eudorus's works, a quotation from Simplicius's commentary on Aristotle's *Physics*, reveals a metaphysical stance that seems especially close to Ammonius's position:

One must say that the Pythagoreans teach that on the highest account the One is principle of all things (τὸ ἐν ἀρχὴν τῶν πάντων), but on the second account there are two principles (δύο ἀρχάς) of what is produced, the One and the nature opposite to this (τὴν ἐναντίαν τούτῳ φύσιν). And ranked below these are all things thought of as opposites, the good under the One and the bad under the nature opposite to this. For this reason, these two are not fully principles according to these men. For if each is principle of a different set, then they are not common principles of all things, as the One is ... Hence they said that even in another way the One is principle of all things, insofar as both matter and all beings have become out of it (ὡς ἂν καὶ τῆς ὕλης καὶ τῶν ὄντων πάντων ἐξ αὐτοῦ γεγεννημένων). And this is also the supreme God (τὸν ὑπεράνω θεόν): the first is named ordered, definite, known, male, odd, right, light, and its opposite disordered, indefinite, unknown, female, left, even, darkness. I therefore assert that the followers of Pythagoras have posited the One as the principle of all things, but in another way introduce two highest elements (δύο τὰ ἀνωτάτω στοιχεῖα) and call these two elements by many names ... So there is the One as principle, and there is the One and the indefinite Dyad as elements (ὡς δὲ στοιχεῖα τὸ ἐν καὶ ἡ ἀόριστος δυάς), both Ones being in turn principles (ἀρχαὶ ἄμφω ἐν ὄντα πάλιν). And it is clear that the One that is principle of all things is different from the One opposed to the Dyad, which they also call Monad (ὁ καὶ μονάδα καλοῦσιν). (Simplicius, *In Arist. Phys.* 9:181,10–30 Diels = frgs. 3–5 Mazzarelli).

The doctrine that Eudorus attributes to the followers of Pythagoras results from an interesting experiment aimed at subsuming under a higher unity the dualistic metaphysics of the Pythagoreans, of Plato's "unwritten doctrines," and of the Old Academy. A similar monistic hypothesis is available in an excerpt from

15.176, for a "Pythagorean" context of the theme of the four ages of man, corresponding to the four seasons, in combination with Heraclitean formulations" (p. 191). Combined with Ammonius's "Pythagorean" etymologies of Apollo's name and epithets, Seneca's *Letter 58* warrants the hypothesis of "some common Pythagorean source" (p. 192), most likely Eudorus. The problem with Whittaker's source-critical reconstruction is that Seneca nowhere refers to the theme of the *four* ages of man, and that neither he nor Ammonius relates this theme, as the "Pythagoreans" allegedly did, to that of the four seasons. In the end, the only "strong" resemblance between Seneca's brief account of Plato's phenomenal flux and Ammonius's more elaborate counterpart is the prominence of Heraclitus and his imagery, especially the "river" fragment (B 49a Diels-Kranz). To make this linkage and construe an argument from there, one did not have to resort to some specific "Pythagorean" source or to a Middle Platonic manual—one could simply read Plato's *Cratylus* (440a–d) or immerse oneself in the *Theaetetus* (esp. 152c–153d). For Seneca's *Epistle 58*, see, e.g., Donini 1979, Sedley 2005, and Inwood 2007.

Alexander Polyhistor's *Pythagorean Notebooks*, preserved in Diogenes Laertius (8.25), which opens with a blunt assertion that "the first principle of all things is the Monad (μονάς)," and that "out of the Monad the indefinite Dyad comes to subsist as matter (ὡς ἄν ὕλην τῇ μονάδι αἰτίῳ ὄντι ὑποστῆναι) for the Monad which is cause. To this derivational model, in which the Monad functions both as principle and as joint cause of creation with the Dyad, Eudorus gives a different spin. In his version, the Monad has no longer two functions but evolves into two separate Ones—the first One as a transcendent source of all things, and the second One as internal principle, or "element" (στοιχείον), acting upon the dyadic substrate.¹⁸ Considering Eudorus's well-attested exegetical preoccupations with Plato's work, it is plausible that his triangular solution to the ambiguous status of the Monad in *Pythagorean Notebooks* owes a great deal to Plato's triadic arrangements in the *Timaeus* (God—"forms and numbers"—"space" and the "errant cause")¹⁹ and in the *Philebus* (Mind or God—Limit—Unlimited).²⁰ The same reliance on Plato's authority could also explain Eudorus's equation of the first One with "the supreme God" (ὁ ὑπεράνω θεός).

Back to Ammonius, his speech does indeed reveal some affinities with Eudorean metaphysics. He identifies the One with God, too, and he posits a "dyadic" principle, which he calls "Otherness" (ἑτερότης), as principle in charge of the realm of Becoming. But Ammonius's schema of principles is not triangular, for he nowhere singles out the second One as joint cause with Otherness. It is true that on one occasion (*E Delph.* 21.393E–F) he refers to the supreme God as actively involved in the ordering of the cosmos—"binding together its [material] substance (τοῦτο συνδέει τὴν οὐσίαν) and prevailing over corporeal weakness tending to destruction"²¹—but he does not hypostasize God's regulating function into a separate principle immanent to creation. Furthermore, Ammonius repeatedly identifies the supreme God with One-Being, in contrast with Eudorus who posits his first One as above "all beings." Finally, the ontological status of Ammonius's "dyadic" principle, which he calls "Otherness" (ἑτερότης), is marred by non-Eudorean ambiguities, in that it is either an independent principle, a variant of the Old Academic Dyad, or, alternatively, derives from the duality of One and Being immanent in Ammonius's God. For Eudorus, in contrast, the Dyad proceeds from the One that is single, beyond Being, and devoid of any inherent duality.

Ammonius's position thus turns out to be significantly different from Eudorus's own. Those wishing to pursue "Pythagorean" connections should perhaps

18. Note that, in Eudorus's account, the Dyad is defined as "element" (στοιχείον), but the second One as both "element" and "principle" (ἀρχή).

19. *Tim.* 47e–53e, esp. 53a2–d7.

20. *Phil.* 26e–30e.

21. Cf. *Tim.* 32b8–c4 and Plutarch, *An. procr.* 9.1016F–1017A.

look elsewhere—for example, to the aforementioned derivative dualism of Alexander’s *Pythagorean Notebooks* and, even better, to the account of Platonic and Pythagorean principles in Sextus Empiricus (*Math.* 10.248–284), where “Pythagoras” is credited with the following derivative scheme:

Pythagoras declared that the Monad is principle of beings (ἀρχὴν ... τῶν ὄντων τὴν μονάδα) and that each being is called “one” by partaking of it. Now this Monad, when conceived in its sameness (κατ’ αὐτότητα μὲν ἑαυτῆς νοουμένην), is conceived as Monad, but when by virtue of otherness it is added to itself (ἐπισυντεθεῖσαν δ’ ἑαυτῇ καθ’ ἑτερότητα), it produces the so-called Indefinite Dyad... Thus, there are two principles of beings: the first Monad, by partaking of which all measured units are conceived as monads, and the indefinite Dyad, by partaking of which the individual even numbers are dyads.

The passage first posits the Monad in its “sameness,” a transcendent principle admitting nothing and partaking of nothing, and then, in an anamorphic shift of perspective, considers the same Monad in its “otherness,” as the beginning and measure of the numbers (“beings”) defined as the measured pluralities of units (“monads”). This “otherness,” of course, is not the “nature that pervades all ideas,” as in the *Sophist* (255d–e), let alone the “otherness” (τὸ ἕτερον) from the *Parmenides* (143a–b), which proceeds from the duality of One and Being and entails, in turn, the generation of the number series. Rather, it stands for the capacity of the Monad to withdraw from its own nature, to posit itself in its oppositional determination, and to duplicate itself, or “be added to itself,” under the guise of duality.²² Needless to say, such a view of “otherness” ill accords with Ammonius’s own. Plutarch’s teacher describes “Otherness” as “moving outward so as to produce” the phenomenal flux as “Non-being” (*E Delph.* 20.393B), not the Pythagorean series of numbers qua “beings.” Furthermore, his “Otherness” is not the self-duplicating power of the Monad, but either an independent “dyadic” principle or the first manifestation of the duality of One and Being inherent in the supreme God.

All in all, Ammonius’s doctrine of first principles seems more indebted to Plato than to various metaphysical systems attributed to “Pythagoras.” If Ammonius is indeed a historical representative of the renewal of dogmatic Platonism in Alexandria, then his reworking of Plato’s metaphysics should be kept apart from those conducted under the banner of Pythagoreanism, including the one propounded by his compatriot Eudorus.

22. See Numenius, frg. 52 des Places, and his critique of the “incorrect” procedure of “certain Pythagoreans,” who derive “the indeterminate Dyad” from “a single Monad, when it retires from its own nature and migrates to the accidental state of Duality” (*illam indeterminatam et immensam duitatem ab unica singularitate institutam recedente a natura sua singularitate et in duitatis habitum migrante*).

AMMONIUS'S DISCOURSE AS AN HOMAGE TO PLATO AND PARMENIDES

The source-critical arguments for the Eudorean background of Ammonius's discourse in *The E at Delphi* rest on the assumption that its central tenets are somewhat atypical of Plutarch's own positions.²³ The speech exalts the supreme God as both Being and the One, which seems to run counter to Plutarch's commitment to the Old Academic doctrine of two antithetical supreme principles. The speech is also curiously silent about the realm of ideas and about the intermediate soul-level, both of which figure prominently elsewhere in Plutarch's philosophical opus. But there are some important yet neglected passages in Plutarch's anti-Epicurean treatise *Against Colotes* that show striking similarities with the substance and tenor of Ammonius's speech, thus posing a further challenge to the hypothesis of its independent "Alexandrian" (Eudorean) background.

Against Colotes is a reply to an otherwise unknown invective by Epicurus's younger contemporary against Arcesilaus's thesis that neither reason nor the senses constitute the criterion of truth. Colotes' main purpose was to show that the rejection of the Epicurean view that knowledge derives from the clear evidence of the senses entails the inability to deal with external objects in a consistent fashion and so to act wisely in the world. Besides Arcesilaus and his Academic followers, "those who suspend assent on all matters" (*Adv. Col.* 24.1120C–D), the targets of Colotes' attack were all those philosophers who, even though failing to uphold universal ἐποχή, still maintained that the senses were fallible and unable to secure true knowledge—to wit, Democritus, Empedocles, Parmenides, Plato, Socrates, Stilpon, and the Cyrenaics. Among these opponents, Parmenides is credited with the most radical anti-empiricist stance; for, according to Colotes, his contention that "Being is One" does not merely cast doubt upon the evidence of the senses, but entails a total "denial of the plural and perceptible" (13.1114E).

Plutarch tends to divorce Colotes' claims from their original context, making it difficult to ascertain their underlying argumentation. But what he seems to have found particularly irksome in Colotes' attack on Parmenides is that it had invoked Plato's critique of Parmenides in the *Sophist*—for it is in the *Sophist* that the Stranger blames Parmenides for positing One-Being as the only real thing and for dismissing all perceptual phenomena as thoroughly non-existent and false (*Soph.* 237a–b, 244b–235e). Plutarch replies that Parmenides' "contention that Being is One was no denial of the plural and the perceptible, but an indication of their distinction from what is intelligible" (*Adv. Col.* 13.1114E–F). He clearly interprets Parmenides here through the Platonic dichotomy of Being and Becoming, draw-

23. See, e.g., Donini 1986; Dillon 1996; 190–91; and Brenk 2007, 18. A good survey of the scholarly disagreement over the status of Ammonius—a character in the dialogue expressing Plutarch's own views or a historical personality reflecting the monistic tendencies within Alexandrian Platonism—can be found in Moreschini 1997, 12–30.

ing primarily on the same Platonic dialogue as his opponent, but emphasizing the section (*Soph.* 246b–c, 248a–249d) where the Stranger turns the tables, so to speak, and *praises* Parmenides as the precursor of “the friends of ideas”—those who “distinguish between Becoming and Real being” (248a). Plutarch’s defense of Parmenides unfolds in the following fashion (*Adv. Col.* 13.1114B–F):

By saying that the All is One (*Soph.* 244b), Parmenides has somehow prevented us from living (in Colotes’ opinion)... But Parmenides for one abolished neither fire nor water ... since he has actually made an “ordering” (διάκοσμον B 8.60 Diels-Kranz), and by blending as elements the light and the dark produces out of them all perceptual phenomena (B 8.53–61; B 9) ... But even before Plato and Socrates he saw that nature has in it something opinable (δοξαστόν, see B 1.30–32; B 8.51–52) and again something intelligible (νοητόν, see B 8.50–51), and that what belongs to the realm of opinion is inconstant and passes through a wide range of accidents and changes. And since for sensation it grows and decays and differs for different persons and is not, even for the same person, always the same, whereas what belongs to the intelligible realm is another kind—for it is, to quote Parmenides’ own words, “entire, unmoving, and unborn” (B 8.4), and is “like itself” (B 8.22) and “enduring in what it is” (B 8.29–30)—Colotes quibbles about the language and attacks the manner of expression, not the matter, when he says that Parmenides simply abolishes all things by laying down a One-Being (τῷ ἓν ὄν ὑποτίθεσθαι).

Parmenides however abolishes neither the one nature nor the other, but gives each its due. He assigns what is intelligible to the idea of One and Being, calling it Being (B 6.1; B 8.19) because it is eternal and imperishable (B 8.3) and One because it is uniform with itself and admits of no difference (B 8.5–6, 22, 29–30), while he assigns what is sensible to that nature which is in disordered motion (see B 4; B 12.4; B 19).

Of these we may further observe the criteria: “the unerring heart of most persuasive Truth” (B 1.29), which deals with what is intelligible and forever unalterably the same, “and man’s beliefs, that lack all true persuasion” (B 1.30) because they consort with objects admitting all manners of changes, accidents and irregularities (see *Soph.* 248a, *Tim.* 27d–28a). Yet how could he have left us with sensation and belief, if he had left us with no object of sensation and no object of belief? The question is unanswerable. No, since real Being should persevere in being, whereas these things that meet the eye now are, and now are not, forever departing from themselves (ἐξίσταται δ’ αἰεὶ) and taking on another nature, they required, so it seemed to him, a designation differing from that which is applied to the first, which always is. Thus his contention, that “Being is One” (B 8.5–6), was no denial of the plural and perceptible, but an indication of their difference (διαφορᾶς) with regard to the intelligible. Plato, too, in conveying this distinction even more clearly in his theory of ideas, has afforded Colotes an opening for attack.

This Platonizing interpretation of Parmenides' ontology reiterates almost verbatim some of the central themes and preoccupations of Ammonius's speech. The most obvious links between the two are as follows:

- (1) Both situate Parmenides' ontology within the Platonic dichotomy of Being and Becoming.
- (2) Following Parmenides and Plato, both speak of two contrasted kinds of cognition, each related to its particular referent—sensation and belief to Becoming, intellection and reason to Being.
- (3) Both adopt Parmenides' rigid conception of Being as One and consider the two as mutually coextensive.
- (4) Both emphasize the Parmenidean rejection of any plurality from the One-Being.
- (5) Both accept Parmenides' analysis of the phenomenal world in terms of two opposite "forms" or forces—the light and the dark in Plutarch's summary of Parmenides, and the Apollonian sun and the sublunary *daimon* in Ammonius's speech.

Oddly enough, Ammonius's speech goes even further than Plutarch's account of Parmenides in exploiting Parmenidean themes, most notably the Eleatic argument that no past or future can be distinguished from "a single now" (*E Delph.* 20.393A) in which the eternal One-Being resides (cf. B 8.5–6). At the same time, Ammonius's speech appears more interested in offering the Platonizing correctives to some glaring deficiencies of Parmenides' system. Thus, besides equating, like Plutarch in *Against Colotes*, the Parmenidean Non-being with Plato's realm of Becoming, it also identifies the Eleatic One-Being with God, most likely in accordance with Plato's verdict in the *Sophist* (248e–249a) that "the perfect Being" must be endowed with both "life and thought" and cannot "stand immutable in solemn aloofness, devoid of intelligence" (νοῦς).

If the above analysis is correct, then Ammonius's speech in *The E at Delphi* represents a sophisticated and rhetorically structured elaboration of the central Platonic dichotomies—Being vs. Becoming, intellection vs. sense perception, eternity vs. time—effected through the intercession of compatible theories among the Presocratics. Thus, in his discussion of the realm of Becoming, Ammonius resorts to Heraclitus's description of the phenomenal flux; and when he analyzes the divine domain of the unitary Being, he draws on Parmenides' ontology as interpreted by Plato in the *Sophist*.

It is much harder to assess Ammonius's indebtedness to another aporetic dialogue of Plato where Parmenides figures as a leading dramatic character—namely, the *Parmenides*. Nowhere in his speech does Ammonius refer directly to particular sections or arguments of this work—but he is, in general, rather

reluctant to quote Plato's statements from other dialogues.²⁴ Yet this need not mean, to be sure, that Ammonius makes no allusion to the *Parmenides*, in the same way in which he makes use of some central notions and terms from the *Sophist* and the *Timaeus* without referring explicitly to their full-fledged assertions. One such possible terminological echo has already been discussed—that is, Ammonius's abrupt introduction of "Otherness" (ἑτερότης), the principle of "Non-being," immediately following his claim that Being and One, the essential predicates of the supreme God, are mutually coextensive and counter-predicable of each other (*E Delph.* 20.393B). Such a close contextual proximity of One, Being, and Otherness, brings to mind the argument of the second deduction of the *Parmenides*' first hypothesis, where Parmenides sets out to prove that his One-that-is, insofar as it partakes of Being, postulates a third concept, Otherness (τὸ ἕτερον), by means of which one can apprehend the *difference* between One and Being (143a4–b8):

—Well, then, proceed even in this way. —How? —Do we say that the One partakes of Being (οὐσίας), and therefore is? —Yes. —And for this reason, the One that is (τὸ ἐν ὄν) appeared many? —Even so. —Then what of this? The one itself (αὐτὸ τὸ ἓν), which we say partakes of Being, if we take this in thought by itself alone, without that of which we say it partakes, then will it appear to be one only, or will this very thing also appear many? —One, I should think. —Let us see, then. It is necessary that its being should be one thing and it itself another, if indeed the One is not Being, but rather as One partakes of Being. —It is necessary indeed. —Therefore, if Being is one thing and the One is another, it is neither by virtue of being one that the One is different from Being, nor is Being other than the One by virtue of being itself, but rather they are different from each other by virtue of the different and other (τῷ ἑτέρῳ τε καὶ ἄλλῳ).

24. See Brenk 2005, 32: "Significantly, Ammonios never cites Plato except for the rather banal assertion that "everything of a mortal nature is at some stage between coming into existence and passing away" (*Phaidon* 95E). Regarding the explicit references to the *Parmenides* in Plutarch's other works, it is a well-known fact that, in his preserved literary corpus, there is but a single unambiguous reference to Plato's aporetic dialogue—viz. *On Brotherly Love* (*Frat. amor.* 12.484E–F), where Plato is said to "have made his brothers famous by introducing them in the *fairest* of his writings, Glaucon and Adeimantus into the *Republic*, Antiphon the Youngest into the *Parmenides*." Besides this high praise for the literary value of the *Parmenides*, there is another possible allusion to Plato's dialogue, more specifically to a passage from the section discussing the dilemma of participation (131b3–5), in *Quaest. Plat.* 3.1002D (see Cherniss 1976, 1:45), but the verbal agreements are rather superficial and cannot prove a direct influence. Finally, it has been argued that the above quoted reference to Colotes' claim that "Parmenides simply abolishes all things by laying down a One-Being" (*Adv. Col.* 13.1114D) is a "Platonic formulation," which "is in the *Parmenides* (142d3–4)" (Einarson and De Lacy 1967, 168), but this formulation might just as easily have come from the *Sophist* (244b–c).

—Entirely so. —Thus, the other (Otherness) is not the same as either the One or Being.—How could it be so?²⁵

Another possible echo of the *Parmenides* pertains not to the philosophical content of Ammonius's speech, but rather to the dramatic characterization of the protagonists in Plutarch's dialogue. *The E at Delphi* is set in 67 C.E. during Nero's visit to Greece, some thirty years before the date of its composition, just as the *Parmenides* recounts the historical meeting between Socrates, Zeno, and Parmenides well over fifty years after the event. Both works suggest that their central characters—Parmenides and Ammonius, respectively—have been dead for some time, giving their words and ideas an aura of timeless relevance. Finally, both dialogues create a dramatic tension between the old teacher of wisdom and his youthful apprentice. Socrates and Plutarch are equally inventive and imaginative, but they both tend to leap to unwarranted conclusions and so cannot defend themselves against the respective criticisms of Parmenides and Ammonius. It is therefore very hard to resist the impression that the contrast set in *The E at Delphi* between Ammonius and his ambitious pupil owes something to the *Parmenides*, "one of the fairest of Plato's writings" in Plutarch's own opinion (*Frat. amor.* 12.484E–F).

CONCLUSION

The results of the preceding analysis of Ammonius's praise of the highest God qua One-Being can be summarized as follows:

- (1) Ammonius's encomium is a rhetorically articulated investigation (*zêtêma*) into the meaning of the Delphic E.
- (2) The solution to the problem under investigation, viz. that the Delphic E designates the nature of God qua One-Being, takes as its starting point the Platonic disjunctions of Being and Becoming, of intellection and sense-perception, and of timeless eternity and temporal duration.
- (3) In describing these two contrasted domains of reality, Ammonius draws on Plato's *Timaeus*, *Sophist*, *Philebus*, *Cratylus*, *Republic*, and possibly the *Parmenides*, but he also resorts to the views and arguments of the Presocratics—of Heraclitus in the case of Becoming, and of Parmenides in the case of Being.

25. If Ammonius indeed has in mind here this section of the *Parmenides*, then he (and Plutarch) would be the earliest representative of the school of thought that posited Parmenides' One-Being as the principal subject of the dialogue's hypotheses. For this type of interpretation, see Proclus's *In Parm.* 1:635.21–638.10, who later relates it to Origen the Platonist, the pupil of Ammonius Saccas (6:1064.21–1065.5).

- (4) By adopting Parmenides' conception of One-Being, Ammonius excludes plurality from his portrayal of the higher realm and suppresses any reference to the Platonic ideas.
- (5) At the same time, Ammonius embraces Plato's critique of the immobility of Eleatic "Being," as put forward in the *Sophist*, and identifies his One-Being with the divine intelligence, or God.
- (6) Ammonius's conception of God qua One-Being owes little or nothing to the Pythagorizing Platonism of Eudorus.
- (7) There is no compelling reason to assume that Ammonius is just a character in the dialogue and a mouthpiece of Plutarch's own views. But if Ammonius is indeed a product of Alexandrian Platonism, then one needs to redraw the history of Platonism of Alexandria and allow for the existence of a non-Pythagorizing dogmatic current in it.
- (8) The claims that Ammonius's stance is atypical of Plutarch's own have no solid ground. Ammonius's omission of the Platonic ideas from his account of God as One-Being accords rather well with Plutarch's tendency to consider them as subordinate to the divine intelligence, and even to assign their paradigmatic function directly to God. This ambiguous attitude towards the Platonic ideas probably reflects Plato's own rejection of ideas as paradigms in his later dialogues.
- (9) Ammonius's interpretation of the Delphic "E" is an interesting blend of various philosophical currents that Plutarch himself viewed as constitutive parts of a unitary Platonist tradition.²⁶ In Plutarch's opinion, this tradition encompasses even some pre-Platonic philosophers, from Pythagoras and Socrates to Heraclitus and Parmenides, whose seeming incompatibilities were first brought into agreement by Plato's dualist scheme of Being and Becoming. The ensuing history of Platonism, as Plutarch sees it, is marked by its cleavage into two currents: dogmatic, which started with the Old Academy, and sceptical, initiated by Arcesilaus. The representatives of the sceptical current focused on Becoming, or the realm of sensory perception, and advocated probable philosophical views; the dogmatic or rationalist current, on the other hand, accepted the noetic realm of Being, God, and the immortal soul. Yet in spite of their important epistemological differences, these two currents, still according to Plutarch, never abandoned Plato, their venerable authority, and never fully parted their ways. What united them was their common opposition to empiricism. Probably under Ammonius's influence, Plutarch regarded himself as the heir of both traditions. This is why, in *The E at Delphi*, these two traditions play an equally important role: Heraclitus as well as Parmenides, Academic probabilism as well as

26. As Plutarch makes it clear in *Against Colotes*; see especially Donini 2002.

Plato's and the Old Academic dogmatism. Ammonius's speech is thus, above all, a passionate homage to the thesis of the unity of Platonism.²⁷

27. See Numenius, frg. 24 des Places, who counters this claim about unity with his critique of the sceptical Academy for abandoning Plato's genuine doctrines.

MODERATUS, E. R. DODDS, AND THE DEVELOPMENT
OF NEOPLATONIST EMANATION

J. Noel Hubler

In 1928, E. R. Dodds rewrote the history of Greek Philosophy by arguing that Moderatus, an obscure Neopythagorean philosopher of the first century, had anticipated the celebrated emanation system of Plotinus by two centuries (1928, 129–42). Dodds claimed that in the course of interpreting Plato’s *Parmenides*, Moderatus developed a theory of emanation through a series of three Ones. Further, Dodds claimed that the three Ones were identified in terms that accorded with the three hypostases that were the ultimate principles of Plotinus’s metaphysics. Dodds thereby managed to strip from Plotinus the credit for his innovations and placed Plotinus within a long tradition of interpreters of Plato’s *Parmenides* alongside Moderatus. Dodds’ claims have been very influential in subsequent historical accounts.¹

Unfortunately, Dodds’ claims rest on the thinnest textual evidence, a single passage from the sixth-century commentator, Simplicius (*In phys.* 9:230–231 Diels). A close examination of the thin textual evidence does not support Dodds’ claims about Moderatus’s anticipation of Plotinus’s theory of emanation. For Dodds failed to take into account Simplicius’s methods of interpretation and the potential for Simplicius’s own supplementation of the textual tradition. He failed to take into account further textual evidence about Moderatus’s teachings from sources earlier than Simplicius, including references in Porphyry, Stobaeus, and Syrianus. Finally, he failed to take into account the historical context of Moderatus’s first-century Neopythagoreanism. Once we take into account Simplicius’s methods, further textual evidence from Moderatus, and other Neopythagoreans, a different reading of Simplicius’s account of Moderatus’s teachings emerges—one

1. Festugière 1954, Merlan 1967, and Dillon 1996 each followed Dodds. Dillon concluded that the teachings of Moderatus preserved by Simplicius anticipated all the distinctive features of Neoplatonism and “all this seems to deprive Plotinus of the chief innovations in Platonism for which he is known” (1996, 349).

that places Moderatus squarely within the tradition of Neopythagoreanism. Then the Neoplatonist anticipations that Dodds attributes to Moderatus are much more plausibly viewed as Simplicius's own transformation of his source through his own hermeneutical methods, which are less than historically reliable and compromise Simplicius as a historically reliable witness.

1. SIMPLICIUS'S HERMENEUTICS

Before embarking on an examination of Simplicius's hermeneutics, it should be noted that there has been much study of Simplicius's methods since the time of Dodds. No longer is Simplicius viewed simply as a repository for testimonials about Presocratic and Hellenistic philosophers. His methods of commentary and his thought have been studied in their own right. Garrett has shown how Simplicius's own philosophical speculations about space and matter contributed to his readings of Plato and Aristotle on the same subjects (Garrett 1994, 384–85). Stevens (1990) and B. Miller (1983) have both demonstrated how Simplicius's own Neoplatonism influenced his understanding of Parmenides.² Each of these historians based their arguments largely on examinations of specific cases of interpretations that Simplicius offered in comparison with their own views of what the passages mean and in comparison with Simplicius's own teachings. Such studies are extremely important, but a more systematic method is available, thanks to a very revealing passage in which Simplicius explains the kind of hermeneutics he rejects and the kind he admires.

In his Commentary on Aristotle's *Physics*, Simplicius explains that there are two kinds of exegetes of Parmenides. There are those who merely look to the surface of the text and then there are those who understand the deeper meanings. The two types of exegetes bear similarities to the two types of Presocratic Philosophers that Simplicius distinguishes earlier in the same discussion,

Thus, some look to the noetic order, while others look to the sensible. Some seek the proximate elements of bodies, while others seek more fundamental principles. Some grasp what is more particular, while others grasp what is more universal than the elemental nature. And some seek the elements only, while others seek all the primary and secondary causes.

Οὕτως οὖν οἱ μὲν εἰς νοητόν, οἱ δὲ εἰς αἰσθητόν διάκοσμον ἀφορῶντες, καὶ οἱ μὲν τὰ προσεχῆ στοιχεῖα τῶν σωμάτων, οἱ δὲ τὰ ἀρχοειδέστερα ζητοῦντες, καὶ οἱ μὲν μερικώτερον, οἱ δὲ ὀλικώτερον τῆς στοιχειώδους φύσεως καταδραττόμενοι, καὶ οἱ μὲν τὰ στοιχεῖα μόνον, οἱ δὲ πάντα τὰ αἴτια καὶ συναίτια ζητοῦντες (9.36.15–19).

2. Similarly, Henry Blumenthal (1987) has shown how Ps-Simplicius's Neoplatonic understanding of the soul contributed to his interpretation of Aristotle's *De anima* (*Soul*).

Thus, there are philosophers who look only to the sensible world of divisible parts and the elements. Then there are philosophers who look beyond the sensible realm to the noetic realm and understand the causes behind the world of appearance.

Simplicius then distinguishes exegetes of Parmenides in much the same way. Even though in the present context he is discussing specifically the interpreters of Parmenides, he applies similar exegetical considerations to other thinkers as well. He distinguishes a first class of exegetes:

Some of those who attend to the more superficial find an apparent contradiction that they discuss in their works, while the ancients are accustomed to declare their own views enigmatically.

τῶν ἐπιπολαιότερον ἀκρωμένων οὔτοι κηδόμενοι τὸ φαινόμενον ἄτοπον ἐν τοῖς λόγοις αὐτῶν διελέγχουσιν, αἰνιγματωδῶς εἰωθότων τῶν παλαιῶν τὰς αὐτῶν ἀποφαίνεσθαι γνώμας (9:36,28–31 Diels).

The first exegetes are able to produce contradictions in the texts they interpret because they fail to look beyond the surface of the text. They fail to recognize that the ancients speak enigmatically in a way that hides their true meaning.

On the other hand, Simplicius distinguishes exegetes, such as Plato and Aristotle, who recognize the depth of a writer such as Parmenides. In their interpretations they overcome objections to Parmenides' thought,

Now they sometimes fill in that which is left out, sometimes clarify that which is stated unclearly, sometimes determine that which is spoken concerning intelligibles as that which cannot be fitted to things in nature, as in the case of the things said of the one and unmovable being, and sometimes they reveal interpretations that are easier than the surface readings.

καὶ οὔτοι οὖν ποτὲ μὲν τὸ παραλειμμένον ἀναπληροῦντες, ποτὲ δὲ τὸ ἀσαφῶς εἰρημένον σαφηνίζοντες, ποτὲ δὲ τὸ ἐπὶ τῶν νοητῶν εἰρημένον ὡς μὴ δυνάμενον τοῖς φυσικοῖς ἐφαρμόττειν διακρίνοντες ὡς ἐπὶ τῶν ἐν τὸ ὄν καὶ ἀκίνητον λεγόντων, ποτὲ δὲ τὰς εὐκόλους ἐκδοχὰς τῶν ἐπιπολαιότερων προαναστέλλοντες (9:37,2–6 Diels).

Following Simplicius's division of philosophers, let us call the two types of exegetes of the sensible and exegetes of the noetic. From Simplicius's description, we can distinguish four types of activities in which the exegetes of the noetic engage:

- 1) They supplement what is left out of the text.
- 2) They clarify what is stated unclearly.
- 3) They apply descriptions that do not fit the physical world to the intelligible.

- 4) They find easier interpretations than the surface reading.

We can find clear examples of the first three practices in Simplicius's commentaries and thus show a close connection between his exegetical reflections that we have been examining and the exegetical practices that he either praises or engages in himself. It is more difficult to find examples of the fourth practice of preferring the easier reading since it is formulated so much more vaguely. It would be hard to pin down an exact example. Now to the first three methods:

- 1) As an example of the supplementation of that which is left out, in his Commentary on Aristotle's *De caelo* (*Heavens*), Simplicius praises Aristotle for supplementing Empedocles' description of the roles of Love and Enmity in his cosmology. Empedocles expressly states that Enmity causes division but leaves out (παραλείπει) any reference to the activity of Love,

Therefore, he says, Empedocles left out the composition of the elements by Love, that is he did not credit it with cosmic production, but credited Enmity with its dissolution.

<διό>, φησί, <καὶ Ἐμπεδοκλῆς παραλείπει τὴν ἐπὶ τῆς Φιλότητος> διάθεσιν τῶν στοιχείων, τουτέστιν οὐ ταύτην αἰτιᾶται τῆς κοσμοποιίας, ἀλλὰ τὴν ἐπὶ τοῦ Νείκουσ διάκρισιν (*In cael.* 7:590,24–27 Heiberg).

Simplicius says that commentators do well to understand what is left out (591,1–2). If Enmity divides, then Love must bring the elements together into order.

- 2) Simplicius cites different types of clarification in his commentaries. Clarification can be accomplished through the definition of terms. Simplicius cites the example of Alexander Aphrodisiensis achieving a clarification of the notion of rectilinear motion in relation to circular motion by defining “up” as away from the center of the universe while defining “down” as toward the center (*In cael.* 7:15,5 Heiberg). Clarification can also be achieved by making proper distinctions. Simplicius says Alexander does well to distinguished the different types of motion and thereby clarify what Aristotle had said about motion and the category of relation (*In phys.* 10:835,11 Diels).
- 3) Simplicius makes reference to Parmenides' poem in which he describes Being as one and motionless. Since the physical world is not motionless, Simplicius concludes that the one Being that Parmenides describes cannot be the physical world, but must be intelligible Being (*In phys.* 9:39,25–26 Diels).

Thus, Simplicius seems to follow a strong principle of charity in interpretation. If the surface interpretation leads to difficulties, he suggests that the exegete should look to the deeper, noetic meaning of the passage. But what results is a hermeneutic of harmonization, since any surface difficulty in applying statements to the physical world allows Simplicius to invoke a hidden reference to the intelligible realm of Neoplatonic metaphysics.

In fact all of Simplicius's guidelines for exegesis are problematic, with the problems growing as one proceeds through the list. To supply what is left out is often necessary in exegesis, but not unproblematic. To define terms and to make relevant distinctions is also sometimes necessary, but the historian must recognize that the author does not always use terms in a consistent, well-defined way.

Under guideline three, things become much more problematic, for guideline three, if followed rigorously, allows the import of Neoplatonic teachings into every text that cannot be understood on its surface. For one is allowed and even encouraged to read any text that does not fit the physical world or leads to contradictions as referring to the noetic realm.³

This is precisely what happened in Simplicius's own reading of Moderatus.

2. TWO TESTIMONIES

In his extant writings, Simplicius refers to only a single passage from Moderatus. He does so as he is developing his own theory of matter as indefinite quantity.⁴ Simplicius relies on his information about Moderatus from a passage he has gleaned from Porphyry. Simplicius's account of Moderatus can be clearly divided into two parts, one part that he recounts in his own voice and another that he attributes to Porphyry. Before he quotes Porphyry, Simplicius gives his own summary of what he takes Moderatus's metaphysical hierarchy to be. For simplicity, we will refer to the two parts as Simplicius's testimony and Porphyry's testimony (remembering that Porphyry's testimony is mediated through Simplicius).

In his article, Dodds takes both Simplicius's and Porphyry's testimonies to be faithful accounts of Moderatus's teachings. He thinks Simplicius's testimony presents Moderatus's own interpretation of Plato's *Parmenides*. But only Porphyry's testimony should be taken as Moderatus's own, for linguistic, doctrinal, and hermeneutical reasons.

Simplicius begins by crediting the Pythagoreans as first to think of matter as indefinite extension. The passage reads,

3. On Simplicius's tendency to harmonize the Greek philosophical tradition, see Sorabji, 1991, 147. Regarding the general unity of Greek thought, Sorabji says that "Simplicius argued for the same general unity in order to rebut Christian charges of contradictions in pagan philosophy."

4. On Simplicius's teaching, see Sorabji 1991, 148–65.

It appears that the Pythagoreans were first among the Greeks to hold this opinion, and after them Plato, as Moderatus recounts. For he declares that according to the Pythagoreans, the first One is above being and every essence. He says that the second One, which is true being and intelligible, is the forms, while the third One, which is psychic, shares in the One and the forms. He says that the final nature from this, which belongs to sensible things, does not even share in the forms, but rather is ordered by the reflection of them as a shadow of the matter that is in these things. Matter belongs to what is not, but at first is in quantity and is even further inferior to it.

And Porphyry writes these things in the second book of his work *On Matter*, citing Moderatus, saying, After the unified logos purposed—as Plato says somewhere—to bring about the generation of beings from itself, it withdrew through its own deprivation, taking away its own *logoi* and forms from the very quantity of all. He called this quantity formless, undivided, and shapeless, yet it receives form, shape, division, quality, and every such thing. It seems, he says, that Plato called this quantity many names, saying it was the “all-receiving” and without form, “invisible,” “partaking in the noetic in a most perplexing way,” “barely apprehended by illegitimate account,” and everything of the like. And he says that this quantity and this kind (that is understood by the deprivation of the unified logos that contains every logos of beings within it) is the model for the matter belonging to bodies. He said that the Pythagoreans and Plato called matter quantity, not quantity as in form, but quantity by deprivation, loosing, extension, severance, and deviation from being. Therefore, matter appears evil because it flees from being.

Ταύτην δὲ περὶ τῆς ὕλης τὴν ὑπόνοιαν εἰκόσιν ἐσχηκέναι πρῶτοι μὲν τῶν Ἑλλήνων οἱ Πυθαγόρειοι, μετὰ δ' ἐκείνους ὁ Πλάτων, ὡς καὶ Μοδέρατος ἱστορεῖ. οὗτος γὰρ κατὰ τοὺς Πυθαγορείους τὸ μὲν πρῶτον ἔν ὑπὲρ τὸ εἶναι καὶ πᾶσαν οὐσίαν ἀποφαίνεται, τὸ δὲ δεύτερον ἔν, ὅπερ ἐστὶ τὸ ὄντως ὄν καὶ νοητὸν, τὰ εἶδη φησὶν εἶναι, τὸ δὲ τρίτον, ὅπερ ἐστὶ τὸ ψυχικόν, μετέχειν τοῦ ἐνὸς καὶ τῶν εἰδῶν, τὴν δὲ ἀπὸ τούτου τελευταίαν φύσιν τὴν τῶν αἰσθητῶν οὐσαν μὴδὲ μετέχειν, ἀλλὰ κατ' ἔμφασιν ἐκείνων κεκοσμηθῆναι, τῆς ἐν αὐτοῖς ὕλης τοῦ μὴ ὄντος πρῶτως ἐν τῷ ποσῶ ὄντος οὐσης σκίασμα καὶ ἔτι μᾶλλον ὑποβεβηκυίας καὶ ἀπὸ τούτου.

καὶ ταῦτα δὲ ὁ Πορφύριος ἐν τῷ δευτέρῳ Περὶ ὕλης τὰ τοῦ Μοδεράτου παρατιθέμενος γέγραφεν ὅτι “βουληθεὶς ὁ ἐνιαῖος λόγος, ὡς πού φησιν ὁ Πλάτων, τὴν γένεσιν ἀφ' ἑαυτοῦ τῶν ὄντων συστήσασθαι, κατὰ στέρησιν αὐτοῦ ἐχώρησε τὴν ποσότητα πάντων αὐτὴν στέρησας τῶν αὐτοῦ λόγων καὶ εἰδῶν. τοῦτο δὲ ποσότητα ἐκάλεσεν ἄμορφον καὶ ἀδιαίρετον καὶ ἀσχημάτιστον, ἐπιδεχομένην μὲντοι μορφήν σχῆμα διαίρεσιν ποιότητα πᾶν τὸ τοιοῦτον. ἐπὶ ταύτης ἔοικε, φησὶ, τῆς ποσότητος ὁ Πλάτων τὰ πλείω ὀνόματα κατηγορῆσαι “πανδεχῆ” καὶ ἀνειδεὸν λέγων καὶ “ἀόρατον” καὶ “ἀπορώτατα τοῦ νοητοῦ μετείληφέναι” αὐτὴν καὶ “λογισμῶ νόθῳ μόλις ληπτὴν” καὶ πᾶν τὸ τοῦτοις ἐμπερές. αὕτη δὲ ἡ ποσότης, φησὶ, καὶ τοῦτο τὸ εἶδος τὸ κατὰ στέρησιν τοῦ

ένιαίου λόγου νοούμενον τοῦ πάντας τοὺς λόγους τῶν ὄντων ἐν ἑαυτῷ περιειληφότος παραδείγματα ἐστὶ τῆς τῶν σωμάτων ὕλης, ἣν καὶ αὐτὴν ποσόν καὶ τοὺς Πυθαγορείους καὶ τὸν Πλάτωνα καλεῖν ἔλεγεν, οὐ τὸ ὡς εἶδος ποσόν, ἀλλὰ τὸ κατὰ στέρησιν καὶ παράλυσιν καὶ ἔκτασιν καὶ διασπασμὸν καὶ διὰ τὴν ἀπὸ τοῦ ὄντος παράλλαξιν, δι' ἧ καὶ κακὸν δοκεῖ ἡ ὕλη ὡς τὸ ἀγαθὸν ἀποφεύγουσα. (*In phys.* 9:230,34–231,21 Diels).

The vocabulary of the two testimonies differs dramatically. In the first testimony, Simplicius recounts Moderatus's teaching in terms of three different Ones. In the second testimony, Porphyry recounts Moderatus's teachings in terms of a unified logos, other *logoi*, and forms. A close analysis also reveals that the doctrines of the two sections are very different. Simplicius gives a summary of a very Neoplatonist theory of emanation from the highest One. Porphyry recounts a very different story in which a primordial unity divides itself, keeping to itself all definite *logoi* and forms, while leaving behind indefinite quantity. After a closer examination of the differing vocabulary and teachings of the two sections, and knowing Simplicius's desire to read his sources noetically and in the way most amenable to Neoplatonism, it seems best to take the first part as Simplicius's own Neoplatonic noetic reading of the passage that he has received from Porphyry and to take the second attributed part as the more historically accurate reading of Moderatus that was preserved by Porphyry.

First, let us consider the vocabulary of the two testimonies. Simplicius's testimony clearly uses the language of Neoplatonism in general and of Simplicius in particular. Simplicius identifies the first, second, and third Ones, as

- First One: the One above being and every substance,
- Second One: the One that is true being and intelligible, in which are the forms,
- Third One: the psychic One that participates in both the One and the forms.

Finally, he identifies nature that belongs to the sensibles. It does not share in the first three, but is ordered by their reflection, and as a shadow of matter.

The language used to describe the Ones in terms of being, the intelligible, the forms and the soul is all Neoplatonic. The description of the sensible realm as a reflection of the forms is characteristic of Simplicius's diction. In his Commentary on Aristotle's *De caelo*, Simplicius refers to the common features in the world of change as being reflections of noetic forms, "just as when one sees a face in a river that constantly flows" (*In cael.* 7:599,24 Heiberg). In his Commentary on the *Categories*, he claims that prime matter receives reflections of Being (*In cael. In cat.* 8.113.2–4, Kalbfleisch). The Neoplatonist Proclus also uses the language of reflection to describe participation in the noetic realm,

Then let it be said that participations in the noetic forms are like reflections in a mirror.

Λεγέσθω μὲν οὖν καὶ ὅτι ταῖς εἰς τὸ κάτοπτρον ἐμφάσεσιν εἰκόασιν αἱ τῶν νοερῶν εἰδῶν μεθέξεις. (Proclus, *In Parm.* 839,20–22 Cousin)

Damascius also refers to forms in matter as reflections (Proclus, *In Parm.* 144.26 Ruelle).

As for the term shadow (σκίασμα), commentators have mistakenly said that Moderatus taught that matter was some sort of shadow cast from the formal realm. The interpretation is based upon a mistranslation, for in the last line of Simplicius's testimony, matter stands in the genitive case, while shadow is accusative.

He says that the final nature from this, which belongs to sensible things, does not even share in the forms, but rather is ordered by the reflection of them as a shadow of the matter that is in these things. Matter belongs to what is not, but at first is in quantity and is even further inferior to it.

τὴν δὲ ἀπὸ τούτου τελευταίαν φύσιν τὴν τῶν αἰσθητῶν οὖσαν μηδὲ μετέχειν, ἀλλὰ κατ' ἔμφασιν ἐκείνων κεκοσμηθῆναι, τῆς ἐν αὐτοῖς ὕλης τοῦ μὴ ὄντος πρῶτως ἐν τῷ ποσῷ ὄντος οὐσης σκίασμα καὶ ἔτι μᾶλλον ὑποβεβηκυίας καὶ ἀπὸ τούτου.

Therefore shadow is not predicated of matter, but it is instead predicated of nature, also in the accusative. It is predicated of nature through indirect discourse and is therefore in the accusative case. The indirect discourse is governed by the verb “he says” (φησίν) that governs the clauses about the second One, the third One, and final nature in Simplicius's testimony. Therefore, nature, not matter, is the shadow.

The description of nature as a shadow is characteristically Neoplatonic. According to Simplicius, nature does not directly share in the formal realm, but nature is a more distant likeness of the realm of the forms (*In cat.* 113,3 Kalbfleisch). Similarly, in his Commentary on Aristotle's *De Anima*, Ps.-Simplicius refers to sensible forms as the images and shadows of true beings (*In de an.* 11:72,27 Hayduck). Olympiodorus echoed the point in his explanation of Plato's notion of matter. Olympiodorus claimed that Plato called forms in matter “shadows” (σκιάς) of the ideas in the noetic realm (*In Alc.* 212 Westerink)—most likely an interpretation of Plato's myth of the cave in the *Republic* (7.532b). Plotinus himself referred to the physical cosmos as a “shadow and an image” (*Enn.* 3.8 [30].11).

Simplicius's use of the verb ὑποβαίνειν to describe the descent from and inferiority of the material realm is typically Neoplatonist.⁵ Plotinus first described the

5. Festugière (1954, 23n) points out the technical Neoplatonist use of the term: “ὑποβαίνειν, ὑπόβασις sont techniques dans le néoplatonisme pour désigner la dégradation successive des

term *ὑπόβασις* to describe the descent and inferiority of matter:

The lowest being comes about through constant descent (*ὑποβάσει*) and falling away (*ὑποστάσει*) and after it nothing else is generated. This is evil.

τῇ αἰὶ ὑποβάσει καὶ ἀποστάσει, τὸ ἔσχατον, καὶ μεθ' ὃ οὐκ ἦν ἔτι γενέσθαι ὀτιοῦν, τοῦτο εἶναι τὸ κακόν. (*Enn.* 1.8 [51].7.19–20)

The lowest nature that Plotinus describes that is unproductive of anything else is matter. Subsequent Neoplatonists followed suit and used *ὑπόβασις* to describe the descent from the unity of the One into the plurality of the physical world. Proclus states:

Therefore, there is one chain just as there is one order, which as a whole follows a descent from the monad into plurality.

διὸ καὶ μία σειρὰ καὶ μία τάξις, ἣ ὅλη παρὰ τῆς μονάδος ἔχει τὴν εἰς τὸ πλῆθος ὑπόβασιν. (*Elem. Theol.* 21,5–6 Dodds)

The notion was one of the central features of Neoplatonic metaphysics and can be found throughout Neoplatonic literature.⁶

Simplicius's account emerges as very Neoplatonic both in language and content.

In contrast to Simplicius's testimony, Porphyry uses strikingly different language in his testimony. The highest principle is not the One, but the "unified logos. It is very difficult to identify the unified logos with the One above all being, since it is not absolutely simple. It is unified and hence composite. Also it contains a plurality of forms and of *logoi* and it is able to divide itself. Perhaps we can supplement Porphyry's testimony and supply a higher One above the unified logos. Then to follow Simplicius's interpretation, the unified logos is at the level of the second One. It is the intellectual principle that contains forms. But Porphyry recounts that the unified logos desires to produce beings from itself. Again the language is completely different from Simplicius's account, where being is identified with the second One, not with its product. Finally, the unified logos departs and leaves quantity behind, deprived of all forms and *logoi*. None of the language of withdrawal or deprivation within the realm of the forms is Neoplatonic.

On the other hand, Numenius of Apamea, probably writing a century after Moderatus, takes time to criticize fellow Pythagoreans for teaching a doctrine that is reminiscent of Moderatus's theory of withdrawal. He says,

êtres dans une même σειρά.”

6. See also Porphyry, *Sent.* 11 Lamberz; Damascius, *In Parm.* 88.22; 303.5 Ruelle 1899; Simplicius *In de an.* 11:39 Hayduck; and Priscianus, *Metaph. Theophr.* 27 Bywater.

But several Pythagoreans are said not to have followed the force of reason and thought that even the indeterminate and immeasurable duality was established by a single unity as it withdrew from its own nature and departed into a state of duality.

Sed non nullos Pythagoreos vim sententiae non recte adsecutos putasse dici etiam illam indeterminatam et immensam duitatem ab unica singularitate institutam, recedente a natura sua singularitate et in duitatis habitum migrante. (Wrobewl 1876, 324)

Numenius claims that misguided Pythagoreans seek to derive the two Pythagorean principles of the One and the infinite Dyad from a common singular source. The source departs from its singular nature and migrates into duality. For the sake of polemics, Numenius may be misstating a position similar to Moderatus's, for as it stands, the passage makes little sense. If the singularity departed from its own nature and migrated into duality, then it would no longer be a singularity and no singularity would remain as a principle opposite the infinite dyad. The withdrawal makes more sense if the singularity withdrew and left behind a duality rather than itself migrating into duality. Hence a singularity would remain. So also proceeds the production of quantity in Moderatus's theory.

Taken overall, the language of Simplicius's testimony is Neoplatonic while the language of Porphyry's is very different and retains echoes of Pythagoreanism.

3. CONCEPTUAL DIFFERENCES

Clearly, the differences in language at least raise the suspicion that Simplicius is rewriting what he found of Moderatus in Simplicius's own terms. But the differences are not merely linguistic. The teachings of the two passages are incompatible with each other and the words that are chosen point to deep differences in conceptual frameworks. First, other reports about Moderatus indicate that he taught that the principles were forms, not numbers, as did more traditional Pythagoreans. Second, Porphyry's testimony does not read at all like the emanation account that Simplicius attributes to Moderatus. Rather, it reads like a very traditional fissure account, whereby opposite principles are generated from the self-division of the first principle. Such fissure accounts were common before and during the time of Moderatus and are attributed specifically to the Neopythagoreans.

The differences in the vocabulary of the Simplicius and Porphyry testimonies take on added significance when we consider the other surviving account of Moderatus's teaching that we have from Porphyry. It is found in Porphyry's *Vita Pythagorae* (48–53). There Porphyry explains that Moderatus reinterpreted traditional Pythagoreanism. According to Porphyry, Moderatus taught that the true first principles were *logoi* and forms and that Moderatus claimed that the earlier Pythagoreans had only used numbers as a teaching device to describe *logoi* and forms. They used numbers as figures to explain about incorporeal forms much as a geom-

eter uses a picture of a triangle to teach about the incorporeal form of a triangle. Moderatus therefore thought that the true first principles were *logoi* and forms, not numbers. The two accounts from Porphyry, one in Simplicius's Commentary and one in the *Vita* agree: Moderatus explained the origins of the universe in terms of *logoi* and forms. The testimony of Simplicius makes an important inversion. He takes the account in terms of numbers to be more fundamental. In a further difference, according to the *Vita*, the numbers that Moderatus said were used as an illustration of forms and *logoi* were one, two, and three, not the first, second, and third One of Simplicius's testimony.

We possess two further textual witnesses that confirm that Moderatus departed from earlier Pythagoreanism by relegating numbers from the ranks of first principles. From the fifth century C.E., both Syrianus and Stobaeus record that Moderatus took numbers, including the one, to be derivative from the monad. According to Stobaeus, Moderatus taught that "number is a system of monads. Monads form the limit for quantity, because "when quantity is deprived of every number as plurality is reduced by subtraction, it takes on solitude and stasis" (Stobaeus, *Anth.* 1.8). According to Moderatus's etymology, solitude and stasis are the sources for the word *monas*, as *monas* is derived from the words to remain (μένειν) and alone (μόνος). Thus, monads are the most basic quantity and the source of numbers.

Syrianus' testimony also confirms that Moderatus took the monad to be prior to the one. According to Syrianus, Moderatus said that the one was a principle, but he derived it from the monad, which was temporally prior to the one, even though it was later in account (*In Metaph.* 6:151,26 Kroll 1902). For the monad was generated prior to the one, but the one functioned as a formal cause for the monad, presumably by giving it numerical form. Nevertheless, the monad was prior because it underlies number as if it were matter.

What we learn from Porphyry's *Vita*, Porphyry's testimony in Simplicius, Syrianus, and Stobaeus forms a consistent picture of Moderatus's metaphysics. In fact the different witnesses serve to illustrate one another. According to Syrianus, number is to form as the monad is to matter. Although this is difficult to understand on its own, it becomes clearer when we consider Stobaeus's claim that Moderatus took number to be a system of monads. So number emerges as a structure imposed upon underlying monads, very much like a form-matter relationship. In Porphyry's testimony in Simplicius, we learn that quantity is the paradigm for physical matter. Again, on its own it is very difficult to understand. But when we compare Syrianus's claim that the monad serves as matter for number and when we consider Stobaeus's claim that the monad is the most basic quantity, we can see that quantity is ultimately the material for numbers. Therefore, quantity acts as prime matter for numbers in a way that can be seen to serve as the paradigm for physical matter. Finally, when we compare all four texts, we see that number is not as basic a cause as are forms such as quantity. Number is derivative. Therefore, through his claim that numbers were merely used to illus-

trate more fundamental formal principles, Moderatus was not merely disputing terminology, he was fundamentally rewriting Pythagoreanism.

In addition to the prioritization of forms and *logoi*, there is another fundamental conceptual difference between Porphyry's and Simplicius's testimonies. According to Simplicius's testimony, Moderatus taught something that very much looks like a Neoplatonist hierarchy of the universe, while Porphyry recounts a story of cosmogenesis by way of division. Simplicius's account begins with the highest One above Being, continues to being and intellect, then to the soul and terminates in the sensible realm. The sensible realm is distinct from the realm of being. It does not participate in the forms as does the psychic One. Rather it is merely a reflection of the forms.

In his testimony, Porphyry recounts a story that fits neither Neoplatonism nor Simplicius's Neoplatonist recounting of Moderatus. In Porphyry's testimony, everything originates from the unified logos that contains all the *logoi* and forms within it. It is not absolutely simple as is the Neoplatonic One.

Furthermore, the account that Porphyry gives about Moderatus is not at all an account of Neoplatonic emanation. He tells the story of cosmogenesis through a fissure of the primordial being. Emanation accounts tell of a progress out from an original source. Each stage proceeds from a higher principle. The stages proceed from top to bottom. By contrast, in fissure accounts the primordial being somehow divides itself into two opposite principles. Thus, unlike emanation accounts, the primal being undergoes a change. After its division, the primal being leaves behind opposite principles, whose interaction then leads to production of subsequent beings that exist somehow between the two opposite principles. Many times the two principles are presented as the spatial containers for the world.

Moderatus had many predecessors who taught fissure theories. Fissure accounts were common throughout the ancient world. They can be found in the Atum theology, recorded as early as Middle Kingdom Egypt in the Coffin Texts (approximately 2040–1640 B.C.E.). According to the myth, Atum creates Shu, the God of air, in order to differentiate himself from Nun, the precosmic sea and create an open space for the creation of the world.⁷ A fissure account is also found in the Babylonian *Enuma Elish*, where creation begins once Tiamat and Apsu (salt and fresh water) are separated.⁸ The *Enuma Elish* dates to approximately 1100

7. Coffin Text 80 (de Buck and Gardiner 1935, vol. 2). The earliest Egyptian accounts of creation are recorded in the Pyramid Texts of the Old Kingdom ca. 2600 B.C.E. In them, Atum first produces Shu and Tefnut (air and moisture) by expectoration or ejaculation. Shu the male and Tefnut the female then give birth to Geb and Nut (earth and sky) who are also male and female respectively. They in turn give birth to Osiris and Seth, Isis and Nephthys, the parents of all the Pharaohs. See J. P. Allen 1988.

8. *Enuma Elish* 1.1–12.

B.C.E.⁹ In the Greek world a fissure account can be found in the cosmogenesis story of Hesiod, which commences with the division of Ouranos from Gaia.¹⁰ Anaximander taught that creation began by the separation of a pre-cosmic egg from the infinite (A:10.83 Diels-Kranz). Division and separation play important roles in many of the early Greek Philosophers¹¹ and continue with Stoic cosmology.¹²

A fissure theory is well suited as an adaptation to the cosmogenesis that was taught by earlier Pythagoreans, since they taught of genesis from opposite principles.¹³ Fissure theories explain the source from which opposite principles arose. Fissure accounts then can continue quite consistently with the same cosmogenesis that is presented by the opposite-principles theory. Moderatus seems to be at the forefront of a movement to find an earlier principle that gave rise to the opposite principles of Pythagorean teachings and to spell out how it generated the opposite principles. He seems to have relied on a long tradition of fissure accounts to do so.

Porphiry's testimony reads like a fissure account and shares its logical structure. The generation of being begins with the division of the unified logos. The unified logos withdraws and leaves quantity behind, deprived of all other forms. Quantity therefore originally existed within the unified logos before it withdrew. The division of the unified logos leaves quantity deprived of all forms and as formless quantity it becomes the model for physical matter. Moderatus's point is very difficult to understand, since it is hard to comprehend privation as a model. But Moderatus tries to explain that it is a model through privation by its "loosing, extension, and severance" all of which describe some sort of rupture from the original unity of the unified logos.

In addition to the division of the first principle, Moderatus's account shares much with other fissure accounts. The product of the fissure represents two extremes, the forms and *logoi*, on the one hand, versus formless quantity, on the other. These two then become the principles for the cosmos as a whole. In an important departure from other fissure accounts, the two principles are not the physical container for the world, but they do serve as a model for space. So Moderatus transfers the fissure account to the intellectual realm of the forms.

On balance, Porphyry's testimony does not resemble the Neoplatonist summary that Simplicius gives of Moderatus's teaching either in language or content.

9. On the date of the Enuma Elish, see Lambert 1965, 297–98.

10. See Cornford 1965, 194–95.

11. For example, Anaximenes teaches that air is separated into earth on one side and fire on the other, A.5.91 Diels-Kranz.

12. See for example, Diogenes Laertius 7.142, where at the beginning of the cosmic cycle, fire converts to air and then to water. Then out of the precosmic waters, earth condenses and the lighter elements are rarified.

13. For the Pythagorean table of opposites, see Aristotle, *Metaph.* A.5.986a23–26.

It is clear that Simplicius's and Porphyry's testimonies recount two distinct theories. Porphyry's version is consistent with the other testimony he provides us about Moderatus in his *Vita Pythagorae*. Simplicius's version is not. Porphyry's version is also historically consistent with what we know from other sources about the Neopythagoreanism of Moderatus's time and with his predecessors. Once again, Simplicius's version is not. Therefore, contra Dodds, Simplicius's testimony should not be taken as an accurate historical rendering of Moderatus's own teaching. Rather it should be taken as Simplicius's own contribution. First Simplicius clarified Moderatus's teaching by translating it into Neoplatonist terminology. Then he supplemented it by adding a fuller account of the noetic realm than Moderatus had given. He supplied references to the One above the unified logos and he filled out the noetic realm with a reference to the Psychic one not supported in his source. In the process, Simplicius transformed what was historically a Neopythagorean teaching into a Neoplatonic teaching. It would be a mistake on our part to follow his lead.¹⁴

14. I wish to thank Philippe Hoffmann and John Finamore for the very helpful comments they provided during readings of earlier versions of this paper at annual meetings of the Society of Biblical Literature and American Academy of Religion.

SECTION 2
MIDDLE PLATONIC AND GNOSTIC TEXTS

THE PLATONIZING SETHIAN TREATISES,
 MARIUS VICTORINUS'S PHILOSOPHICAL SOURCES, AND
 PRE-PLOTINIAN *PARMENIDES* COMMENTARIES

John D. Turner

THE NAG HAMMADI LIBRARY AND THE SETHIAN TREATISES

No fewer than eleven of the fifty-three Coptic treatises discovered in 1945 near Nag Hammadi¹ in Egypt fit the designation "Sethian Gnostic" (Turner 2001, 57–92). They reveal the existence and nature of a hitherto unrecognized religious competitor of early Christianity. Sethian Gnosticism is presently the earliest form of Gnosticism for which we possess a great deal of textual evidence.² It appears to antedate and form a partial source for another equally well-documented form of Gnosticism, the Christian school of Valentinus (120–160 c.e.) and his followers.

1. Its original 1253 written pages (about 1153 survive) contained 53 original treatises of which 41 were previously unknown. See Robinson 1979, 206–24; 1981, 21–58; and most recently, 1997, 3–34.

2. It had its roots in a form of heterodox Jewish speculation on the biblical figure of Sophia, the wisdom by which God created, nourished, and enlightened the world. The Sethian Gnostics distributed these biblical functions of Sophia among a hierarchy of feminine principles. The two most important were 1) a transcendent divine Mother called Barbelo, the First Thought of their supreme deity, the Invisible Spirit; and 2) a lower Sophia ultimately responsible for both the creation of the physical world and the incarnation of portions of the supreme Mother's divine essence into human bodies, often by the instrumentality of her offspring, the world-creator Yaldabaoth-Saklas. Salvation was achieved by the supreme Mother's reintegration of her own dissipated essence into its original unity. These figures and events were linked together in a mythical narrative inspired by the two great protological texts of the period, the biblical book of Genesis and Plato's dialogue the *Timaeus*. In fact one might say that the Sethian picture of the world resulted from the interpretation of the biblical protology of the book of Genesis in the light of the Platonic distinction between an ideal, exemplary realm of eternal stable being and its more or less deficient impermanent earthly and changeable copy.

THE PLATONIZING SETHIAN TREATISES

Despite their shared features, one may bifurcate these eleven Sethian treatises into two subgroups precisely in view of the path to saving enlightenment offered in each. For the larger and probably earlier group of treatises—the *Apocryphon of John*, the *Trimorphic Protennoia*, the *Apocalypse of Adam*, the *Hypostasis of the Archons*, *Thought of Norea*, *Melchizedek*, and the *Gospel of the Egyptians*—saving enlightenment is conferred through a biblically inspired horizontal sequence of temporally successive earthly *descents* on the part of a heavenly savior/revealer sent by the divine Mother of the All to awaken humans to the nature and reality of the upper world. The other group—consisting of the four treatises *Zostrianos*, *Allogenes*, the *Three Steles of Seth*, and *Marsanes*—conceives saving enlightenment to be achieved through a Platonically inspired vertical *ascent* of a visionary through a succession of supramundane realms and mental states during which one becomes assimilated to ever higher levels of being and insight.³ For reasons that will become apparent, these four treatises form a distinctive group that can be called “the Platonizing Sethian treatises.”

Each of the Platonizing Sethian texts commemorates the ecstatic ascent of a single exceptional individual such as the biblical Seth, Zostrianos (son of Iolaos, the alleged uncle or grandfather of Zoroaster), Allogenes (“one of another kind or race,” a play on Seth as the σπέρμα ἕτερον of Gen 4:25), or Marsanes (who may have been a contemporary Sethian prophet). The various stages of these ascents are articulated according to ever-ascending levels of transcendent being whose ontology is typical of contemporary Middle Platonic metaphysical treatises. The metaphysical hierarchy of the Platonizing Sethian treatises is strikingly similar, consisting of four ontological levels. Uppermost is 1) a supreme realm altogether beyond being occupied by the Triple Powered Invisible Spirit; below this one finds 2) an atemporal, intelligible realm of pure determinate being occupied by a tripartite divine Intellect, the Aeon of Barbelo encompassing three subaeons: Kalyptos, Protophanes, and Autogenes. In turn, Autogenes presides over the Four Luminaries who govern the Self-generated Aeons that contain the souls of those who have achieved complete enlightenment and eternal stability. Below these are 3) three lower psychic realms—the Repentance, Sojourn, and the aeonic Anti-types—characterized by time and motion, that contain souls still in the process of transmigration. Finally, at the bottom of the hierarchy lies 4) the physical realm of “Nature. In this scheme, Sethianism has become a form of mythological Platonism.

3. Ultimately inspired by a combination to *Theaet.* 176b with the vision of absolute Beauty in Plato's *Symp.* 210a–212a and of the true light in the parable of the cave in *Resp.* 7.514–517a, and perhaps even the vision of Parmenides (frgs. B 1–18, 227–46 Diels-Kranz). See Turner 1980, 341–51.

THE PLATONIC MILIEU OF THE PLATONIZING SETHIAN TREATISES

Among all eleven Sethian treatises, three can be rather precisely dated. One of these is a version of the *Apocryphon of John*, whose introductory theogony and cosmogony was summarized by Irenaeus (*Adv. Haer.* 1.29) around 175–180. The other two are the two Platonizing treatises *Zostrianos* and *Allogenes*. In his *Life of Plotinus* 16, Porphyry tells us that these two apocalypses (and perhaps also a version of *Marsanes*) circulated in Plotinus’s philosophical seminar in Rome during the years 244–265 C.E., and that one in particular, *Zostrianos*, was scrupulously critiqued by Amelius and himself.⁴ The record of Plotinus’s debates with the proponents of these treatises is contained in his *Großschrift*, an originally continuous treatise that included *Enn.* 3.8 [30]; 5.8 [31]; 5. 5 [32], and 2.9 [33], whose concluding section contains Plotinus’s own antignostic critique, some of whose details are clearly directed at *Zostrianos*.⁵

4. “There were in his time many Christians and others, and sectarians who had abandoned the old philosophy, men of the School of Adelphius and Aculinus who possessed a great many treatises of Alexander the Libyan and Philocomos and Demonstratos and Lydos, and used to quote apocalypses by Zoroaster and Zostrianos and Nicotheos and Allogenes and Messos and other people of the kind; they deceived themselves and many others, alleging that Plato had not penetrated to the depths of intelligible reality. Plotinus hence often attacked their position in his lectures and wrote the treatise to which we have given the title *Against the Gnostics*; he left it to us to assess what he passed over. Amelius went to forty volumes in writing against the book of Zostrianos. I, Porphyry, wrote a considerable number of refutations of the book of Zoroaster, which I showed to be entirely spurious and modern, made up by the sectarians to convey the impression that the doctrines which they had chosen to hold in honor were those of the ancient Zoroaster” (trans. Armstrong with slight modifications).

5. In particular, Michel Tardieu (2005) has plausibly shown that Plotinus actually cites *Zost.* VIII.9.16–20 in *Enn.* 2.9 [33].10.19–33; see also my own comments in my Commentary on *Zostrianos* in Barry, et al. 2000, 513–14; see Appendix 11 (pp. 172). While Plotinus does not seem to attack the general schema of the either the unfolding of or reascent to the divine world offered in the Platonizing Sethian treatises, nonetheless he accepts and rejects certain specific elements. He voices no objection to their designation of the supreme deity as the Invisible Spirit, nor to *Allogenes*’ notion of learned ignorance (*Enn.* 3.8 [30].9–10; NHC XI.59.30–32; 60.8–12; 61.2–3; 61.17–19; cf. Porphyry, *Sent.* 25–26; *Anon. in Parm.*, frgs. II and IV), nor to the notion that spiritual beings are simultaneously present in their entirety as “all together” in the Intellect (*Enn.* 5.8 [31].7–9; *Zost.* VIII.21; 87; 115–16), nor the idea of the traversal of Life from the One into the Intellect (*Enn.* 3.8 [30].11; 6.7 [38].17; *Zost.* VIII.17.6–22; 66.14–67.3; *Allogenes* XI.49.5–21). On the other hand, Plotinus rejects: (1) the strong partitioning of Intellect (*Enn.* 2.9 [33].1; cf. 3.9 [13].1) in the manner both of Numenius and of *Zostrianos* and *Allogenes*; (2) the idea that *Sophia* is derivative and alien (*Zost.* VIII.9–10; cf. *Enn.* 5.8 [31].5), or that Soul or *Sophia* declined and put on human bodies (cf. *Zost.* VIII.27.9–12), or that *Sophia* or the mother illumined the darkness, producing an image in matter, which in turn produces an image of the image (*Zost.* VIII.9.17–10.20 and *Enn.* 2.9 [33].10.19–33; 11.14–30; but see Plotinus’s own version of this in 3.9 [13].3); (3) the idea of a demiurge revolting from its matter and whose activity gives rise to “repentances” (μετάνοιαι), “copies” (ἀντίτυποι) and

With the Platonizing Sethian treatises, we are at the cusp of the shift from what is known as Middle Platonism to the Neoplatonism of Plotinus and his successors.⁶ For the Middle Platonists, the principal Platonic dialogue of reference was the *Timaeus*, interpreted to reveal three fundamental principles: 1) The supreme principle was God, identified with the supreme Form of the Good from the *Republic* and the demiurge of the *Timaeus* conceived as a universal Intellect. 2) Next was the Paradigm of the *Timaeus*, conceived as the intelligible realm of Forms, perhaps identical with God's thoughts, existing either within the divine Intellect or occupying a distinct realm external and subjacent to it. By contemplating these, God confers order upon 3) the third and lowest principle, Matter, a pre-existing stuff mysteriously agitated within its matrix, the receptacle of the *Timaeus*.⁷

NEOPYTHAGOREANISM

Sometime during the first and second centuries, Platonists like Moderatus of Gades and Numenius of Apamea were attracted by certain Neopythagorean doctrines espoused by such figures as Eudorus and Thrasyllus, aspects of which probably stemmed ultimately from Old Academicians like Speusippus. They were led to reconcile Old Academic traditions about Plato's actual and reputed teaching concerning the origin of universal multiplicity from the interaction of two supreme principles, the Limit and the Unlimited of the *Philebus*⁸ with Par-

"sojourns" (παροικήσεις), *Enn.* 2.9 [33].6; the "alien earth," 2.9 [33].11; cf. *Zost.* VIII.5.10–29; VIII.9–16; XII.4–21); (4) the unnecessary multiplication of Hypostases; (5) the notion of secondary "knowledge of (a yet higher) knowledge" (*Enn.* 2.9 [33].1; cf. *Zost.* VIII.82.1–13; 119.12–13), and; (6) magical incantations (*Enn.* 2.9 [33].4; cf. *Zost.* VIII.52; 85–88; 127; *Allogenes* XI.53.32–55.11; *Steles Seth* VII.126.1–17; *Marsanes* X.25.17–32.5). In general, Plotinus's objections to Gnostic cosmogonies are based on his perception that they feature entities (such as Sophia or a world-creator) that produce inferior products by failing to adequately contemplate superior entities, thereby introducing discontinuities into what ought to be a continuous ontological hierarchy. Unfortunately, the doctrines criticized by Plotinus in the *Großschrift* may not always provide evidence sufficient to identify his opponents with any precision, since he may have in mind doctrines of several such opponents, not only those of the Sethians, but also of Valentinians, Christians, or even Numenius and his followers. It is likely that these gnostic proponents continued to be Plotinus's subtextual interlocutors up through his very latest treatises (at least through *Enn.* 1.8 [51]).

6. See, e.g., Brisson 1999a, 173–88; 1999b, 145–69.

7. Thus Aetius, *Plac. reliq.* 288,1–6 Diels 1879 (= Stobaeus, *Anth.* 1.10.16a5 Wachsmuth): Πλάτων Ἀρίστωνος τρεῖς ἀρχαί, τὸν θεὸν τὴν ὕλην τὴν ἰδέαν, ὅφ' οὐ ἐξ ὅφ' πρὸς ὃ. ὃ δὲ θεὸς νοῦς ἐστὶ τοῦ κόσμου, ἡ δὲ ὕλη τὸ ὑποκείμενον γενέσει καὶ φθορᾷ, ἰδέα δὲ οὐσία ἀσώματος ἐν τοῖς νοήμασι καὶ ταῖς φαντασίαις τοῦ θεοῦ.

8. Or in Aristotle's terminology, the One and the Great and the Small, or the One and the Indefinite Dyad.

menides' monistic doctrine of the ultimate unity of all things in the One. From this they concluded that the multiplicity of both ideal and sensible realities was derived from the interaction of a transcendent Monad and Dyad, whose origin was in turn attributed to a supreme One beyond them.⁹

It is at this time that the *Parmenides*, with its thoroughgoing exploration of the nature of ultimate Unity, gradually comes to supplement or even supplant the *Timaeus* as the primary dialogue of reference in the search for ultimate principles.¹⁰ The "hypotheses" occupying its second half could be identified with a Neopythagorean hierarchy of hypostatic principles:¹¹ 1) a supreme One beyond being; 2) a second One or Monad, paradoxically conceived as a static one-in-many, a dyad of unity and determinate being-in-plurality identified as a Middle Platonic Intellect containing multiple Forms; and 3) a third hypostasis¹² where multiple otherness undergoing change merely participates in unity and thus can account for the motion typical of Soul or the sensible universe, and so on, ending with the realm of pure disordered matter, identifiable with the *Timaeus's* receptacle. Such an "episodic" scheme appears to have been anticipated already in the Old Academic thought of Speusippus.¹³ The three highest of these hypostatic entities could also be recognized in the three kings mentioned in the pseudonymous second Platonic Letter (*Ep.* 2.312e), perhaps composed in these same Neopythagorean circles during the first century.

9. See Festugière 1954, 36–40; Krämer 1967, 320–21, 330–35; Rist 1965, 329–44, and *passim*; Dillon 1996, 120–21, 126–29, 342–61.

10. See, e.g., Proclus, *Theol. Plat.* 1:7–8.

11. Such as those attributed to Eudorus, *apud* Simplicius, *In phys.* 9:181,10–30 (Diels) and Alexander Polyhistor *apud* Diogenes Laertius 8.24.7–25.10, and perhaps the testimonia on Archaenetus, Philolaus, and Brotinus *apud* Syrianus, *In metaph.* 165,33–166,6 (Kroll 1902) and Pseudo-Archytas *apud* Stobaeus, *Anthologium* 1.41.2.1–50 = 1:278–79 (Wachsmuth).

12. Taking *Parm.* 155e5 (ἔτι δὴ τὸ τρίτον λέγωμεν) as designating a third hypothesis rather than as part of the second hypothesis.

13. See Aristotle, *Metaph.* N.1090b19–20. Iamblichus, *Comm. math. sc.* 4 (15,5–17,23 Festa) attributes to Speusippus a five-level universe: the transcendent principles of One and Multiplicity (Plato's Indefinite Dyad?), the determinate being of the mathematical and geometricals, the world soul (third level) and the sensible world, both animate (fourth level) and inanimate (fifth level). According to Dillon in this volume (p. 69), Proclus's (*In Parm.* 7,38–40 Klibansky-Labowsky = frg. 48 Tarán) citation of Speusippus's testimony concerning the "ancients" (i.e., Pythagoreans), who held that "if one postulates the One, in itself, conceived as separated and alone, without anything else, with no other element added to it (cf. Plato, *Parm.* 143a6–9), nothing else would come into existence; and so they introduced the Indefinite Dyad as the principle of beings," shows that already Speusippus had adopted a "metaphysical" interpretation of the first and second hypotheses of the *Parmenides*. He regarded its second hypothesis as "portraying the interaction of the One and the indefinite Dyad to generate first Number, and ultimately the whole ordered universe" according to the process depicted in 143c–144a, where "the union of the One with Being is a process of dyadic division, addition and multiplication that leads to Number."

MODERATUS

Thus, according to Simplicius (*In phys.* 9:230,34–231,5 [Diels] in part citing Porphyry's lost treatise *On Matter*), Moderatus of Gades proposed a hierarchy of four entities: 1) a First One beyond being who actually seems to be generated by 2) a Second One that—according to Porphyry—is a “unitary Logos” that initiates ontogenesis by depriving itself of the unitary aspects of its multiple Forms.¹⁴ Apparently, this self-deprivation yields not only the transcendent unity of the First One, but also makes room for pure indeterminate Quantity—perhaps the mere plurality of the Forms—deprived of all unity and determinate proportion as a sort of relative non-being that could be identified with the receptacle of the *Timaeus*.¹⁵ Next, there is 3) a third entity that merely participates the first two and thus is both one and many, perhaps identifiable as the cosmic Soul (or the sensible cosmos itself), which is apparently followed by 4) a fourth realm as the sensible

14. Simplicius, *In phys.* 9:231,7–10 (Diels): “The Unitary Logos (i.e., the “second One) ... intending to produce from itself the origin of beings, by self-deprivation made room for [ms.] Quantity (ποσότης), having deprived (στερήσας) it (Quantity) of all its (the Unitary Logos’) proportions and Forms.” The entire passage is cited in Appendix 1 (p. 161). By retracting unity from the multiplicity of the Forms conceived as a prefigurative quantity already seminally present in itself, the unitary Logos makes space for pure Quantity (see the indefinite dyad) to serve as a passive receptacle to receive the Forms. This self-deprivation seems to refer to the similar process of regression ascribed to Moderatus in Stobaeus’s *Anthologium* (1.8.1–11 = 21 Wachsmuth), according to which “number is a collection of monads, or a progression of multiplicity (προποδισμός πλήθους) beginning from a monad, and regression terminating at the monad (ἀναποδισμός εις μονάδα): monads delimit Quantity, which is whatever has been deprived and is left remaining and stable when multiplicity is diminished by the subtraction of each number.” This process of the generation of number is very likely indebted to Plato’s description of the generation of number in *Parm.* 143c–144a. According to Syrianus (*In metaph.* 151,14–27 Kroll 1902), Moderatus said that the One was a principle, although he derived it from the Monad, which was generated temporally prior (γενέσει) to the supreme One, even though the One was treated later in the account (λόγω). Although the one functioned as a formal cause for the monad, presumably by giving it numerical form, the monad has a certain priority because it underlies number as if it were its material substrate.

15. Thus ontogenesis is not a hierarchical emanation of all subsequent being from an absolutely simple first principle from highest to lowest; it instead starts at the second level with the fission of the unitary Logos into opposite principles of formal unity and indeterminate plurality that interact to generate all subsequent reality. See the similar process in frgs. 3–5 of the *Chaldaean Oracles*, where the Father snatches away his own fire or hypostatical identity (ὁ πατήρ ἤρπασσεν ἑαυτὸν, οὐδ’ ἐν ἑῇ δυνάμει νοεῖ κλείσας ἴδιον πῦρ) to yield pure indeterminate power or potential to be informed by his intellectual power on a lower level. Evidently, along the lines of *Parm.* 142b–e, the unity of the unitary Logos becomes the First One, while the duality of its “being one” becomes the second One whose forms will be imposed on the indeterminate quantity for which it has made room, producing an arrangement rather like that of Eudorus (*apud* Simplicius, *In phys.* 181.10–30 Diels): a supreme One (ἔν) above lower pair of principles, the Monad and the (indefinite) Dyad.

reflections (κατ' ἔμφασιν) of the Forms in 5) an apparent fifth realm of absolute non-being, that is, Matter as a mere “shadow” of the quantitative non-being left behind by the unitary Logos. Since—assuming Simplicius’s testimony can be trusted¹⁶—Moderatus evidently designated the two highest of these principles as a First One and a Second One, it appears that his reading of the *Parmenides* may have suggested an elaborate synthesis between its several hypotheses and the Middle Platonic three-level scheme of God, Model, and Matter. These could be arranged along the lines of the three kings of *Letter II*, so as to represent a hierarchy of God, the Forms, and the sensible universe or its Soul. The result was a series of four or five entities that could serve to interpret the first five hypotheses of the *Parmenides* as signifying the One, Intellect, the realm of souls, the sensible universe, and Matter.¹⁷ Thus, the three principles of Middle Platonism—God, Model, and Matter—apparently supplemented by a psychic and physical realm, are subordinated to a supreme principle, the One beyond being.¹⁸

NUMENIUS

In its appropriation of both the *Parmenides* and *Timaeus*, Moderatus’s account of ontogenesis by which the Second One gives rise to both unity and multiplicity through self-privation seems thoroughly Neopythagorean. By contrast, Calcidius testifies that Numenius, although a Neopythagorean, rejected the notion of a generation of dyadic multiplicity by the self-privation of the Monad.¹⁹ And, although the *Parmenides* seems to have influenced his explanation of the nature of pure

16. See however the doubts raised by Philippe Hoffman (“Simplicius’ reading of Moderatus via Porphyry (Simpl. in *Phys.* 230,34ff.)” during the 2003 meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature Seminar, “Rethinking Plato’s *Parmenides* and its Platonic, Gnostic and Patristic Reception,” and by J. Noel Hubler in this volume (pp. 115–28).

17. See the five-level universe Iamblichus attributes to Speusippus outlined in n. 14 above.

18. In their survey of the interpretation of *Ep. 2* in the introduction to vol. 2 of *Proclus: Théologie Platonicienne* (1974, 2:lviii–lix), Saffrey and Westerink distinguish two schools of interpretation, the “Syrian” school of Amelius, Iamblichus, and Theodore, who identify the three kings with three intellects or demiurges that are subordinated to the One, and the “Roman” school of Plotinus and Porphyry (preceded by Moderatus and followed by Julian and Proclus), who identified the first “King of all things” with the One. Although he does not posit a supreme One above the triad, Numenius is clearly a precursor of the Syrian school.

19. See Numenius frg. 52 des Places (= Calcidius, *In Tim.* c. 293): “(Numenius) says that Pythagoras applied the name Unity to God, but to Matter, the name Dyad. This Dyad is said to be indeterminate when ungenerated, but determinate when generated. . . . (While yet) unorganized and ungenerated, that (dyad) must be considered as coeval with the God by whom it was organized. But some Pythagoreans (e.g., Moderatus) had not correctly apprehended this statement, still claiming that this indeterminate and unlimited Dyad is itself brought forth from the single Unity, as it withdraws from its singular nature and departs into the condition of the Dyad.”

being (frgs. 5–6 des Places),²⁰ Numenius still relies principally on the *Timaeus* to articulate his system of three Gods or Intellects. The first God is a static Intellect, modeled on the *Timaeus*'s paradigmatic “truly living being. Since he transcends discursive thinking, he gives rise to a second Intellect below him which he “uses” (frgs. 20–22 des Places) for this purpose. This second Intellect is the actual demiurge; according to fragment 11, he is unified so far as he turns toward the first Intellect, but when he becomes preoccupied with unifying the duality of Matter according to the Forms he perceives in the First God, his contact with Matter sunders him into distinct second and third Gods. According to fragment 16, this demiurge apparently alternates between an Intellect-in-contemplation and a discursive demiurgical Intellect (who might be considered as the rational aspect of the World Soul).²¹

Although Numenius speaks of a Second and Third God in fragment 11, he nevertheless calls them “One” (εἷς), suggesting that he too (like Moderatus's δεύτερον ἓν and τὸ δὲ τρίτον) may have associated them with the Ones of hypothesis II (142b1–155e4) and what the “ancients” regarded as hypostasis III (155e4–157b4) of the *Parmenides*. According to Proclus (*In Parm.* 638,21–36), certain “ancients” took the phrase ἔτι δὴ τὸ τρίτον of *Parmenides* 155e4 to designate a third hypothesis, while most modern scholars argue that the initial ἔτι suggests that this “third” designates, not a separate hypothesis, but merely a third approach to the One of hypothesis two. The One of this supposed third hypothesis undergoes instantaneous alternation between unity and plurality since it partakes of being when it is one, but when it is not one, it does not so partake.²² But on either view, it nevertheless inherits the second hypothesis's essential character of a many-in-one.²³ Thus the One of what was taken to be hypothesis III (155e–157b) and the One of hypothesis II are both many-in-ones: from the point of view of hypothesis II, although also a plurality (142e, 144e), the One nevertheless remains an overall unity, while from the point of view of hypothesis III it

20. I.e., as an incorporeal, Being has no change, movement, difference, location, or time.

21. See citations from des Places' fragments 11 and 16 (where ἔπειτα seems to imply successive alternation) cited in Appendix 2 (p. 162). Numenius also posits an irrational world soul, cf. frg. 52 des Places: “The same Numenius praises Plato (cf. *Laws* 896d–e) for having taught the existence of two world souls, the one being very beneficent, and the other malevolent, namely, matter. For if nature is in even only moderate motion, then must it necessarily be alive and animated, according to the laws of all things whose motion is innate. This (matter) is also the cause and director of the passible part of the soul, which contains something corporeal, mortal and similar to the body, just as the rational part of the soul derives from reason and God. For the world is created out of (a commingling of) God and matter.”

22. See Appendix 3 (p. 162).

23. See *Parmenides* 156e3–7, cited in Appendix 3 (p. 162).

alternately becomes one and many (155e).²⁴ In the same way, in fragments 11 and 16, Numenius apparently portrays the demiurgic intellect as alternating between a second contemplative God who participates in the unity of the First God and a third demiurgic God who comes into contact with the plurality of matter. So it seems that Numenius has been influenced, not only by the *Timaeus* and the second Platonic *Letter*, but quite possibly also by the *Parmenides*' distinction between the absolute Unity of the first hypothesis and the duality of—or alternation between—Unity and Being in the second.

It is in this Neopythagorean metaphysical environment that the *Parmenides* seems to come into its own as a theological treatise. In the process, various expositions and even lemmatic commentaries—such as the anonymous Turin *Commentary on the Parmenides*—began to uncover the metaphysical realities concealed in the various hypotheses of its second half. Once Plotinus had based his own metaphysics upon the first three hypotheses of the *Parmenides* read in terms of the three kings of *Ep. 2*, the way lay open to subsequent Neoplatonists to discover hypostatic equivalents for the *Parmenides*' remaining hypotheses as well.²⁵ But it is possible that the detection of three or more Parmenidean hypostases had already occurred to certain of Plotinus's predecessors.

24. See *Parmenides* 155e4: "If the one is such as we have described it, being both one and many and neither one nor many, and partakes of time, must it not, because one is, sometimes partake of being (i.e., when the second God turns to the First), and again because one is not, sometimes not partake of being (i.e., when he turns to matter)?" and 156b5: "When it becomes one its existence as many is destroyed, and when it becomes many its existence as one is destroyed." See Tarrant 1993, 174, and the passages cited in Appendices 9 (Numenius) and 10 (*Parmenides*), on pp. 170–72.

25. An attempt to flesh out Moderatus's entire metaphysical hierarchy corresponding to the Parmenidean "hypotheses" has been offered by Tarrant (1993, 150–61). Dividing the hypotheses in Neoplatonic fashion by counting 155e4–157b4 ("for a third time") as a distinct third hypothesis to form a series of nine (H1=137c3–142a6; H2=142b1–155e4; H3=155e4–157b4; H4=157b5–159a9; H5=159b1–160b3; H6=160b4–163b5; H7=163b6–164b3; H8=164b4–165e1; H9=165e1–166c6), Tarrant assigns the first eight to the four entities mentioned in Simplicius's citation of Moderatus (*In phys.* 230.34–231.5) and to the various kinds of matter described in Porphyry's book *On Matter 2* (*In phys.* 231.5–231.34) that cites Moderatus's doctrine of the origin of matter as indeterminate Quantity (ποσότης), according to the following hierarchy: (H1) the first One beyond Being; (H2) the second One-Being or Unitary Logos embracing the Forms; (H3) the "third" (One?) that participates the One and the Forms as signifying unified (rational) souls; (H4) Soul (non-rational) in diversity; (H5) archetypal Matter (ποσότης) "left over" when deprived of all the Unitary Logos' λογνοὶ and εἶδη—i.e., the receptacle of the *Timaeus*—whose indeterminacy becomes the determinate quantity (ποσόν) of (H6) corporeal matter when caught by and actually ordered by the Unitary Logos, who imposes—not Forms—but (continuous) geometrical magnitude and (discrete) numerical distinction upon it; (H7) the non-existent "shadow" matter in sensibles, incapable of receiving any determination at all; and (H8) the fourth (mentioned in *In phys.* 231.2–5 after the "third") and "final nature" (φύσις) consisting, not of any kind of matter, but of phantasms, merely apparent sense-data reflecting the

THE SETHIANS

This shift in the Platonic dialogue of reference is also visible in the Sethian treatises. In mid- to later-second-century Sethian treatises like the *Apocryphon of John*, the *Hypostasis of the Archons*, the *Trimorphic Protennoia*, and the *Gospel of the Egyptians*, the cosmology of the *Timaeus* becomes an exegetical template to interpret the Genesis protology, in both negative and positive ways. Negatively, they compromise the supremacy of the Jewish creator God by identifying him with a jealous and ignorant parody of the *Timaeus's* demiurge subordinated to a superior divine model which he must consult, but cannot actually see. Positively,

formal properties of already-ordered corporeal matter. Tarrant distributes the psychic realm into two levels on the basis of Moderatus's notion (cited in Porphyry, *Vit. Pyth.* 44.8–14) of a One that causes the co-animation (συμπνοία) of both the universe (H3) and of particulars (H4). The distribution of entities in H5–H8 is based on Moderatus's apparent distinction between the indeterminate ποσότης deprived of the Unitary Logos' λόγοι and εἶδη (but nevertheless receptive of Form, *In phys.* 231.7–15) and the disorganized but determinate ποσόν of corporeal matter upon which the Unitary Logos forcefully imposes geometrical and arithmetic organization (*In phys.* 231.15–24; cf. Plotinus, *Enn.* 6.6 [34].3!), which Tarrant distinguishes in turn from the apparently absolutely unparticipable “shadow” matter of sensibles in *In phys.* 231.2–5. Tarrant justifies this scheme on the basis of its apparent resemblance to what seems to be Amelius'—whom Porphyry (*Vit. Plot.* 20.68–80) says was influenced by Moderatus's and Numenius's interpretation of the first principles of Pythagoras and Plato—eight-level interpretation of the Parmenidean hypotheses sketched in Proclus, *In Parm.* 1052.31–1053.9 Cousin. In contrast to Tarrant, Saffrey and Westerink (1974, 2:lviii–lix) argue that Moderatus's teaching derives not from an interpretation of the *Parmenides* but from a creative exegesis of the *Second Letter* (312e) in connection with readings from the *Republic* (6.509b), *Philebus* (15a), and *Timaeus* (27c; 52d). In their view (following Zeller; see, similarly, Hadot (1968, 1:166 and n. 1), the “three Ones” of Simplicius's report have been glossed by Porphyry (or by Simplicius, e.g., “the second One, which is truly being and intelligible; “the third, which relates to Soul”) and, consequently, follow the division of hypotheses attributed to Porphyry in Proclus's *In Parm.*, 1053.38–1054.37. The innovator was really Plotinus, who first linked the “three kings” of the *Second Letter* with the “three Ones” of the *Parmenides* in *Enn.* 5.1.8. Against this, Whittaker (1976, 155–72) argues that the Middle Platonic negative theologies of Clement of Alexandria (*Strom.* 5.12.81.5–82.1) and Alcinoüs (*Didask.* 10:165,5–17 Hermann) “provide incontestable proof of a pre-Plotinian theological interpretation of the first hypothesis of the *Parmenides* and must be taken seriously into account when one weighs the value of Simplicius's report (drawn from Porphyry) of a metaphysical interpretation on Neoplatonic lines of the first three Hypostases by the Platonist Moderatus in the first century after Christ. I substantially agree, although, following Dodds (1928, 129–42), I think it safer to see in Moderatus evidence of the interpretation of perhaps only the first five of the hypotheses, more like the scheme Proclus attributes to certain “ancients” (the One transcending being, the One-Being/intelligibles, being with “essential oneness,” [the others] participating the One, and [others] deprived of all attributes; see Proclus, *In Parm.* 638–640 Cousin) and to the anonymous “philosopher from Rhodes” (also influenced by *Resp.* 6.509–511: the One transcending being, the intelligibles, the διανοητά, embodied forms of physical objects, and the receptacle of bodies; see *In Parm.* 1057–1058).

it seems that the very nomenclature of the Sethians' supreme Father-Mother-Child trinity was probably inspired by Plato's triad of principles in *Tim.* 50c–d.²⁶

But with the turn to the third century, the Platonizing Sethian treatises abandon all interest in the Genesis protology in favor of a theology of transcendental ascent. At times the *Timaeus's* influence shows itself in *Zostrianos's* brief treatment of the world creator Archon's demiurgical act of creation or in *Marsanes's* speculations on the configurations of the soul. But in these treatises the principal dialogues of reference have become the *Symposium* as a model for the technique of ascent, and, for their metaphysical theology, the *Parmenides*, whose influence is so visible in the negative theologies of the supreme unknowable One beyond being that gives rise to the Barbelo Aeon as the realm of determinate being.²⁷

THE METAPHYSICS OF THE PLATONIZING SETHIAN TREATISES

The metaphysical hierarchy of the Platonizing Sethian treatises is headed by a supreme and pre-existent Unknowable One who, as in Plotinus, is clearly beyond being.²⁸ It can be described only in negative terms that appear to be derived from the second half of Plato's *Parmenides*, especially its first hypothesis (137c–142a). This One is usually identified with—but sometimes distinguished from—the Invisible Spirit, the supreme principle in many Sethian treatises.²⁹ The ambivalence in the name for the supreme principle—Unknowable One versus Invisible Spirit—probably results from the melding of two somewhat incompatible traditional designations for the supreme deity; for Sethianism, it is the Invisible Spirit,

26. “We must conceive of three kinds, that which comes to be, that *in* which it comes to be, and that *from* whose imitation what comes to be is generated. We may fittingly compare the receptacle (τὸ δεχόμενον) to a mother, the source to a father, and the nature (μεταξὺ φύσις) between them to a child” (*Tim.* 50c–d).

27. By contrast, most other Sethian and most Valentinian sources seem to make little use of the *Parmenides* in their theological characterization of the highest realities, preferring instead to trade in the earlier Middle Platonic metaphysical model, where the dialogue of reference continues to be the *Timaeus*. The *Apocryphon of John* is influenced by both dialogues. There may also be remote influence from the *Parmenides* in the Neopythagorean-influenced negative theologies of Basilides (ὁ οὐκ ὄν θεός in Hippolytus, *Ref.* 7.20.2–21.6), *Eugnostos the Blessed* (NHC III.71.13–72.6), the Valentinian *Tripartite Tractate* (NHC I.51.28–55.14) and Hippolytus's “monistic” Valentinian myth (*Ref.* 6.29.2–5).

28. See Appendix 4 (p. 162–63) for a graphic portrayal of the metaphysical structure here described.

29. From certain earlier Sethian treatises (*Apocryphon of John*, the *Trimorphic Protennoia*, and the *Gospel of the Egyptians*), the Platonizing treatises have inherited a tendency to identify the supreme deity as “the Invisible Spirit. While the *Three Steles of Seth* (7.125,23–25) calls this supreme pre-existent One a “single living Spirit,” *Zostrianos* identifies this One as “the Triple Powered Invisible Spirit.” On the other hand, *Allogenes* and *Marsanes* seem to distinguish a supreme “unknown silent One” from both the Invisible Spirit and the Triple Powered One.

and for Platonism, it would be the One. From a traditional Sethian point of view the two terms are interchangeable, while for Platonists, the materialistic associations of the term "Spirit" in Stoic philosophy might discourage its use as a simple equivalent to the supreme One beyond all being and corporeality.

Below the supreme One, at the level of determinate being, is the Barbelo Aeon, a Middle Platonic tri-level divine Intellect.³⁰ As in Numenius, Amelius, and the early Plotinus, it is modeled on a reading of the *Timaeus's* (39e) doctrine of a transcendent model contemplated by a demiurge who then orders the universe.³¹ It contains three ontological levels, conceived as sub-intellecets or aeons: one that is contemplated (νοῦς νοητός), called Kalyptos or "hidden"; one that contemplates (νοῦς νόερος or θεωρητικός), called Protophanes or "first manifesting"; and one that is discursive and demiurgic (νοῦς διανοούμενος), called Autogenes or "self-generated."³² At the highest level, Kalyptos contains the para-

30. See Bechtle 2000, 413, n. 74: "Barbelo really is equivalent to mind. It is the first thought of the Invisible Spirit and it has, principally speaking, three levels: Kalyptos, the hidden One, Protophanes, the first appearing One, Autogenes, the self-begotten One. At first this triad is an emanative triad: it represents the stages of the unfolding and proceeding of the aeon of Barbelo from its source in the Invisible Spirit. In the beginning Barbelo is hidden as purely potential intellect in the Invisible Spirit. Once Barbelo is constituted, Kalyptos will represent the realm of that which truly exists, i.e. the ideas. Next, Barbelo first appears as the male intelligence which is then conceived of as those which exist together, those which are unified (perhaps mind and ideas which are unified through intellection), represented by Protophanes who thinks the ideas of Kalyptos, on the one hand, and acts on the individuals, on the other hand. Finally, Barbelo becomes the self-begotten demiurgical mind which can be identified with the rational part of the world soul. As an established ontological level it is the individuals represented by Autogenes who has the demiurgic role of a world soul. Thus Barbelo corresponds to Numenius's second mind. Insofar as the second mind is participated in and used by the first, i.e. insofar as the second mind is prefigured in the first and thus is the first in a certain way, we have Kalyptos. Insofar as the Numenian second mind is identical with the third and acts through the third it can be compared to Autogenes. *Stricto sensu* the second mind as second mind is comparable to the Protophanes level of the Sethians."

31. Numenius (frgs. 11, 13, 15, 16 des Places); Amelius (Proclus, *In Tim.* 1.306.1–14, 1.309.14–20; 1.431.26–28), and the early Plotinus (*Enn.* 3.9 [13].1 but rejected in *Enn.* 2.9 [33].1).

32. Originally, these names seem to have referred, not to the ontological levels of the Barbelo Aeon, but rather to the process by which the Barbelo Aeon gradually unfolds from its source in the Invisible Spirit: at first "hidden" (καλυπτός) or latent in the Spirit as its prefigurative intellect, then "first appearing" (πρωτοφανής, see Phanes, *Orph. Hymn.* 52.5–6; PGM IV.943–944) as the Spirit's separately existing intelligence, and finally "self-generated" (αὐτογενής) as a demiurgical mind, perhaps equivalent to the rational part of the cosmic soul that operates on the physical world below in accordance with its vision of the archetypal ideas contained in the divine intellect, Protophanes. In *Cand.* 14.11–14, Victorinus hints at a similar progression: "For what is above ὄν is hidden (cf. Kalyptos) ὄν; indeed the manifestation (cf. Protophanes) of the hidden is generation (cf. Autogenes), since ὄν in potentiality generates ὄν in act."

digmatic ideas or authentic existents, each of which is a unique, uncombinable paradigmatic form.³³ At the median level, Protophanes contains “those who are unified,” that is, the contemplated ideas that are “all together”³⁴ with the minds that contemplate them.³⁵ At the lowest level, Autogenes would be a demiurgic mind (νοῦς πρακτικός) who shapes the individuated realm of Nature below him according to the forms in Kalyptos that are contemplated and made available to him by Protophanes (the νοῦς θεωρητικός). As the equivalent of the Plotinian Soul, Autogenes analyzes these in a discursive fashion (as a νοῦς διανοούμενος), and thus comes to contain the “perfect individuals,”³⁶ the ideas of particular, individual things, as well as individual souls.³⁷

33. See *Allogenes* XI.46.6–35. In *Zost.* VIII.82.8–13 Kalyptos emerges as the second knowledge of the Invisible Spirit (the first being Barbelo), “the knowledge of his knowledge;” in 119.12–13 Kalyptos is associated with “his ἰδέα.

34. Coptic ρΙΟΥΜΔ. See *Enn.* 6.1 [42].1.5–6: “There the whole of Intellect is all together and not separated or divided, and all souls are together” (ἐκεῖ δὲ [i.e., ἐν τῷ νῶ] ὁμοῦ μὲν νοῦς πᾶς καὶ οὐ διακεκριμένον οὐδὲ μεμερισμένον, ὁμοῦ δὲ πάσαι ψυχαί); 6.8 [31].10.16–22: “And that (beauty) above everything that courses round about its (the intelligible world) entire magnitude is finally seen by those who have already seen many clear visions, the gods individually and together (οἱ θεοὶ καθ’ ἑνα καὶ πᾶς ὁμοῦ), and the souls who see everything there and originate from everything, so as to contain everything themselves from beginning to end; and they are present there (in the intelligible realm) so long as they are naturally able, but oftentimes—when they are undivided—even the whole of them is present.” Cf. *Corpus Hermeticum* (frg. 21 Nock-Festugière): “The preexistent one is thus above those that exist and those that truly exist, for there is a preexistent one through which the so-called universal essentiality of those that truly exist is intelligized together, while those that exist are intelligized individually. Their opposites, on the other hand, again existing individually, is nature, a sensible substance that contains all sensibles” (“Ἐστὶ τοίνυν τὸ προὐν ἐπὶ πάντων τῶν ὄντων καὶ τῶν ὄντως ὄντων· προὐν [ὄν] γὰρ ἔστι, δι’ οὗ ἡ οὐσιότης ἢ καθόλου λεγομένη κοινὴ νοεῖται τῶν ὄντως ὄντων καὶ τῶν ὄντων τῶν καθ’ ἑαυτὰ νοουμένων. τὰ δὲ ἐναντία τούτοις κατὰ τὸ ἕτερον πάλιν αὐτὰ καθ’ ἑαυτὰ ἔστι φύσις, οὐσία αἰσθητή, ἔχουσα ἐν ἑαυτῇ αἰσθητὰ πάντα).

35. Apparently to be distinguished both from ideas of particular things in Autogenes and from the uncombinable authentic existents in Kalyptos; cf. the status of Plato’s “mathematicals” *apud* Aristotle, *Metaph.* A.987b14–18; M.1080a11–b14.

36. Coptic ΚΑΤΑΟΥΔ. Originally Aristotle’s distinction (cf. Psellus, [*De anima et mente*] 68,21–22 O’Meara 1989: ἔτι ὁ νοῦς ὁ πρακτικὸς περὶ τὰ μερικὰ, ὁ θεωρητικὸς περὶ τὰ καθόλου); in *Enn.* 3.9 [13].1.26–37 this third hypostasis is called Soul and the products of its discursive thought are many individual souls. For Plotinus, the equivalent of Autogenes is Soul: its highest level dwells in Intellect (the equivalent of Protophanes) and contains all souls and intellects; it is one and unbounded (i.e., having all things together, every life and soul and intellect), holding all things together (πάντα ὁμοῦ), each distinct and yet not distinct in separation (ἕκαστον διακεκριμένον καὶ αὐτὸ διακριθὲν χωρὶς, *Enn.* 6.4 [22].14.1–4). On individuals in Plotinus, see Blumenthal 1966, 61–80; 1971, 55–63.

37. While these three define the *ontological* levels of the Barbelo Aeon, it also contains a fourth entity, the Triple Male Child, a kind of transitional or transformational figure who mediates the mutual transfer between “the all-perfect ones who exist together” in Protophanes

Mediating between the Unknowable One and the threefold Aeon of Barbelo is the Triple Powered One, an intermediary agent endowed with the three powers of Existence, Vitality, and Mentality (or Blessedness).³⁸ The Triple Powered One is the emanative means by which the supreme One generates the Aeon of Barbelo in three phases. 1) In its initial phase as a purely infinitival Existence (ὑπαρχις or ὀντότης), it is latent within and identical with the supreme One; 2) in its emanative phase it is an indeterminate Vitality (ζωότης) that proceeds forth from the One; and 3) in its final phase it is a Mentality (νοήτης) that contemplates its source in the supreme One and, thereby delimited, takes on the character of determinate being as the intellectual Aeon of Barbelo.

While these notions are more or less common to *Zostrianos* and *Marsanes* and are perhaps reflected also in the *Three Steles of Seth*, *Allogenes* seems to take an additional and innovative step by arranging the Triple Powered One's three powers into an enneadic structure, a hierarchy of three horizontal triads where,

and the "perfect individuals" in Autogenes; as such, he is apparently called "Savior. Rather than defining a separate ontological level in the Barbelo Aeon, the Triple Male Child, a term deriving from "triple male" as a traditional epithet of Barbelo in the *Apocryphon of John* and *Trimorphic Protennoia*, represents the three-in-one character of Barbelo as the Invisible Spirit's First Thought or offspring who is one, yet both generates multiplicity (in particular the ontological triplicity of the Barbelo Aeon itself; cf. *Steles Seth* VII.120.17–121.11) and maintains its unity.

38. A certain variability occurs in the Existence–Vitality–Mentality (or Existence–Vitality–Blessedness) nomenclature for the three powers of the Triple Powered One found in the Platonizing Sethian treatises. The *Three Steles of Seth* (VII.124.25–34; 125.28–32) consistently maintains the sequence Being–Life–Mind that became canonical among post-Iamblichian Neoplatonists. In *Allogenes* there is a brief instance of the reverse sequence of the non-canonical order (1.49.26–27: Vitality and Mentality and Substantiality—followed immediately by the canonical order!), but everywhere else one finds the canonical order in reverse (XI.59.9–60.35: Blessedness–Vitality–Existence; 61.32–39: Mind–Life–Existence). In *Zost.* VIII.13.27–18.4 the triad occurs in the reversed non-canonical order Vitality–Blessedness–Existence (also coordinated with the figures of Autogenes, Protophanes, and Kalyptos in the Aeon of Barbelo), but also in the canonical order Existence–Life–Blessedness in 20.16–24 and in 64.13–75.21 + 80.10–25 where *Zostrianos* draws upon the common source it shares with Marius Victorinus (*Adv. Ar.* 1.49.9–50.21), a source apparently deriving from some kind of epitome or commentary on the first hypothesis of Plato's *Parmenides*. One may suggest that the order Being–Mind–Life, deriving from the influence of *Tim.* 39e and *Soph.* 248e, is used mainly in "noological" contexts where the structure of Intellect and its relation to Soul is of uppermost concern, while the order Being–Life–Mind, is used mainly in ontogenetic contexts where the relation of the determinate being described in Hypothesis II of the *Parmenides* to its indeterminate, unitary source described in Hypothesis I is of uppermost concern, e.g., Plotinus, *Enn.* 6.6 [34].8.17–22: "First, then, we take Being as first in order; then Mind, then that which has Life, for this appears already to 'contain all things' (*Tim.* 31a4; cf. *Parm.* 145c), while Mind, as the act of Being, is second. Thus it is clear that numbers cannot depend upon that which has Life, since unity and duality existed before that, nor would it depend on mind, as before that was being, which is both one and many (*Parm.* 145a2)"; cf. also *Enn.* 6.7 [38].17.6–43, cited in Appendix 6 (p. 164).

at each successively lower deployment of the triad, each term cyclically predominates and includes the other two.³⁹ Thus 1) at the level of the Invisible Spirit and/or Unknowable One, the Being-Life-Mind triad is present as pure infinitival activity (Existing, Living, Thinking, though dominantly Existing); 2) on the level of the Triple-Powered One, it is present as a triad of abstract qualities (Existence, Vitality, Mentality/Blessedness, though dominantly Vitality); and 3) on the level of the Barbelo Aeon, it is present as an implicit triad of substantial realities, (Being, Life, and Mind, though dominantly Mind).⁴⁰

As the entity that mediates between the Unknowable One/Invisible Spirit and the Aeon of Barbelo, the Triple Powered One is the most distinctive metaphysical innovation of the Platonizing Sethian treatises. But there are a host of ambiguities in the ontological relationship between this Invisible Spirit and its Triple Power. Thus the *Three Steles of Seth* tends to portray the Triple Powered One as a dynamic structure inherent in the second principle Barbelo, while *Zostrianos* tends to portray it as the Invisible Spirit's inherent three-fold power. On the other hand, *Allogenes* and *Marsanes* tend to hypostatize the Triple Powered One by identifying its *median* processional phase (e.g., Vitality/Life/Activity) as a quasi-hypostatic "Triple Powered One" (or Triple-Powered Invisible Spirit) interposed between the supreme Unknowable One and the Aeon of Barbelo, while in its initial and final phases, it actually *is* these two.⁴¹

39. See passages A and B from *Allogenes*, Appendix 4 (p. 162–63). The same notion is found in Victorinus, *Adv. Ar.* 4.5.36–45: "Thus ὄντοτης, that is existentiality or essentiality, or ζωότης, that is vitality, that is the primary power of universal life, that is the primary life and source of living for all things, and likewise νοότης, the force, virtue, power, or substance or nature of thought, these powers, then, must be understood as three in one, but such that one names them and defines their proper being by the aspect according to which each has a predominating property. For there is none of them that is not triple, since being is being only if it lives, that is, is in life; likewise living: there is no living that lacks knowledge of the act of living. Appearing as a mixture, in reality they are simple, but with a simplicity that is triple."

40. *Allogenes* XI.61.32–39 (exists, lives, knows); 49.26–37 (substantiality, vitality, mentality); 49.14–19 + 46.32–36 + 51.8–21 (being, life, intellect; cf. *Steles Seth* VII.123.18–26: "Because of you (Barbelo) is Life: from you comes Life. Because of you is Intellect: from you comes Intellect. You are Intellect: you are a universe of truth. You are a triple power: you are a threefold; truly, you are thrice replicated, O aeon of aeons!").

41. The Triple Powered One is mentioned sometimes separately from the Invisible Spirit (*Zost.* VIII.15.18; 17.7; 24.9–10; 93.6–9; 124.3–4; *Allogenes* XI.45.13–30; 52.19; 52.30–33; 53.30; 61.1–22 and *Marsanes* X.4.13–19; 6.19; 8.11; 9.25; 14.22–23; 15.1–3); sometimes as identical with or in close conjunction with the Invisible Spirit (*Zost.* VIII.20.15–18; 24.12–13; 63.7–8; 74.3–16; 79.16–23; 80.11–20; 87.13–14; 97.2–3; 118.11–12; 123.19–20; 128.20–21; *Allogenes* XI.47.8–9; 51.8–9; 58.25; 66.33–34; *Steles Seth* VII.121.31–32; *Marsanes* X.7.16–17 [the "activity" of the Invisible Spirit]; 7.27–29; 8.5–7), often called "the Triple Powered Invisible Spirit" or "the invisible spiritual Triple Powered One"; and sometimes in conjunction with Barbelo (*Steles Seth* VII.120.21–22; 121.32–33; 123.18–30; *Marsanes* X.8.19–20; 9.7–20; 10.8–11). As the activ-

THE ANONYMOUS COMMENTARY ON THE PARMENIDES AND THE PLATONIZING SETHIAN TREATISES

The closest contemporarily attested non-Sethian parallel to this sequence of emanative phases, Existence, Life, and Intellect, is apparently to be found in the anonymous Turin *Commentary on the Parmenides*.⁴² First published by Wilhelm Kroll in 1892, this commentary has attracted much attention in recent decades, having been subsequently re-edited by Pierre Hadot in 1968—who also named Plotinus's disciple Porphyry as its author—and more recently by Alessandro Linguiti in 1995 and by Gerald Bechtle in 1999, who located it in a pre-Plotinian Middle Platonic milieu.⁴³

According to the *Commentary*, there are two “Ones,” a first One whom the *Parmenides*' first hypothesis describes as altogether beyond the realm of determinate being, and a second One, the prototype of all true, determinate being, to be identified with the “One-Being” of the second *Parmenidean* hypothesis.⁴⁴ The second One—conceived as a divine Intellect—is said to originate by unfolding from the absolute infinitival existence of the supreme One in three successive phases or activities (ἐνεργεῖαι). First, as a pure infinitival Existence (εἶναι or ὑπαρξις), the second One is a purely potential Intellect prefigured in the absolute being of the supreme first One. In the final phase, it has become identical with the determinate or participial being (τὸ ὄν) of Intellect proper, the second hypostasis; it has now become the hypostatic instantiation of its idea, the absolute being (τὸ εἶναι) of its prefiguration in the first One. The transitional phase between the first and final phases of Intellect in effect constitutes a median phase in which Intellect proceeds forth from the first One as an indeterminate Life.⁴⁵

ity of the Invisible Spirit, the Triple Powered One is perhaps identical with all three in *Marsanes* X.7.1–9, 29.

42. At least some of the ambiguities surrounding the status of the Triple Powered One may therefore be partially explained by postulating its possible dependence on the *Commentary*'s doctrine of the two “Ones” of the first and second *Parmenidean* hypotheses and its subtle distinctions between the First One, the prefigurative existence of the Second One in the First, and the resultant determinate being of the Second as “another One” (ἄλλο τι ἔν). Although the First One is altogether beyond determinate being, it nevertheless “contains” the prefigurative infinitival being of the Second One (τὸ <ἐ>ν ἄλλο ἐξ αὐτοῦ ἔχει ἐκκλινόμενον τὸ εἶναι) that becomes defined as fully determinate Being (τὸ ὄν) and Intellect (*Anon. in Parm.* 12.22–35; see citation A in Appendix 5, p. 163).

43. See Kroll 1892, 599–627; Hadot 1961, 410–38; 1960, 107–57; 1968, 2:64–113; Linguiti 1995, 3:63–202 (text, translation, commentary), 601–612 and 649 (indices); and most recently Bechtle 1999a.

44. *Anon. in Parm.* 12.16–35 (see citation A in Appendix 5 [p. 163])

45. *Anon. in Parm.* 14.21 (see citation B in Appendix 5 [p. 163]); similarly Plotinus, *Enn.* 6.7 [38].17.6–43 (see Appendix 6 [p. 164]). Looked at from below, whether conceived as the *Commentary*'s “second One” or as the Barbelo Aeon of the Sethian treatises, or even as the Plo-

NEGATIVE THEOLOGY AND THE THEOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION OF THE *PARMENIDES*

According to the *Apocryphon of John*, *Zostrianos*, and *Allogenes*, the supreme Invisible Spirit or Unknowable One of Sethian theology, like the Plotinian One, can only be characterized negatively and as superlative to all else. These treatises each feature negative theologies that combine the two classical approaches to the knowledge of the supreme deity, known as the *via negativa* and *via eminentiae*.⁴⁶ It is also clear that these negative theologies have drawn upon common sources, quite likely certain Middle Platonic epitomes of or commentaries on Plato's *Parmenides*, especially its first hypothesis (137c–142a). One such source is shared by *Allogenes* and the *Apocryphon of John*, while another is shared by *Zostrianos* and Marius Victorinus.

In the first instance, *Allogenes* (XI.62.28–63.25) and both the shorter and longer versions of the *Apocryphon of John* (BG 8502.24.6–25.7 = NHC II.3.18–33) share a nearly word-for-word parallel series of such negative predications: the supreme One or Monad is immeasurable, ineffable, incomprehensible, neither limited nor unlimited, neither corporeal nor incorporeal, neither large nor small, lacks quantity or quality, is not among existent things, and experiences neither eternity nor time. Stated in positive terms, he is superior to any conceivable attribute, including superiority itself.⁴⁷

tinian Intellect, the divine Intellect is a “traveling subject” that deploys itself, or “lives forth,” beginning from the transcendent “being” of the supreme One—conceived as a self-contained static activity beyond either determination or indetermination—in three phases: 1) an initial stage of indeterminate or infinitival being (εἶναι, ὑπαρξίς) interior to the One, a pure act prior to but prefiguring determinate being (τὸ ὄν); 2) the going forth of “being-in-the-process-of-determination,” a boundless “otherness” or trace of Life or Vitality proceeding from the One; and 3) a final stage in which this indeterminate Life becomes defined as determinate being (τὸ ὄν) by an act of contemplative reversion upon its own prefiguration still present in the supreme One.

46. The *via negativa* is implemented by negative predications followed by an adversative elative clause: either triple negation, “it is neither X nor Y nor Z, but it is something superior” or double, antithetical negation, “it is neither X nor non-X, but it is something superior” or just a single negation, “it is not X but it is superior to X. The “but” clause is always positive and elative, referring to “something else” above, beyond, superior to the previously negated predications. Thus negation of all alternatives on one level of thought launches the mind to upward to a new, more eminent level of insight.

47. See the table of parallel passages in Appendix 7 (pp. 164–65).

Similar negative theologies are found not only in Middle Platonic philosophical and patristic authors such as Alcinous,⁴⁸ Aristides,⁴⁹ and Clement of Alexandria,⁵⁰ but also in Gnostic sources such as Basilides,⁵¹ *Eugnostos the Blessed* (NHC III.71.13–72.6), and the Valentinian *Tripartite Tractate* (NHC I.51.28–55.14). As Eric Dodds showed in 1928, 132–33, such negative theologies are only a natural development of Plato's doctrine of the Good "beyond being in power and dignity" in *Resp.* 509b and the speculations about the non-being of the One in the first hypothesis of the *Parmenides*. Hypothesis I of the *Parmenides* (137c–142a) presents an absolutely pure, unique and unqualified "One," which cannot properly be said to "be" at all. Since possession of any attribute such as "being" in a given subject entails a measure of plurality by which its unity is thereby compromised, all one can do is resort to negative predicates or deny it any predicates whatsoever.⁵²

While Plato had applied this reasoning to Parmenides' argument for the absolute unity of the universe, these Middle Platonic sources take the innovative step of applying this absolute unity to a supreme God that transcends the universe, thereby converting the *Parmenides* into a theological treatise.⁵³ As John Whittaker once pointed out (1976, 156–59), these negative theologies (he discusses those of Alcinous and Clement) are mutually dependent upon a "theologically inclined Middle Platonic commentary upon," or "a Middle Platonic theologico-metaphysical adaptation of the first hypothesis of Plato's *Parmenides*." As I have here argued in the case of Moderatus and Numenius, not all Middle

48. Alcinous, *Didask.* 10.3–4 [= 164.28–165.14 Whittaker-Louis]. On such negative theologies, see Wolfson 1957, 145–56; also Whittaker 1960, 109–25; 1973, 77–86; 1969c, 91–104; 1984; 1990; Mansfeld 1988, 92–117; Jufresa 1981, 1–15; Mortley 1986, 1:125–58; Van den Broek 1988, 202–18.

49. Aristides, *Apologia* 1:3 Vona = 1:4–5,57 Alpigiano; cf. Syriac 35 Harris.

50. Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 5.12.81.4.1–82.4.1.

51. Ca. 125 C.E., cited in Hippolytus, *Ref.* 7.20.2–21.1.

52. The non-existence of the One follows because it is neither a whole nor made up of parts (137c–d); it has neither beginning, nor middle, nor end (137d); it is shapeless, neither round nor straight (137d–138a); it is not anywhere, neither in another nor in itself (138a–b); it is neither at rest nor in motion (138b–139b); it is neither other than nor the same as itself or another (139b–e); it is neither similar nor dissimilar to itself or another (139e–140b); it is without measure or sameness and so is neither equal to nor larger than nor smaller than itself or another (140b–c); it is has nothing to do with time or any length of time since it is neither the same age as nor older nor younger than itself or another (140e–141d); it neither was nor will be nor is (141d–e); "Therefore the one in no sense is."

53. In their introduction to vol. 2 of Proclus's *Platonic Theology*, Saffrey and Westerink (1974, 2:xxx–xxxv) have rejected any Middle Platonic tradition of writing "metaphysical" or theological commentaries on the *Parmenides* and reaffirm Plotinus's originality in introducing the *Parmenides* into the study of Platonism. In my view, the negative theologies of these Middle Platonic and Gnostic sources demonstrate that this cannot be the case.

Platonists regarded the *Parmenides* as a mere “logical exercise book.” Like these Neopythagorean Platonists, the negative theologies of Alcinous and Clement of Alexandria as well as those of these Sethian treatises that likely depend Middle Platonic sources provide—in Whittaker’s words—“incontestable proof of a pre-Plotinian theological interpretation of the first hypothesis of the *Parmenides*.”

ZOSTRIANOS AND VICTORINUS: OTHER PARMENIDES COMMENTARIES?

In addition to the *Parmenides*-inspired negative theological source shared in common between the *Apocryphon of John* and *Allogenes*, Michel Tardieu and Pierre Hadot have recently drawn attention to what may be yet another instance of such a theological commentary on—or epitome of—Plato’s *Parmenides* that underlies another common negative theological source, this time shared virtually word-for-word between *Zostrianos* and book 1b of Marius Victorinus’s treatise *Against Arius*.⁵⁴ Here both *Zostrianos* (VIII.64.13–66.11) and Victorinus (*Adv. Ar.* 1.49.9–40) characterize the supreme deity by means of a negative (the *via negativa*) and superlative theology (the *via eminentiae*), supplemented by a long series of positive affirmations about the One’s identity as a threefold Spirit (VIII.66.14–68,13; 74.17–75.21 and *Adv. Ar.* 1.50.1–21).⁵⁵

In the negative theology common to *Zostrianos* and Victorinus, the negative attributes of the Spirit—such as immeasurable, invisible, indiscernible, and partless—mostly derive from the first hypothesis of the *Parmenides* (137c–142a), while others are transferred from the *Phaedrus* or derive from the description of matter in the *Timaeus*.⁵⁶ Such attributes are not typical Neoplatonic designations of the One, but more like the sort of scholastic formulations to be found in the Middle Platonic commentaries and treatises by Severus, Cronius, Numenius, Gaius, Atticus, and Alexander that were read in the meetings of Plotinus’s circle.⁵⁷

The Generation of a Second One?

But—while it seems virtually certain that this common source constituted a theological interpretation of the first hypothesis of Plato’s *Parmenides*—is it also

54. Tardieu 1996, 7–114 and Hadot 1996, 117–25. See also Turner in Barry et al. 2000, 77, 150, and 579–608. On Victorinus’s thought, see Hadot 1960 and Baltes 2002.

55. See the table of parallels in Appendix 8 (p. 166); note that this gender transformation is explicit in *Marsanes*.

56. *Parm.* 140c3, 140d4 (immeasurable), 136d7–138a1 (invisible), 139b–e (indiscernible), 137c4–d3 (partless; cf. *Soph.* 245a), 137d9 (shapeless); *Phaedr.* 247c6–7 (colorless and shapeless); *Tim.* 50d7, 51a8 (formless), 50e4 (specieless); Alcinous, *Didask.* 10.165.10–13 Hermann (qualityless [and of Matter, shapeless, specieless, 8.162.36 Hermann]).

57. Thus Brisson 1999a, 178.

possible that this common source went on to supplement its negative and positive theological sections with an exposition of hypothesis II as a second One that was generated from the First One?⁵⁸

Indeed, it turns out that both Victorinus and *Zostrianos* immediately move beyond their expositions of the supreme One to expound the process by which the indeterminate pre-existence within the One-Spirit gives rise to a subsequent hypostasis: for Victorinus the Son of God (*Adv. Ar.* 1.50.22–51.43), and for *Zostrianos* the Aeon of Barbelo (VIII.76.top–84.21).⁵⁹ Interestingly, the second page of *Zostrianos*'s (VIII.77.20–23) version of this exposition applies the attribute of “unengenderedness” from the apparent conclusion of the common source's positive theology to the Aeon of Barbelo: here Barbelo is called the externalized “pre-potency and primal unengenderedness” succeeding the supreme One. Moreover, the concluding lines (VIII.84.15–20) of *Zostrianos*'s exposition of the emergence of the Barbelo Aeon also return to the terminology (“ἀπλ[οῦ/ῶ]ς,” “ἐνάς,” “Unity”) of the concluding lines (VIII.75.22–25) of the common source. This continuity of vocabulary may indicate *Zostrianos*'s continued dependence on the common source, suggesting that it too may have gone on to speak of the generation of “all things” that preexist purely unengendered in the One. Similarly, the section of Victorinus (*Adv. Ar.* 1.50.22–51.43) that follows the common source also goes on to treat the emergence of the Son as the “second One” (i.e., *unum unum*).⁶⁰

Although what I have here posited as a possible third section expounding the generation of the second One contains no instances of actual word-for-word agreement between Victorinus and *Zostrianos*,⁶¹ both authors nevertheless share

58. Apparently Victorinus's and *Zostrianos*'s word-for-word citation of the common source breaks off with the phrase “being absolutely all things in a universal mode, purely unengendered, preexisting, a unity of union which is not itself union” (*Adv. Ar.* 1.50.21–22, rendered by *Zostrianos* as “And (he is) a Henad with Unity, and absolutely all things, the unengendered purity, thanks to whom they preexist, all of them together with [...]” (VIII.75.20–25)), after which *Zostrianos* contains no more exact word-for-word parallels with the extant writings of Victorinus. But if the common source was intended as a theological interpretation of Plato's *Parmenides*, as it so far seems to be, might not one expect its exposition of the first One and its powers to be followed by an exposition of the generation and nature of the second One?

59. For a comparative table of these texts, including one from *Marsanes*, see Appendix 10 (pp. 169–71).

60. Key vocabulary shared by Victorinus's citation of the common source (*Adv. Ar.* 1.49.9–50.21) and his exposition on the generation of the second One (*Adv. Ar.* 1.50.22–51.43) include: *existentia*, *immobilis*, *intelligentia*, *motio*, *motus*, *pater*, *perfectus*, *potentia*, *praexistentia*, *praecognitio*, and *spiritus*.

61. In the first, negative theological section of the common source, word-for-word agreement occupies 98 percent of *Zostrianos*'s version and 45 percent of Victorinus's version, while in the second, positive theological section, this word-for-word agreement occupies only 43 percent of *Zostrianos*'s version and 30 percent of Victorinus's version.

a significant amount of common concepts and vocabulary: spirit, existence, life, motion, power, potency, virginal potential, virginal maleness, eternal movement, eternal appearance, desire, striving, thinking, declination, defection, downward tendency, and perfection by reversion or contemplation.

Beyond this shared vocabulary, the common theme shared by both Victorinus's and *Zostrianos's* account of the emergence of a second hypostasis is a gender transformation from female to male. For Victorinus, the indeterminate feminine power of Life emerging from the Father is rendered as the masculine Son of God by reversion upon its potential prefigurative existence in the Father. For *Zostrianos*, the indeterminate feminine power of knowledge emerging from the Invisible Spirit is rendered as the masculine Aeon of Barbelo by a contemplative reversion upon its potential prefigurative existence in the Invisible Spirit. The main conceptual difference is that, while Victorinus conceives this indeterminate proceeding power primarily in terms of Life, vivification, and wisdom, *Zostrianos* conceives it primarily in terms of an act of knowledge and blessedness.⁶²

These commonalities strongly suggest—although by no means prove—that the source common to Victorinus and *Zostrianos* included not only a negative and positive theology of the supreme First One, but may also have contained a third part that expounded the emergence of the Second One from the First. If so, the common source may have been a *Parmenides* commentary that—like the *Anonymous*—dealt with at least the first two hypotheses of Plato's *Parmenides*.⁶³

The Existence–Life–Intellect Triad in Victorinus, Zostrianos, and Allogenes

At this point, one must raise the question whether traces of this common source can be detected in sources other than Victorinus and *Zostrianos*. A clue is offered by the fact that, at the beginning of their affirmative expositions, both authors explain the threefold character of the One as containing the three powers of Existence, Life, and Blessedness.⁶⁴ While the material shared between Victorinus and *Zostrianos* is obvious, Victorinus's version also contains material absent from *Zostrianos*, but present in yet another Platonizing Sethian treatise, namely *Allogenes*. Thus Victorinus's (1.49.17–18) claim that the supreme One is “without existence,

62. See the table of parallels in Appendix 7 (p. 164–65).

63. Although there is no explicit mention of the *Anonymous Commentary on the Parmenides* in Proclus's *Commentary on the Parmenides* (see Morrow and Dillon 1987, xxiv) in discussing the “logical” and “metaphysical” interpretations of the *Parmenides*, Proclus does appear to refer to Albinus on occasion and perhaps also to Origen the Platonist (Proclus, *In Parm.* 630,37–640,17 Cousin).

64. *Adv. Ar.* 1.50.11–12 = *Zost.* VIII.66.14–20. The primal unity prefiguratively contains its emanative products, whether intellect (as in the *Anonymous Commentary on the Parmenides*), or power and intellect (as in the *Chaldaean Oracles*), or Existence, Life, and Blessedness (as in Victorinus and *Zostrianos*), or Substantiality, Vitality, and Mentality (as in *Allogenes*).

life, or intellect" is absent from *Zostrianos*, but present in *Allogenes* (XI.61.36–37). Again, both Victorinus and *Zostrianos* agree that the supreme Spirit contains and co-unites each of its three powers of Existence, Life/Vitality, and Blessedness/Mentality.⁶⁵ But Victorinus's (1.50.12–15) additional claim that the One's *power of Existence* also contains its powers of Life and Blessedness⁶⁶—while absent from *Zostrianos*—is present in *Allogenes* XI.49.26–37.⁶⁷

These parallels between Victorinus and *Allogenes* suggest that a similar—if not the same—source may have been available also to the author of *Allogenes*. Moreover, while Victorinus's example of the mutual inclusion of these powers in one another is restricted to the inclusion of Vitality and Blessedness in Existence, the excerpt from *Allogenes*—roughly contemporary in date with *Zostrianos*—gives the full cyclic permutation: Each of the three powers is mutually and successively included in the other two,⁶⁸ thus implementing Numenius's dictum, "All things are in all things, but in each thing appropriately in accord with its own essence."⁶⁹ With a slightly different nomenclature, the only other instance of the fully developed scheme of *Allogenes* occurs in Proclus's *Elements*

65. VIII.75.6–11: "The one ⁷ [belonging to the Entirety] exists in Existence ⁸ [and he] dwells in the [Vitality] ⁹ of Life; and in ¹⁰ Perfection and ¹¹ [Mentality] <and> Blessedness"; see *Adv. Ar.* 1.50.16–18: "It has its living and acting in its own nonexistent Existence" (*et vivere et age<ere>{ns} habens secundum ipsam suimet ipsius inexistentem existentiam*) and *Zost.* VIII.68,4–6: "And Life ⁵ <is> [an] activity (ἐνέργεια) of the ⁶ insubstantial [Existence] (†ΖΥΠΔΡΞΙΟ ΠΑΤΟΥΓΙΑ).")

66. *Adv. Ar.* 1.50.10–15: *unus qui sit, tres potentias couniens, existentiam omnem, vitam omnem et beatitudinem, sed ista omnia et unum et simplex unum et maxime in potentia eius quod est esse, hoc est existentiae, potentia vitae et beatitudinis: quo enim est et existit, potentia quae sit existentiae, hoc potentia est et vitae beatitudinis ipsa per semet ipsam et idea et λόγος sui ipsius*; cf. the parallel in *Zost.* VIII.66.14–21: "For they are [triple] powers of his [unity: complete] Existence, Life and Blessedness. In Existence he exists [as] a simple unity, his own [rational expression] and idea." A closer but very fragmentary parallel occurs later in *Zost.* VIII.75.7–11: "In Existence [is] Being; in [Vitality] <is> Life; and in perfection and [Mentality] is Blessedness." Cf. *Adv. Ar.* 4.21.26–22.6: τριδύναμος *est deus, id est tres potentias habens, esse, vivere, intellegere, ita ut in singulis tria sint sitque ipsum unum quodlibet tria, nomen qua se praestat accipiens, where the powers are characterized as infinitival rather than substantival.*

67. Although Victorinus's example of each power's mutual inclusion of the other two is here restricted to the inclusion of Vitality and Blessedness in Existence, Victorinus—but not necessarily the source he shares with *Zostrianos*—was certainly aware of the notion of each term's mutual inclusion of the other two in cyclic permutation, e.g., *Adv. Ar.* 3.4.36–38: *necessario et sunt tria at tamen unum, cum omne, quod singulum est unum, tria sunt*, and 3.5.31–32: *ita in singulis omnia vel unumquidque omnia vel omnia unum.*

68. See *Allogenes* XI.49.26–37 cited in Appendix 1 (p. 161) and the precise parallel in Proclus, *Elem. Theol.* 103 Dodds, cited in Appendix 6 (p. 164).

69. Numenius *apud* Stobaeus, *Anth.* 1.49.32.68–71: ἐν πᾶσιν πάντα ἀποφαινόνται, οἰκείως μέντοι κατὰ τὴν αὐτῶν οὐσίαν ἐν ἑκάστοις; cf. Porphyry, *Sent.* 10 and Proclus, *Elem. Theol.* 103 Dodds; Syrianus, *In Metaph.* 82.1–2 ascribes this saying to the "Pythagoreans."

of *Theology* (*Elem. Theol.* 103).⁷⁰ But it is *Allogenes* that offers the first known systematic presentation of this doctrine in religio-philosophical literature.

Now the final fragment of the *Anonymous Commentary on the Parmenides* (14.15–26) clearly adumbrates the doctrine of the Existence–Life–Intellect triad in the Platonizing Sethian treatises. But it seems to know nothing of the doctrine of the mutual inclusion of these powers within one another that we find in both Victorinus and the Sethian treatises. This raises interesting questions: Since the *Anonymous Commentary* breaks off at this point, 1) might it have originally gone on to develop this doctrine of the mutual inclusion of each of these three powers in one another? Or 2) do we have to do with yet another *Parmenides* commentary, similar to the *Anonymous*, but which fully developed this doctrine that is only adumbrated in the final fragment of the *Anonymous*? Or 3) is it possible that the author of *Allogenes* was the first to elaborate upon this doctrine by applying Numenius’s principle of universal mutual inclusion to the material available to him in his source, perhaps the very one underlying Victorinus and *Zostrianos*?

Multiple Parmenides Commentaries?

Two things seem clear: both *Zostrianos* and *Allogenes* were circulated and read in Plotinus’s Roman seminar (Porphyry, *Vit. Plot.* 16), and both Victorinus and *Zostrianos* reproduce portions of a pre-Plotinian common negative and positive theological source whose conceptuality strikingly resembles that of the *Anonymous Commentary on the Parmenides*. On this basis, Michel Tardieu argues that “the totality of *Zostrianos*—whose content we know through the Coptic version in the Nag Hammadi Codices—was already written in 263 c.e., at the time of the arrival of the Gnostics in the School of Plotinus” (Tardieu 1996, 112–13). He furthermore notes⁷¹ that the *Anonymous Commentary on the Parmenides* that

70. See the table of parallel passages in Appendix 9 (p. 169).

71. Tardieu 1996, 100–101: “As Pierre Hadot notes (Porphyre et Victorinus, II, p. 91,2), the formula *simplicitate unus qui sit tres potentias cuniens* [*Adversus Arium* 50,10] is found verbatim in the (anonymous) Commentary on the Parmenides that he attributes to Porphyry, IX,4: ἐν τῇ ἀπλότητι αὐτοῦ συνηνώσθαι.” The passage: “Others, although they affirm that He (the Father) has robbed himself of all things that are His, nevertheless concede that his power and his intellect are co-unified in his simplicity” (IX 1 4, trans. Hadot, p. 91). The expression οἱ εἰπόντες refers to the Chaldaean Oracles, since the first part of the tradition that is attributed to them, ἀρπάσαι ἑαυτὸν, is a citation from Oracle 3.1: ὁ πατήρ ἤρπασσεν ἑαυτὸν. In the second part of the tradition, δυνάμιν τε αὐτῷ διδῶσαι καὶ νοῦν ἐν τῇ ἀπλότητι συνηνώσθαι, the presumed author of the *Commentary*, i.e., Porphyry, no longer uses the the Chaldaean terminology, but that of the common source (in *simplicitate cuniens*) to interpret the second verse of Oracle 3 known by Psellos (= oracle 33 in Pletho, ed. Tambrun-Krasker, pp. 4, 18 and 147–50: οὐδ’ ἐν ἑξὶ δυνάμει νοερά κλείσας ἴδιον πῦρ. Therefore it is clear that all three witnesses say the same thing: 1) the source common to Marius Victorinus and *Zostrianos* affirms first that the Spirit is *in semet ipso manens, solus in solo* (50,9), then states the opposite, namely that the

Pierre Hadot has attributed to Porphyry contains a statement⁷² that depends upon *both* the *Chaldaean Oracles*⁷³ and the theological source common to Victorinus⁷⁴ and *Zostrianos*,⁷⁵ to the effect that the supreme One's power and intellect are co-unified in his simplicity. This suggests that this common source predates even the anonymous *Commentary* and that we may have to do with at least two theological expositions of the *Parmenides* in pre-Plotinian times. Or it may be that there was only one commentary—the *Anonymus Taurinensis*—whose missing portions included this common source. But then, what would be the relation between these and the *Parmenides*-inspired negative-theological source shared by *Allogenes* and the *Apocryphon of John* (let alone other similar Middle Platonic negative theologies)?

Taken together, these factors suggest four things. First, theological expositions and/or lemmatic commentaries on the *Parmenides* were available in the

Spirit co-unifies in his simplicity the three powers of Existence, Life, and Beatitude (50,10–11); 2) likewise according to fragment 3 of the Oracles, the Father simultaneously privates himself (=remains alone) and does not confine his own fire in his power, thus not remaining alone and deploying his power; 3) finally Porphyry affirms along with the Oracles that the One privates himself and, together with the common source, that his power is co-unified in his simplicity. These three witnesses coincide, yet also reveal a history. Thus in effect, since the author of the *Parmenides* Commentary unites two formulas in the same exegesis, the one from the *Chaldaean Oracles* and the other from the common source, these two documents are therefore the sources for this author, anterior to him and esteemed by him as foundational texts. Similarly, since the identity of authors 2 and 3 is implausible, the hypothesis that authors 1 and 3 are identical seems—as we have already seen, difficult to envisage by the very reason of the name Spirit (*Pneuma*) applied by the common source to the One-Father.”

72. *Anon. in Parm.* 9.1–4: “Others, although they affirm that He has robbed himself of all that which is his, nevertheless concede that his power and intellect are co-unified in his simplicity.” The commentator alludes to certain thinkers who apparently thought that the *Oracles* had located a Father–Power–Intellect triad within a supreme Father conceived as a monadic intellect who presides over “still another” subjacent triadic intellect. It appears that not only *Zostrianos* and *Allogenes*, but also these thinkers and the anonymous *Commentary* itself entertain a triadic doctrine related to that of the *Chaldaean Oracles*, although they take a critical stance towards it.

73. *Orac. chald.* frg. 3: “the Father snatched himself away and did not enclose his own fire in his intellectual Power” [Majercik] and 4: “For power is with him (for the commentator, the Father), but intellect is from him” [Majercik]. According to the *Commentary*, since the Father snatched himself away, he cannot be called a solitary “One”; as the first member of a triad, he is instead “co-unified” with the entire triad as a three-in-one unity. A similar notion of self-rapture, which seems to be implied in *Moderatus*, may possibly be reflected also in the Sethian Platonizing treatise *Marsanes* (X.9.29–10.4) when it says that the Invisible Spirit “ran up to his place,” apparently causing the entire divine world to unfold and be revealed “until he reached the upper region.”

74. *Esp. Adv. Ar.* 1.50.10: “Since he is one in his simplicity, containing three powers: all Existence, all Life, and Blessedness.”

75. Especially VIII.66.14–20: “For they are [triple] powers of his [unity: complete] Existence, Life and Blessedness. In Existence he exists [as] a simple unity.”

late-second or early-third century. Second, such expositions were used by the versions of *Zostrianos* (ca. 225 C.E.) and *Allogenes* (ca. 240 C.E.) known to Plotinus and Porphyry. Third, they were probably pre-Plotinian and Middle Platonic (Michel Tardieu and Luc Brisson suggest Numenian authorship, while Kevin Corrigan suggests Cronius).⁷⁶ And fourth, the anonymous Turin *Commentary* need not necessarily be ascribed to Porphyry, but may be dated earlier, before Plotinus. Coupled with the recent arguments for a pre-Plotinian origin of the *Anonymous Commentary on the Parmenides*,⁷⁷ Professor Tardieu's observation that the *Anonymous Commentary on the Parmenides* may depend on both the *Chaldaean Oracles* and the common source presently embedded in Victorinus and *Zostrianos* makes a strong case indeed that the *Commentary* is not by Porphyry, but—perhaps together with others like it—is a product of pre-Plotinian Middle Platonic *Parmenides* interpretation.

ALLOGENES, ZOSTRIANOS, AND VICTORINUS'S PHILOSOPHICAL SOURCES

Not only *Zostrianos*, but also *Allogenes* sustain several important relationships with the sources used by Marius Victorinus's trinitarian treatises, among which Pierre Hadot has identified four literary groups of philosophical passages. The first three of these exhibit a distinctive Platonically inspired ontology, which he supposes to derive from one or several commentaries on Plato's *Parmenides* that were mediated to Victorinus by the writings of Porphyry.⁷⁸

Group I, taken mainly from the first part of Victorinus's letter to Candidus (*Cand.* 2.21–15.12), includes passages whose object is to determine the ontologi-

76. Tardieu 1996, 112; Brisson 1999a, 179–82; Corrigan 2000, 156.

77. See Corrigan 2000, 141–77: all the apparent innovations in the *Commentary* are already to be found in Plotinus, and there is a remarkable affinity of thought between Plotinus, Amelius, and the anonymous Commentator that stems from a still earlier tradition of commentary (in *Vit. Plot.* 20, Porphyry *apud* Longinus mentions Numenius, Cronius, Moderatus, and Thrasyllus) necessitated by the need for an intelligent reading of difficult passages in Plato's *Parmenides*. Moreover, the doctrine of participation apparently espoused by the Commentator (12.16–22; 14.17–20; 33–35)—namely, that the Second One receives determinate being by substantivizing its own vision of the “idea” of being that it sees in the “First One”—is exactly the sort of participation that both Syrianus (*In metaph.* 109,12–14 [Kroll 1902]) and Proclus (*In Tim.* 3:33,31–34,2 Diehl) specifically deny to Porphyry, but attribute to earlier Plotinian-circle thought that has its root in Middle Platonism and Neopythagoreanism (Numenius, Cronius, and Amelius). See also Bechtle 1999a; Edwards 1990, 14–25 and 1995. See also Hadot's arguments for Porphyrian authorship of the *Commentary* anticipated in 1960, 107–57 and articulated fully in 1961, 1966, and 1968, vol. 1. These arguments are accepted by Abramowski 1983a, 108–28 and by Majercik 1992, 475–88, who also defends Hadot's position in her unpublished response to Corrigan's 1995 paper and in 2001, 265–96. See Hadot's most recent defense of his theory in 1996, 117–25.

78. Hadot 1968, 1:68–77, 102–46; gathered and reprinted in 2:13–55. The fourth group, drawn from Aristotle's *Categories*, is not immediately relevant to the present argument.

cal status of God among the various classes of being and non-being distinguished by Plato and Aristotle.⁷⁹ They conclude that God is not among entities that have being, and is therefore the Non-being beyond being. Like this first group, Victorinus, *Allogenes*, and *Zostrianos* all implement a version of the doctrine of four modes of being and non-being derived from Plato's *Parmenides* and *Sophist*. While Victorinus applies these modes of being and non-being to the determination of God's ontological status (as the non-being beyond being), *Zostrianos* uses them to characterize the ideal paradigms of all reality residing in the Kalyp-tos aeon. Even more broadly, *Allogenes* uses them to characterize the intelligible realms of the Barbelo Aeon and the psychic and natural realms below it as the kinds of reality transcended by the Triple-Powered One.⁸⁰

The hallmark of the texts in Group II (principally *Adv. Ar.* 1.48–64 and 3.1–10) is their substitution of the term Blessedness (*beatitudo*) for Intellect or Mentality as the third member of the triad. These texts juxtapose two Ones, wherein the Existence, Vitality, and Blessedness that pre-exist in the first One emanate as an otherness conceived as an indeterminate Vitality or Life that achieves determinate identity as the second One in a subsequent act of intellectual reversion upon its own prefiguration pre-existing in the first One.⁸¹

79. E.g., *Soph.* 240b3–12; 254c5–d2 (ὄντως ὄν, οὐκ ὄντως οὐκ ὄν, ὄντως μὴ ὄν); *Parm.* 162a: εἶναι ὄν, εἶναι μὴ ὄν, μὴ εἶναι μὴ ὄν, μὴ εἶναι ὄν; Aristotle, *Cael.* 282a4–b7 (ἀεὶ ὄν, ἀεὶ μὴ ὄν, μὴ ἀεὶ ὄν, μὴ ἀεὶ μὴ ὄν); and Proclus, *In Tim.*, 1:233.1–4: “Accordingly certain of the ancients call the noetic realm ‘truly existent,’ the psychic ‘not truly existent,’ the perceptible ‘not truly non-existent,’ and the material ‘truly non-existent’” (διὸ καὶ τῶν παλαιῶν τινες ὄντως μὲν ὄν καλοῦσι τὸ νοητὸν πλάτος, οὐκ ὄντως δὲ ὄν τὸ ψυχικόν, οὐκ ὄντως δὲ οὐκ ὄν τὸ αἰσθητόν, ὄντως δὲ οὐκ ὄν τὴν ὕλην). According to Tournaire (1996), the predicate ὄν means innately organized (intelligible or psychic), οὐκ ὄν means innately unorganized (sensible, material), while the qualifier ὄντως signifies what is stable or stabilized (intelligible or material), and οὐκ ὄντως signifies perceptible or intelligible reality subject to change (1996, 55–63). See the historical discussion of Hadot 1968, 1:147–211.

80. Cf. *Allogenes* XI.55.19–30: “the [Triple-Powered] One exists before [those that] do not exist (i.e., matter or sensibles), [those that exist] without [truly] existing (i.e., souls), those that exist (i.e., particular ideas), [and those that] truly exist (i.e., universal ideas)”; *Zost.* VIII.117.10–14: “True light (is there), as well as enlightened darkness (i.e., intelligible matter) together with that which truly is non-existent (i.e., gross matter), that [which] is not-truly existent (i.e., souls), [as well as] the non-existent ones that are not at all (i.e., sensibles)”; Codex Bruce, *Untitled*, 237.20–23 Schmidt-MacDermot: “Phosilampes ... said: “Those that truly and really exist and those that do not truly exist are for his sake, he for whose sake there exist those that truly exist, which are hidden, and those that do not truly exist, which are manifest.”

81. E.g., in *Adv. Ar.* 1.57.7–21, the Holy Spirit is conceived as both Life and Blessedness that achieves determinate identity (*identitas/ταυτότης*) by seeing and knowing the Father's pre-existent *esse* from which it has proceeded as an otherness (*alteritas/ἑτερότης*; cf. *Anon. in Parm.* XII.16–35 cited in Appendix 5A [p. 163]): “Thus the Holy Spirit, total Beatitude, in the first unengendered generation—which is and is called the only generation—was his own Father and his own Son. For by the self-movement of the Spirit itself, that is by the going forth of perfect

Both *Zostrianos* and the final fragment of the *Anonymous Commentary on the Parmenides*—although it employs the term “intellection” (νόησις) rather than “blessedness”—are clearly consonant with the doctrine of Group II, as is the doctrine of the previously discussed negative and positive theological source shared in common between *Zostrianos* and Book 1 of Victorinus’s *Adversus Arium*. In *Zostrianos* generally, the three powers of Existence, Life and Blessedness reside in the Invisible Spirit itself. Then on the secondary level of the Barbelo Aeon, determinate being results from the procession of an indeterminate Vitality from the first One when it is halted and instantiated by its intellectual reversion (as Blessedness) upon the first level (the Invisible Spirit as Existence).⁸² Here, the Barbelo Aeon results from the third power’s *post*-emanative visionary reversion upon its source, which would be its own first power or prefiguration still resident in the Invisible Spirit.

Like Group II, Group III (principally *Adv. Ar.* 4.1–29) also utilizes the being–life–intellect (*intelligentia*, not *beatitudo*!) nomenclature, but its distinguishing feature is the characterization of the first One by the triad of infinitives *esse*, *vivere*, and *intellegerere* (as well as the corresponding finite verbs and participles) according to the principle of paronymic hierarchy. According to this principle, infinitival acting (*actus*, *actio*, ἐνέργεια) always precedes formal qualities such as essentiality, vitality, and mentality (*essentitas*, *vitalitas*, and νοότης). These formal qualities in turn precede substantive entities, such as the fully determinate and substantial being, life, and intelligence (*essentia*, *vita*, and *intelligentia*) that characterize the second One.⁸³ In Group III, infinitival intellection—which

Life in movement—wishing to see itself, that is, its power, namely the Father—there is achieved its self-manifestation—which is and is called a generation—and exteriorization. For all knowledge (*cognoscentia*) insofar as it is knowledge is outside of that which it wishes to know, I say ‘outside’ as in the action of perceiving, as when it sees itself, which is to know or to see that preexisting paternal power. Then in that moment—which is not to be conceived temporally—going forth, as it were from that which was ‘to be,’ to perceive what it was—and because all movement is substance—the otherness that is born returns quickly into identity.”

82. Thus *Zost.* VIII.20.22–24: “[Existences are prior to] life, [for it is] the [cause of] Blessed[ness]”; 36.1–5: “[He] has [a Logos] of Existence [in order that he might become] Life [for all those that] exist on account of [an intelligent] rational expression [of the truth]”; 66.16–67.3: “For they are [triple] powers of his [unity, complete] Existence, Life and Blessedness. In Existence he exists [as] a simple unity, his own [rational expression] and idea.... [And in] Vitality, he is alive [and becomes; in Blessedness he comes to have Mentality]”; 68.4–11: “And the Life is [an] activity of the insubstantial [Existence]. That which exists in [them exists] in him; and because of [him they exist as] Blessed[ness] and perfect[ion]”; and 79.10–16: “[And from] the undivided One toward Existence in act move the [intellectual] perfection and intellectual Life that were Blessedness and divinity.”

83. Cf. Proclus’s (*In Parm.* 1106.1–1108.19) theory of paronyms, in which infinitives, participles, and *nomina actionis* ontologically precede abstract denominatives in -της, which in turn ontologically precede their respective substantives, by which one may illustrate that acts

together with infinitival life coincides with the divine infinitival being (*esse*)—actively exteriorizes itself as a second One by an immediate act of self-reflection, altogether bypassing any intermediate phase of infinitival living. By contrast with Group II, in Group III visionary reversion *precedes* and *initiates* emanation rather than *following* and *terminating* emanation by contemplative reversion upon the source. This doctrine is implemented in both *Adv. Ar.* 4 and *Allogenes*, but not in *Zostrianos* or in the *Anonymous Commentary on the Parmenides*, which both feature an intermediate phase of Life.⁸⁴ In *Allogenes*, the three powers of Existence, Vitality, and Mentality are identified as a median entity, the Triple Powered One, whose first and third powers coincide with the Invisible Spirit/Unknowable

precede their substantive results; an example would be this series of terms from most abstract to most substantial: νόημα, νοούν, νοότης, νοῦς (as though all derived from the causitive νοώω). Cf. *Adv. Ar.* 4.6.5–7: *ab agente actus, ab eo quod est esse, essentitas vel essentia, a vivente vitalitas vel vita, ab intelligente νοότης,*” *intelligentiarum universalium universalis intelligentia nasceretur.*

84. *Adv. Ar.* 4.24.9–20; 27.1–17; 28.11–22. See *Allogenes* XI.45.22–33: “For after it (the Triple Powered One) [contracted, it expanded], and [it spread out] and became complete, [and] it was empowered [with] all of them, by knowing [itself in addition to the perfect Invisible Spirit], and it [became an] aeon. By knowing [herself] she (Barbelo) knew that one, [and] she became Kalyptos (“hidden”) [because] she acts in those whom she knows”; here ontogenesis begins, not with the First One—the Invisible Spirit—but on a secondary level with the self-contraction of the Triple Powered One as the prefigurative state of the second One prior to its expansion into the Aeon of Barbelo (the doctrine of Group III), who subsequently achieves full determination as the truly existent objects of intellection in Kalyptos (the doctrine of Group II). See also XI.49.5–21, where, as in Group III, there is no intermediate phase of Life or Vitality, and the act of indeterminate knowing immediately precedes reversionary determination: “When he (the Triple Powered One, TPO) ⁸ is intelligized as the traverser (περὶ τοῦ < διαπερᾶω or perhaps “delimiter” < διαπεραίνω) ⁹ of the (indeterminate) Boundlessness (B) of the ¹⁰ Invisible Spirit (IS) [that subsists] in him (TPO), ¹¹ it (B) causes [him (TPO)] to revert to [it (IS)] ¹² in order that it (B) might know what it is ¹³ that is within it (IS) and ¹⁴ how it (IS) exists, and ¹⁵ that he (TPO) might guarantee the endurance of ¹⁶ everything by being a ¹⁷ a (determining) cause of truly existing things. ¹⁸ For through him (TPO) ¹⁹ knowledge of it (IS) became available, ²⁰ since he (TPO) is the one who knows what ²¹ it (IS) is.” In *Adv. Ar.* 1.57.7–21 the role of this indeterminate boundlessness seems to be played by the Holy Spirit as an indeterminate “otherness” or Life in movement. Interestingly, a similar notion—but without a trace of the being, life, and mind triad—is used in the *Apocryphon of John* (II.4.19–5.2), according to which the supreme Father contemplates himself in the light that surrounds him (cf. the self-contemplating God of Aristotle, *Metaph.* M.9.1074b21–40), giving rise to a thought that actualizes itself as Barbelo, his First Thought and triple-powered image, whereupon she reverts back to her source in an act of praise. Indeed, in *Adv. Ar.* 4. 24.21–31, Victorinus’s summary of God’s nature (as One alone; breathing spirit; illumining light; existing existence, living life, knowing knowledge; omnipotent, perfect; indeterminacy determining itself; beyond all, transcendent source of all; and single principle of all things) resembles that of the *Apocryphon of John* (BG 25.13–19: the Monad is “the Eternal, giver of eternity, the Light, giver of light, the Life, giver of life, the Blessed, giver of blessedness, the Knowledge, giver of knowledge, the eternally Good, giver of good”).

One and the Barbelo Aeon respectively. Although its median power of vitality is identified as an activity (ἐνέργεια, XI.54.8–11) and is characterized as in motion (XI.59.14–16; 60.19–28), it does not seem to demarcate an explicit phase in the emanation of the Barbelo Aeon. Thus, while emanative doctrine of *Zostrianos* thoroughly reflects the doctrine of Group II, the emanative doctrine of *Allogenes* reflects the doctrine of Group III. While *Allogenes* certainly accords Life or Vitality a prominent intermediate position in its descriptions of the Existence, Vitality, Mentality triad of powers comprising the Triple Powered One, Vitality does not seem to play an explicit mediating role in the descriptions of the generation of the Barbelo Aeon.

Among the Platonizing Sethian treatises, both *Zostrianos* and *Allogenes* show varying implementations of all three groups of doctrines, although their implementations of the emanative doctrine of Groups II and III differ. It certainly seems that all three authors have drawn these doctrines from a common source whose doctrine—especially its description of the successive phases of the emanation of a second One as dynamic activities⁸⁵—was very similar to that of the concluding fragment of the *Anonymous Commentary on the Parmenides*. Assuming that such a doctrine was not already present in the missing parts of the *Commentary*, it seems that there was a distinct source or sources that amplified its notion of a succession of three activities—static, outer-directed, and inner-directed—by offering a theory about how these activities are related to each other, namely that each activity successively predominates and mutually includes the other two. But in their implementations of the emanative doctrines of Groups II and III, it is only Victorinus and *Allogenes*—but not *Zostrianos*—that portray *each* member of the Existence, Life, and Intellect triad as powers that cyclically dominate and include the other two. Moreover, it is only *Allogenes* and the doctrine of group III that deploy these powers into a hierarchy of three horizontal triads arranged in a paronymous sequence leading from infinitival acts through abstract qualities to substantive hypostases. But such a notion is lacking in group II, to which the source common to Victorinus and *Zostrianos* belongs.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Michel Tardieu's observation that the anonymous Turin *Parmenides* commentary contains a statement that depends not only upon the *Chaldaean Oracles* but also upon the theological source common to Victorinus and *Zostrianos* suggests that this common source may have been another such *Parmenides* commentary distinct and even predating the *Anonymous*. I have also suggested

85. "With respect to Existence, activity would be static; with respect to Intelligizing, activity would be turned to itself; and with respect to Life, activity would be inclining away from existence" (*Anon. in Parm.* 14.14–26 Hadot).

that this common source contained not only negative and positive theological expositions of the supreme One of the first Parmenidean hypothesis but may also have gone on to account for the generation of a second "One-who-is" based on the second Parmenidean hypothesis. In addition, there is the question of the *Parmenides*-inspired negative theological source shared between *Allogenes* and the *Apocryphon of John* that featured its own triad of Blessedness, Perfection, and Divinity to which the One is superior.⁸⁶ Given this web of intertextual affiliations, one may suppose that several pre-Plotinian, Middle Platonic expositions of the *Parmenides* were available in the late-second to early-third centuries. Such expositions seem to have been used by the versions of *Zostrianos* (ca. 225 c.e.) and *Allogenes* (ca. 240 c.e.) known to Plotinus and Porphyry. And it is even possible that they may indeed predate these treatises as well as the *Anonymous Commentary on the Parmenides*, itself composed perhaps around 200 c.e.

Zostrianos and *Allogenes*, taken together with the closely related *Three Steles of Seth* and *Marsanes*, clearly indicate that the metaphysical doctrine of a supreme unity-in-trinity, whose nature could only be described in largely negative terms, need not be a post-Plotinian and therefore Neoplatonic invention, but already played a role in the thought of the Sethian Gnostics and certain Neopythagorean and Middle Platonic interpreters of Plato's *Parmenides*. Since this same doctrine subsequently found its way into the anti-Arian treatises of Marius Victorinus, Willy Theiler's long-standing working hypothesis (Theiler 1933, 1–74)—that every Neoplatonic but non-Plotinian doctrine found simultaneously in Augustine and in a late Neoplatonist must derive from Porphyry—needs a slight modification: although Porphyry may be the immediate source, he was not necessarily the originator. For it appears that the trinitarian theology of Marius Victorinus had its metaphysical basis, not exclusively in Porphyry or later Neoplatonists, but also in the pre-Plotinian Middle Platonic philosophy of the sort best preserved in the Platonizing Sethian treatises from Nag Hammadi.

86. See Appendix 7 (p. 164–65).

APPENDICES

1. MODERATUS'S DOCTRINE OF FIRST PRINCIPLES

It seems that this opinion concerning Matter was held first among Greeks by the Pythagoreans, and after them by Plato, as indeed Moderatus relates. For, following the Pythagoreans, he (Moderatus—or Plato, e.g., Letter II 312e?) declares that the first One is above being and all essence, while the second One—[[i.e., the truly existent and object of intellection]]—he says is the Forms. The third—[[i.e., the psychic]]—participates in the One and the Forms, while the final nature, that of the sensibles, does not even participate in them (the Forms = second One? both the first and second Ones?), but is ordered by a reflection of them, since the Matter in sensibles is a shadow of Non-being (Dodds: relative non-being; intelligible matter; Hubler: “the nature of sensibles is ordered by reflection [ἐμφασίς] as a reflection [σκίασμα] in the Matter that is in sensibles”) as it (Matter) primordially exists in quantity (ποσόν; i.e., the quantitative plurality of the forms), and which is inferior in degree even to this (i.e., quantity [Brisson]? or non-being [Dodds, Westerink]?).

And in the second book of *On Matter* Porphyry, citing from Moderatus, has also written that the Unitary Logos, [[as Plato somewhere (*Timaeus* 29d7–30a6) says]], intending to produce from itself the origin of beings, by self-deprivation made room for [ms. ἐχώρησε; ἐχώριξε, “separated from itself” conj. Zeller, Festugière] Quantity (ποσότης), having deprived it (Quantity) of all its (the Logos’) proportions (λόγοι) and Forms. He (Moderatus—or Plato in e.g., *Timaeus* 48E–51B?) called this Quantity (ποσότης) shapeless, undifferentiated and formless, but receptive of shape, form, differentiation, quality etc. It is this Quantity (ποσότης), he says, to which Plato apparently applies various predicates, speaking of the “all receiver” and calling it “formless,” even “invisible” and “least capable of participating in the intelligible” and “barely graspable by spurious reasoning” and everything similar to such predicates. This Quantity (ποσότης), he says, and this Form (*sic.*) conceived as a privation of the Unitary Logos which contains in itself all proportions of beings, are paradigms of corporeal Matter which itself, he says, was called quantity (ποσόν) by Pythagoreans and Plato, not in the sense of quantity (ποσόν) as a Form, but in the sense of privation, loosening, extension and dispersion, and because of its deviation from that which is—which is why Matter seems to be evil, as it flees from the good. And (this Matter) is caught by it (the Unitary Logos) and not permitted to overstep its boundaries, as extension receives the (continuous) proportion of ideal magnitude and is bounded by it, and as dispersion is given (discrete) form by numerical distinction. [[So, according to this exposition, Matter is nothing else but a turning away of perceptible species from intelligible ones, as the former turn away from there and are borne downwards towards non-being.]] (Simplicius, *In phys.* 230.34–231.26; [[...]] indicate possible interpolations either by Porphyry or Simplicius)

2. NUMENIUS

The First God—since he is in himself—is simple by virtue of being entirely unified in himself; he is never divisible. As for the Second and Third God, he is one (εἷς). But when he is associated with Matter, which is dyadic, on the one hand he unifies it, but on the other he is split by it, since Matter has the character of desire and is in flux. Thus, by not attending to the Intelligible—which would be toward himself—by gazing on Matter and caring for it, he becomes careless of himself. He attaches himself to and deals with the perceptible, yet still elevates it to his own character, having yearned for Matter. (Numenius, frg. 11.11–20 des Places)

Now if the Demiurge of becoming is good, then the Demiurge of being must be the Good-in-itself, kindred with being. For the second one—being double—as Demiurge creates his own Idea as well as the cosmos, thereupon (ἔπειτα; Dodds: ἔπει ὁ ἄ ν, i.e., “since the first is”) being entirely contemplative. (Numenius, frg. 16,8–12 des Places)

3. PARMENIDES 156E3–7 (HYPOTHESIS III = [IIA], 155E4–157B4)

Then the one—if it is at rest and in motion—could change to each state, for only in this way can it do both. But in changing, it changes instantaneously, and when it changes, it would be in no time, and at that instant it will be neither in motion nor at rest.

4. THE METAPHYSICS OF THE PLATONIZING SETHIAN TREATISES IN ALLOGENES (NHC XI)

Invisible Spirit/ Unknowable One	<i>Exists</i>	Lives	Knows
The Triple Powered One/ Eternal Life	Essentiality	<i>Vitality</i>	Mentality
The Aeon of Barbelo/ First Thought (Intellect)	Being	Life	<i>Mind</i>
Kalyptos <i>contemplated intellect</i> (contains True Being)			
Protophanes <i>contemplating intellect</i> (contains the “Unified”)			
Autogenes <i>discursive intellect</i> (contains the “Individuals”)			
Nature (sensible cosmos)			

A. XI 49 ²⁶ He (the Triple Powered One) is Vitality and ²⁷ Mentality and Essentiality. ²⁸ So then, Essentiality ²⁹ constantly includes its ³⁰ Vitality and Mentality, ³¹ and ³² Vitality includes ³³ Substantiality and ³⁴ Mentality; Mentality includes ³⁵ Life and Essentiality. ³⁶ And the three are one, ³⁷ although individually they are three.

B. XI 61 ³² Now he (the Unknowable One) is ³³ an entity insofar as he exists, in that he either ³⁴ exists and will become, ³⁵ or lives or knows, although he [lives]<acts> ³⁶ without Mind ³⁷ or Life or Existence ³⁸ or Nonexistence, ³⁹ incom-

prehensibly. (cf. *Adv. Ar.* 4.23.18–31: God is incomprehensibly ἀνύπαρκτος, ἀνούσιος, ἄνους, ἄζων)

5. THE TURIN ANONYMOUS COMMENTARY ON THE PARMENIDES

A. It has not been said that Being participates in the One, but that the One participates in Being (τὸ ὄν), not because the first was Being (τὸ ὄν), but because an otherness (ἐτερότης) from the One has turned the One towards this whole One-Being (τὸ ἐν εἶναι). For from the fact of being engendered somehow at the second level, being-One (τὸ' ἐν εἶναι) is added. See then if Plato is like one who hints at a hidden doctrine: for the One, which is beyond substance and being (τὸ ὄν), is neither being nor substance nor act, but rather acts and is itself pure acting, such that it is itself (infinitival) being (εἶναι) before (determinate) being (τὸ ὄν). By participating this being (the εἶναι of the first One; cf. *Parm.* 137c–142a), the One (scil. “who is,” i.e. the second One of *Parmenides* 142b–155e) possesses another being (εἶναι) declined from it (the εἶναι of the Supreme One), (106) which is (what is meant by) participating in determinate being (τὸ ὄν; cf. οὐσία in *Parm.* 142b). Thus, being (εἶναι) is double: the one preexists determinate being (τὸ ὄν), while the other is derived from the One that transcends determinate being (τὸ ὄν), who is absolute being (εἶναι) and as it were the idea of determinate being (ιδέα τοῦ ὄντος) by participation in which some other One has come to be to which is linked the being (εἶναι) carried over from it (*Anon. in Parm.* 12.16–35 Hadot 2:104).

B. Taken in itself as its own idea it—this power, or whatever term one might use to indicate its ineffability and inconceivability [i.e., the potential Intellect still identical with the One]—is one and simple. But with respect to existence (ὑπαρξις), life (ζωή) and intellection (νόησις) it is neither one nor simple. Both that which thinks and that which is thought (are) in existence (ὑπαρξις), but that which thinks—if Intellect passes from existence to that which thinks (νοοῦν) so as to return to the rank of an intelligible and see its (prefigurative) self—is in life. Therefore thinking is indeterminate with respect to life. And all are activities (ἐνεργεῖαι) such that with respect to existence, activity would be static; with respect to intelligizing, activity would be turning to itself; and with respect to life, activity would be inclining away from existence (*Anon. in Parm.* 14.15–26 = Hadot 2:110–112).

- | | | | |
|----|----------------------------------|------------------|---------------------|
| 1. | The One
(Procession τὸ εἶναι) | <i>Existence</i> | |
| 2. | The One-Being (τὸ ὄν) | | <i>Life</i> |
| | | | <i>Intellection</i> |

6. A COMPARATIVE EXAMPLE FROM PLOTINUS

Intellect therefore had life and had no need of a giver full of variety, and its life was a trace of that Good and not his life. So when its life was looking towards that it was unlimited, but after it had looked there, it was limited—though that Good has no limit. For immediately, by looking to something which is one, the life is limited by it, and has in itself limit and bound and form; and the form was in that which was shaped, but the shaper was shapeless. But the boundary is not from outside, as if it was surrounded by a largeness, but it was a bounding limit of all that life which is manifold and unbounded, as a life would be which shines out from a nature of this kind ... and it was defined as *many* because of the multiplicity of its life, but on the other hand as *one* because of the defining limit. What then does “it was defined as one” mean? Intellect: for life defined and limited is intellect. And what “as many”? Many intellects (*Enn.* 6.7 [38].17.6–43 trans. Armstrong)

7. NEGATIVE THEOLOGICAL SOURCE COMMON TO *ALLOGENES* AND THE *APOCRYPHON OF JOHN*

<i>Allogenes</i> NHC XI.62.28–63.25	<i>Ap. John</i> BG 8502.24.6–25.7	<i>Ap. John</i> NHC II.3.18–33:
<p>He is neither Divinity²⁹ nor Blessedness³⁰ nor Perfection. Rather³¹ it (this triad) is an unknowable entity of him,³² not what is proper to him. Rather³³ he is something else³⁴ superior to the Blessedness and³⁵ the Divinity and³⁶ Perfection.</p> <p>For he is not³⁷ perfect, but he is another thing⁶³¹ that is superior.</p>	<p>24⁶ This is the Immeasurable Light,⁷ pure, holy,²⁶ spotless, ineffable,⁹ [perfect in in-] corruptibility. He is neither¹⁰ Perfection nor¹¹ Blessedness nor Divinity,¹²</p> <p>but rather something superior¹³ to them.</p>	<p>3¹⁷ [He] is [the Immeasurable Light],¹⁸ pure, holy, [spotless].¹⁹ He is ineffable, [perfect in in]corruptibility.²⁰ He is not in [Perfection or in]²¹ Blessedness [or in]²² Divinity,</p> <p>[but rather he is far superior].</p>

<i>Allogenes</i> NHC XI.62.28–63.25	<i>Ap. John</i> BG 8502.24.6–25.7	<i>Ap. John</i> NHC II.3.18–33:
<p>He is neither ² boundless nor ³ is he bounded by ⁴ another. Rather he is something superior.</p> <p>⁵ He is not corporeal; ⁶ he is not incorporeal. ⁷ He is not Great; [he is not] Small. ⁸ He is not a <quantity>; he is not a [<quality>]. ⁹</p> <p>Nor is he something ¹⁰ that exists, that ¹¹ one can know. Rather ¹² he is something else that is superior, which ¹³ one cannot know. ¹⁴</p> <p>He is primary revelation ¹⁵ and self-knowledge, ¹⁶ since it is he alone who knows himself. ¹⁷ Since he is not one of those things ¹⁸ that exist, but is another thing, ¹⁹ he is superior to all superlatives, ²⁰ even in comparison to his character and ²¹ what is not his character.</p> <p>He neither participates in ²² eternity nor ²³ does he participate in time. ²⁴</p> <p>He does not receive anything from ²⁵ anything else.</p>	<p>He is neither infinite ¹⁴ nor unlimited (<i>sic</i>), ¹⁵ but rather he is something better than these.</p> <p>For ¹⁶ he is neither corporeal ¹⁷ nor incorporeal; he is not Great, he is not ¹⁸ Small, nor is he a quantity ¹⁹ nor a <quality>.</p> <p>For it is not possible for anyone to ²⁰ contemplate him.</p> <p>He is not anything among ²¹ existing things, but rather something superior ²² to them– not ‘superior’ in the comparative sense, but ²⁵ ¹ in the absolute sense. ²</p> <p>Not participating in eternity, time ³ does not exist for him.</p> <p>For one who participates ⁴ in eternity, others ⁵ anticipated. ⁶ Time did not limit him, since he does not ⁷ receive from some other who limits. ⁸ And he has no need. There is nothing ⁹ at all before him</p>	<p>²³ [He is] neither corporeal [nor incorporeal], ²⁴ he is not Great, [nor] is he Small. [There is no] ²⁵ way to say “[What is his quantity?” or “What is his quality?”]” ²⁶</p> <p>for it is not possible [for anyone to contemplate him]. ²⁷</p> <p>He is not anything among [existing things, but rather he is] ²⁸ far superior–not ‘superior’ in the comparative sense, but rather in the absolute sense. ²⁹</p> <p>He [participates neither] in eternity nor ³⁰ in time.</p> <p>For one who [participates in eternity] ³¹ was previously anticipated. He [was not limited] ³² by time, [since] he ³³ receives nothing, [for it would be something received] ³⁴ on loan. For what is prior does not [lack] ³⁵ so as to receive.</p>

<p><i>Zost.</i> VIII.64.13–66.11</p>	<p>Marius Victorinus, <i>Adv. Ar.</i> 1.49–40</p>
<p>⁶ [he is pre-principle of] ⁷ [every principle], fore[thought] ⁸ [of] every thought, ⁹ [strength] of every power. ¹⁰ [He is faster] <than> [his] ¹¹ [motion], he is more stable <than> ¹² [stability],</p> <p>he surpasses ¹³ [compaction] ¹⁴ [as well as] rarefaction. [And] he is more remote than ¹⁶ any unfathomable(ness), and he is ¹⁷ more [definite] than any corporeal entity, ¹⁸ he is purer than any incorporeal entity, ¹⁹ he is more penetrating than any ²⁰ thought and any body. ²¹ [Being] more powerful than them all, ²² any genus or species, ²³ he is their totality: [66] ¹ [the whole of true] existence, ² and [those who truly] exist; ³ [he is] all [these; for he is greater] ⁴ [than the whole, corporeal] ⁵ [and incorporeal alike], ⁶ [he is more] particular [than] ⁷ [all the] parts. ⁸ Existing by a [pure un-] ⁹ knowable [power, he] from whom ¹⁰ [derive] all those ¹¹ that truly exist, ¹² that derive from ¹³ the [truly] existent <i>Spirit</i>, ¹⁴ the sole One.</p>	<p>particulars, ²⁸ the principle prior to every principle, ²⁹ intelligence prior to every intelligence, the vigor of every power, ³⁰ more mobile than movement itself, more stable than rest itself—for it is rest by an inexpressible ³¹ movement and it is a superlative ³² movement by an ineffable rest; more condensed than every continuity, more exalted than every ³³ distance; more definite than every body and greater than every ³⁴ magnitude, purer than every incorporeal entity, more penetrating than every intelligence ³⁵ and every body; of all realities it has the most potency, it is the potency ³⁶ of all potencies; more universal than everything, every genus, every species, it is in an absolutely universal way the truly ³⁷ Existent, being itself the totality of hte authentic existents, greater than ³⁸ every totality whether corporeal or incorporeal, more particular ³⁹ than every part, by a <pure> ineffable potency being <preeminently> all the authentic ⁴⁰ existents.</p>

B. POSITIVE THEOLOGY

<p><i>Zost.</i> VIII.66.14b–68.13</p>	<p><i>Adv. Ar.</i> 1.50.10–16</p>
<p>66 ¹⁴ For they are [triple] ¹⁵ powers of his [unity]: ¹⁶ [complete] Existence, ¹⁷ Life and ¹⁸ Blessedness. In ¹⁹ Existence he exists [as] ²⁰ a simple unity,</p> <p>((cf. <i>Allogenes</i> XI.49 ²⁸ <i>Essentiality</i> ²⁹ <i>constantly includes its</i> ³⁰ <i>Vitality and Mentality</i>, ³¹ <i>and</i> ³² <i>Vitality includes</i> ³³ <i>Substantiality and</i> ³⁴ <i>Mentality; Mentality includes</i> ³⁵ <i>Life and Essentiality.</i>))</p>	<p>50 ¹⁰ Since it is one in its simplicity, it contains three powers: ¹¹ all Existence, all Life, and Blessedness; but ¹² all these are one, even a simple one, and it is predominantly in the power ¹³ of being—that is Existence—that the powers of Life ¹⁴ and Blessedness exist, for that by which it is and exists is the power ¹⁵ of Existence, and this is also the power of Life and Blessedness. It is itself ¹⁶ and by</p>
<p>66 ²¹ his own [rational expression] and idea. ²²</p>	<p>itself the idea and rational expression (λόγος) of itself.</p>

<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Zost. VIII.66.22–68.13</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Adv. Ar. 1.50.1–8</i></p>
<p>66²² Whomever he will find ²³ he brings into ²⁴ being. [And in] ²⁵ Vitality, he is alive [and becomes]; 67¹ [in Blessedness] ² [he comes to] ³ [have Mentality]. ⁴ [And he] knows [that] all these ⁵ [become] uniquely him, ⁶ for [no] divinity ⁷ [is concerned with anything] except [what] ⁸ [is his] alone, and he [exists] ⁹ [alone] in himself [with] ¹⁰ [himself], the <i>single</i>, [perfect] ¹¹ [<i>Spirit</i>]. For he dwells ¹² [within] <i>that which is his</i>, which [exists] ¹³ [as] a idea of an idea, ¹⁴ [a] unity of the ¹⁵ [Henad]. He exists <i>as [the]</i> ¹⁶ [<i>Spirit</i>], inhabiting it ¹⁷ by intellect, and it inhabits ¹⁸ him. He is <i>not about to come forth</i> to any ¹⁹ place, because he [is] a <i>single</i> ²⁰ <i>perfect, simple Spirit</i>.</p>	<p>50¹ This (One) is God, this is the Father, preintelligence preexisting ² and preexistence preserving itself in its own Blessedness and a motionless ³ motion and, because of this, ⁴</p> <p>having no need of other beings;</p> <p>perfect beyond perfect things, triple powered in ⁵ the unicity of the Spirit, perfect and beyond spirit—for he does not ⁶ breathe, rather the Spirit is only in that which is his being, Spirit ⁷ breathing toward itself so that it may be Spirit, since the Spirit ⁸ is not separate from itself.</p>
<p>²¹ He is his own place and ²² he is its inhabitant. ²³ Indeed <he is> everything. And ²⁴ on the other hand, [there] is the one who [68]¹ [exists in] ² [Mentality] and [Life], ³ even [its] inhabitant. ⁴ And the Life ⁵ is [an] activity of the ⁶ insubstantial [Existence]. ⁷ That which exists in [them] ⁸ [exists] in him; ⁹ because of [him they exist as] ¹⁰ blessed[ness] and ¹¹ perfect[ion]. And [it is the power] ¹² that exists in [all those] ¹³ that truly exist.</p>	<p>He is at the same time residence and resident, ⁹ remaining in himself, alone in himself alone.</p> <p>(cf. I, 50¹⁶ He has his living and acting ¹⁷ in his own non-existent existence;))</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Zost. VIII.74.17–75.21</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Adv. Ar. 1.50.9–21</i></p>
<p>74¹⁷ It is everywhere and ¹⁸ nowhere that he [empowers] ¹⁹ and activates them all. ²⁰ [[The ineffable, ²¹ unnamable one—it is ²² from himself that he [truly] exists, ²³ resting himself [in] ²⁴ in his perfection— ²⁵ has [not] shared in [any] form, [75]¹ therefore [he is invisible to] ² them [all. He has taken] ³ [no pattern for himself, nor] ⁴ [is he anything at all of] those [that] ⁵ [exist among the perfect ones] and [those] ⁶ [that are unified.</p>	<p>50⁹ existing at the same time everywhere and ¹⁰ nowhere. [[Being one in his simplicity, he nevertheless interiorly unites in himself these three powers: ¹¹ universal existence, universal life, and beatitude.</p>

He alone is] the one ⁷ belonging to the Entirety.]] In Existence ⁸ [is] Being; in [Vitality] ⁹ <is> Life; and in ¹⁰ perfection and ¹¹ [Mentality] is Blessedness. ¹²

All [these] were existing ¹³ [in the] *indivisibility of* ¹⁴ [the] *Spirit*. And it is Mentality ¹⁵ on account of [which] is ¹⁶ [Divinity] and [{In}Substantiality] ¹⁷ and Blessedness ¹⁸ and Life and ¹⁹ Mentality and Goodness. ²⁰ And (he is) a Henad ²¹ with Unity, and ²² absolutely all things, the ²³ unengendered purity, ²⁴ thanks to whom ²⁵ they preexist, all of them together with [...].

[[But ¹² all these realities are One, even the simple One.]] And it is predominantly **in** the power ¹³ of being—that is of **Existence**—that the powers of **Life** ¹⁴ and **Beatitude** are contained; [[for that by which it is and exists is the power of existence, ¹⁵ and likewise with life and beatitude.]] ¹⁶ **He has his living and acting** ¹⁷ **in his own non-existent Existence;** ¹⁸ **union without distinction of the Spirit** with itself, **divinity,** ¹⁹ **substantiality, blessedness, mentality, vitality, goodness,** ²⁰ **being absolutely all things** in a universal mode, **purely unengendered, preexisting,** ²¹ **unity of union** which is not itself union.

9. THE CYCLIC MUTUAL INCLUSION OF EACH POWER IN THE OTHER TWO IN ALLOGENES AND PROCLUS'S ELEMENTS OF THEOLOGY

<i>Allogenes</i> XI.49.26–37	Proclus, <i>Elem. Theol.</i> 103
<p>49 ²⁶ He is Vitality and ²⁷ Mentality and Essentiality.²⁸ So then: Essentiality ²⁹ constantly includes its ³⁰ Vitality and Mentality, ³¹ and {Life has} ³² Vitality includes ³³ {non-}Substantiality and ³⁴ Mentality; Mentality includes ³⁵ Life and Essentiality. ³⁶ And the three are one, ³⁷ although individually they are three.</p>	<p>All things are in all things, but in each thing in an appropriate manner. For in Being (τὸ ὄν) there is Life and Intellect, and in Life there is Being (εἶναι) and Intellection (νοεῖν), and in Intellect there is Being (εἶναι) and Living (ζῆν).</p>

10. THE SECOND HYPOSTASIS AS THE MASCULINIZATION OF THE SPIRIT'S POWER

<i>Adv. Ar.</i> 1.50.22–51.38	<i>Zost.</i> VIII.76.20–84.3 (excerpts)	<i>Marsanes</i> X.9.1–20
<p>50 ²² Therefore with this One existing, the (second) One leaped forth, the One who is One.... 51 ¹ But this One, which we say to be a One-One, is a ² Life that is in infinite motion, creator of all other</p>	<p>76 ²⁰ And ²¹ his knowledge dwells ²² outside of him with ²³ that which contemplates him ²⁴ inwardly.... 77 ¹² She became distinct ¹³ because she is [an] all-perfect instance ¹⁴ [of] perfection</p>	

existents, whether of ³ the authentic existents or the existents, being the Logos of the "to be" of ⁴ all existents, moving itself by itself in an eternal ⁵ movement, having its movement in itself, or rather being itself ⁶ movement ... ¹⁰ For proceeding ¹¹ as a potency out of a state of immobile pre-existence—unmoved ¹² so long as it was in potency—this never-resting motion ¹³ arising out of itself and hastening to engender all sorts of movement ¹⁴ since it was infinite life—this motion as it were appeared outside in vivifying ¹⁵ activity. It necessarily follows that life has been engendered... ¹⁹ Life is thus this ²⁰ Existence of all existents, and insofar as life is ²¹ movement, it has received a sort of feminine power, since it ²² desired to vivify. But since, as was to be shown, this movement, ²³ being one, is both Life and Wisdom, Life is converted ²⁴ to Wisdom, or rather to the paternal existence, ²⁵ or better yet, ²⁶ by a retrograde movement to the paternal power. Thus fortified, Life, hastening back to the Father, has been made male. ²⁷ For Life is descent and Wisdom is ascent. It is also Spirit; ²⁸ the two are thus Spirit, two in one.

¹⁵ existing as contemplation. ¹⁶ With respect to that one, ¹⁷ [she] is an offspring that supplements ¹⁸ him, even that which derives from ¹⁹ his ineffable power. ²⁰ She has ²¹ a pre-potency, even ²² the primal unengenderedness ²³ succeeding that one, ²⁴ because with respect to all the ²⁵ rest [she is] a first aeon. **78** ⁶ It is she who knows] ⁷ and [who foreknows] ⁸ herself, [truly existing] ⁹ as a [single] aeon ¹⁰ in act [and] ¹¹ potency and [Existence]. ¹² It is not [in] ¹³ time that she originated, but [she] ¹⁴ [appeared] eternally, ¹⁵ having eternally stood ¹⁶ in his presence... **79** ⁵ [And she is an insubstantial Existence] ⁶ [and a power] that [truly exists]. ⁷ [She is the] first [insubstantial] ⁸ Existence [after] ⁹ that one. ¹⁰ [And from] the undivided one toward ¹¹ existence in act ¹² move the [intellectual] perfection ¹³ and intellectual life ¹⁴ that were ¹⁵ blessedness and ¹⁶ divinity. The [entire] Spirit, ¹⁷ perfect, simple ¹⁸ and invisible, ¹⁹ [has] become a unity ²⁰ in existence and ²¹ act, even a ²² simple Triple [Powered] One, ²³ an Invisible Spirit, an ²⁴ image of the one that ²⁵ truly exists ... **81** ⁶ She [was] existing [individually]

9 ¹ For this reason the ² Virgin became male (as *voûç*, i.e., the Aeon of Barbelo), ³ because she had separated from the male (i.e., the Invisible Spirit). The ⁴ Knowledge stood outside of him, ⁵ as if belonging to him. ⁶ And she who exists is she who sought. ⁷ She is situated just as ⁸ the Triple Powered One is situated. ⁹ She withdrew ¹⁰ from [these] two [powers] (the first two powers of the Triple Powered One), ¹¹ since she exists [outside of] ¹² the Great One (i.e., the Invisible Spirit), [seeing what] ¹³ is above [her, the Perfect One (i.e., the Triple Powered One)] ¹⁴ who is silent, [who has] ¹⁵ this [commandment] ¹⁶ to be silent. His knowledge ¹⁷ and his hypostasis ¹⁸ and his activity ¹⁹ are those things that the power (i.e. Barbelo) ²⁰ of the Triple-Powered One expressed.

And likewise Life: at first nothing other than ²⁹ primal Existence, it was necessarily first invested with a virginal ³⁰ potential to be subsequently engendered as the male ³¹ Son of God by masculine birth from the Virgin—since in the first motion, when it first ³² appears, Life initially was—as if it defected from the Father’s power and by its innate ³³ desire to vivify while it was still interior—³⁴ externalized by its own movement. When it again ³⁵ reverted upon itself, it returned to its paternal ³⁶ existence and became male. Completed by its all-powerful ³⁷ vigor, life has become perfect Spirit by ³⁸ reversion toward the higher, i.e., toward the interior away from its downward tendency.

⁷ [as cause] of [the declination]. ⁸ Lest she come forth anymore ⁹ or get further away ¹⁰ from perfection, she ¹¹ knew herself and him, ¹² and she stood at rest ¹³ and spread forth ¹⁴ on his [behalf]—, ¹⁵ since she derived ¹⁶ [from] what truly exists ¹⁷ {... ¹⁸ ...} in common with all ¹⁹ things—to know herself ²⁰ and the one that pre-exists.... **83** ⁸ She was called ⁹ Barbelo by virtue of ¹⁰ thought, the ¹¹ perfect virginal male of three ¹² kinds. And it is her own knowledge ¹³ through which she originated ¹⁴ lest ¹⁵ [she be drawn] down and ¹⁶ come forth further ¹⁷ by the things that exist ¹⁸ in her and that follow ¹⁹ her.... **84** ¹⁰ She stood at rest [as the] ¹¹ first one of that [which] ¹² truly exists. In [another way] ¹³ [she is] truly the Blessedness ¹⁴ of the Invisible [Spirit], ¹⁵ the knowledge of the primal ¹⁶ Existence within the ¹⁷ simplicity of the ¹⁸ Invisible Spirit— ¹⁹ “within the Henad” resembles ²⁰ “within the Unity”—that which ²¹ is pure and form[less].

11. PLOTINUS'S CITATION OF ZOSTRIANOS IN ENN. 2.9 [33]

Plotinus, <i>Enn.</i> 2.9 [33].10.19–33	<i>Zost.</i> VIII.9.16–10.20
<p>9, 10¹⁹ For they say that <u>Soul declined to what was below it, and with it some sort of “Wisdom,”</u> (Ψυχήν γὰρ εἰπόντες νεῦσαι κάτω καὶ σοφίαν τινα) whether²⁰ Soul started it or whether Wisdom²¹ was a cause of Soul being like this, or whether they mean both to be the same thing, and then they tell us that the other²² souls came down too, and as members of Wisdom²³ put on bodies, human bodies for instance.²⁴ But again <u>they say that very being for the sake of which²⁵ these souls came down did not come down itself, did not decline, so to put it, but only illumined the²⁶ darkness, and so an image from it came into existence in matter</u> (ἧς δὲ χάριν καὶ αὐταὶ κατήλθον, ἐκείνην λέγουσι πάλιν αὐ μὴ κατελθεῖν, οἷον μὴ νεῦσαι, ἀλλ’ ἐλλάμψαι μόνον τῷ σκότῳ, εἴτ’ ἐκείθεν εἰδωλον ἐν τῇ ὕλῃ γεγενέσθαι). <u>Then²⁷ they form an image of the image somewhere here below, through matter or²⁸ materiality</u> or whatever they like to call it (Εἶτα τοῦ εἰδώλου εἰδωλον πλάσαντες ἐνταῦθά που δι’ ὕλης ἢ ὑλότητος ἢ οτι ονομάζειν θέλουσι)—they use now one name and now²⁹ another, and say many other names just to make³⁰ their meaning obscure—and produce what they call <u>the Maker,³¹ and make him revolt from his mother and drag the cosmos that proceeds from him³² down to the ultimate limit of images</u> (τὸν λεγόμενον παρ’ αὐτοῖς δημιουργὸν γεννώσιν καὶ ἀποστάντα τῆς μητρὸς ποιήσαντες τὸν κόσμον παρ’ αὐτοῦ ἔλκουσιν ἐπ’ ἔσχατα εἰδώλων). The man who wrote this just meant³³ to be blasphemous!</p>	<p>Zost 9¹⁶ When Sophia looked¹⁷ [down], she saw the darkness,¹⁸ [illuminating it] while maintaining¹⁹ [her own station], being [a] model for²⁰ [worldly] things, [a principle] for the [insubstantial] substance²¹ [and the form]less form²² [...] a [shapeless] shape.²³ [It makes room] for²⁴ [every cosmic thing ...] the All²⁵ [... the corrupt product].²⁶ [Since it is a rational principle]²⁷ [that persuades] the darkness, [he sows]²⁸ [from his] reason. Since it [is im]possible²⁹ [for the archon] of [creation] to³⁰ see any of the eternal entities, 10¹ he saw a reflection, and with reference to² the reflection that he [saw]³ therein, he created the world.⁴ With a reflection of a reflection⁵ he worked upon the world,⁶ and then even the reflection of⁷ the appearance was taken from him. But⁸ Sophia was given a place of rest⁹ in exchange for her repentance.¹⁰ In consequence, because there was within her no¹¹ pure, original image,¹² either pre-existing in him or that had¹³ already come to be through him, he¹⁴ used his imagination and fashioned the remainder,¹⁵ for the image belonging to Sophia¹⁶ is always corrupt [and]¹⁷ deceptive. But the Archon— [since he simulates]¹⁸ and embodies by [pursuing the image]¹⁹ because of the superabundance [that inclined downward]—looked²⁰ down.”</p>

IS THERE A GNOSTIC “HENOLOGICAL” SPECULATION?

Johanna Brankaer

In the (Neo-) Platonic *Parmenides* reception, the One is a central philosophical theme; it has acquired a status that transcends even Being. Ultimate source of reality, it is placed so far above Being that it has barely any relation to it at all. Whether or not this is a valid interpretation of Plato and Parmenides¹ is not directly relevant to the scope of this paper, which is primarily concerned with Gnostic thought. Even though the Gnostics did not necessarily seek to interpret philosophical antecedents, like the *Parmenides*, they were confronted with similar questions. In Gnosticism (and especially in the more Platonizing texts), we find a way of exploring answers to the question of the derivation of multiplicity from initial unity. This unity, however, is only rarely described in the “henological” language of the Neoplatonists—even if it sometimes tends to seem so, especially in English translations where substantivized adjectives are often translated with the indefinite “one.” The treatises we deal with rather seem to conceive of the one—which is not necessarily identified with the highest principle—on a purely “ontological” level, being in that way maybe even closer to the historical Parmenides and Plato than the philosophical “schools” of later antiquity.

THE THREE STELES OF SETH (NHC VII,5)

Steles Seth consists of a set of hymns addressed to the three supreme deities in ascending order of transcendence: the first hymn (after an opening doxology from the implied author, Seth, to his father Adamas) is dedicated to the lower entity of the divine triad, the Self-begotten or Autogenes; the second hymn to the mother or Barbelo; and the third to the highest principle, the Father or the invisible spirit.

1. See, e.g., the excellent study by Narbonne (2001). This work presents Plotinus’s henological interpretation of Plato more as a deviant interpretation of the *Parmenides*, contrary to thinkers like Origen (the Pagan) and others that were still active at the time of Proclus.

The literary genre of this text is doxology: a number of characteristics are associated with every entity in order to illustrate its soteriological function. This genre, consisting of invocation, glorification and prayer to obtain salvation,² does not really allow the reader to distinguish the elements of the underlying theological “system” and especially their articulations. Although many commentators have identified the *Steles Seth* as belonging to a Sethian practice of ascension, the very articulation of the theology of *Steles Seth* often has to be inferred from similar texts.

This text appears to be something like a reading mystery. Knowledge is transmitted not only through vision or audition, but also by the act of reading itself. In the opening lines the validity of this transmission is claimed through the representation of Dositheus, who has read the steles and transmitted their content, presumably in the literary form of the present text.

We can isolate some passages where we find some kind of technical language concerning the one. The “theme” of oneness recurs at every one of the three levels and is in fact attributed (among many other characteristics) to each entity of the triad. In none of the hymns, however, is oneness presented as the main attribute of a member of the triad, since the main concern of the writing is soteriology and thus the relation between the Gnostic and the deity (this relation being basically one of knowledge and adoration, and, in response to that, salvation).

The attribute of “oneness” is most closely related to the level of the Father: the other entities seem to participate in this attribute or derive their own oneness from this primary one. In the following passage oneness is clearly predicated of the Father, without him being identified as “the One.”

ⲛⲓⲧⲢⲉ ⲟⲩⲗ ⲛⲓⲧⲢⲉ ⲟⲩⲗ ⲕⲁⲧⲁ ⲡⲣⲏⲧⲉ ⲉⲧⲉ ⲟⲩⲛⲓ ⲟⲩⲗ ⲛⲁⲭⲭⲟⲟⲥ ⲉⲣⲟⲕ ⲭⲉ ⲛⲓⲧⲢⲉ
ⲟⲩⲗ ⲛⲓⲧⲢⲉ ⲟⲩⲣⲏⲛⲁ ⲛⲟⲩⲱⲧ ⲉⲒⲟⲛⲓⲣⲉ ⲉⲛⲛⲁⲧ ⲣⲁⲛ ⲉⲣⲟⲕ ⲛⲁⲩⲱ ⲛⲓⲣⲉ.

You are one, you are one in the way that one will say to you: you are one, you are a single (ⲟⲩⲱⲧ) living spirit. How shall we give you a name? (*Steles Seth* VII.125.23–27)

In this passage the Coptic word ⲟⲩⲗ is used with two different meanings. On the one hand, it is a predicate attributed to the highest entity, on the other, it is an indefinite noun, the subject of saying. If a purely technical use had been envisaged, one would expect that the word ⲟⲩⲗ occur in this context only in a “metaphysical” way, so that confusion might be avoided.

One is a predicate attributed to the Father, the living spirit that cannot be named. So “the One” is not a name of the first principle, but a characteristic of it. It is remarkable that the predicate “one” has no article. It should not be under-

2. For this tripartition, see Goehring and Robinson 1996, 374–75.

stood in the way Plotinus writes about the One.³ In a way, the absence of the definite article might imply some indefinite or unarticulated character with respect to the first principle.

The text of this passage continues by attributing the elements of the “intellectual triad” to the Father, respectively ὑπαρξίς (existence), ὠν[ε] (life) and νοῦς (mind). The predicate “one” might refer to the unity (of these three aspects and of his three powers) of the highest principle rather than to its “oneness” as such. The oneness is not pictured as preceding the completeness of the aspects of the triad. It rather appears to be the fullness of everything that is according to every mode of being. That this principle has no name, or that its name cannot be uttered, does not imply that it can only be described in an apophatic way. There are clearly a number of predicates that can be positively connected with this first principle.⁴ Those do not however exhaust the entire being of the spirit.

The adjective ΟΥΩΤ (single) attributed to the Spirit seems to refer to its uniqueness or to its self-containedness. It is hard to decide which interpretation is to be preferred, because both meanings make sense. It could be used in the same sense as the modifier ΟΥΔΔΩ (alone) in the next fragment. The Spirit might be in itself or alone, because it is exalted above every other reality and needs no one and nothing. It could also be that it is the *only* spirit that has this characteristic.

In another place, the text mentions “the one that is yours on every side.”

ἸΤΡ Ο[ΥΠ]ἸΔ ΟΥΔΔΩ ΔΥΩ ΕΦΩΝΩ· ΔΥΩ [Κ]ΟΟΩΝ ΕΟΥΔ· ΧΕ ΠΙΟΥΔ
ΕΤἸΤΔΚ ἸΓΔΓΔ ΝΙΜ ἸΜἸΩΜ ἸΜΟΝ ΕΧΟΩ·

You are [a sp]irit, alone/self and living and know[ing] of one that (or: because) the one that is yours on every side/ in all its parts/everywhere,⁵ we cannot say it. (*Steles Seth VII.125.6–9*)

This element contributes to the ineffability of the first principle: that the oneness it possesses does not just imply that it is a unity in itself, but also that it is in every place. This is one of the questions Parmenides asks the young Socrates in Plato’s *Parmenides*. The problem is, that if something is in different places (everywhere), it is separated from itself. Socrates suggests one could think of the oneness as of something like the day, which is in many places, but remains one.⁶ The Spirit can thus penetrate the whole reality. This representation of the spirit in a way likens

3. See, e.g., *Enn.* 6.9 [9].5.

4. Claude (1983, 109–10) considers 125.28–126.4 to be a gloss.

5. Claude (1983, 53), connects the expression ἸΓΔ ἸΓΔ ΝΙΜ (“on every side,” “everywhere,” “in all [its] parts”) with the following negation and translates «aucunement». Schenke (2003a, 630), has, “denn, den einen, den du überall hast, können wir nicht aussprechen.”

6. See Plato, *Parm.* 131b Diès.

that of the Stoic πνεῦμα.⁷ The transcendent Father is thus also an immanent principle that pervades the entire reality.

It should be noted that we have here a definite one. This one is possessed by the Father, it is not identified with him. The possession might be a way to express attribution. The one does not appear as an entity or level of reality in itself, but as the oneness possessed by the Father. The aspect “one” is subordinated in a way to the aspect “spirit” or “Father,” which are more appropriate ways to name the first principle —because they actually function as names of the nameless.

That the one that belongs to the Father is everywhere might be the consequence of the mediation by the second entity of the Triad, Barbelo, the Mother, who empowers the shadows pouring forth from the one: the one has probably to be read as a reference to the Father; thus there seems to be some kind of emanation. This process implies a transition from the oneness of the first principle to the multiplicity of the shadows. The fact that they are still only shadows might express some inarticulateness that is typical for this level of being; blessedness seems to be the highest level of being in this passage, whereas it might be identified with νοῦς in another place (124.29–33).⁸

ἡ ἑνὴ ἑστῆς ἀγαθῶς· ἡ ἑνὴ ἑστῆς ἀγαθῶς ἀρετῆς ἀπονομιζαμένη ἐπιπέσει
ἐβόλῃ ἡνιοχῶν.

In the blessedness you have empowered the shadows that pour forth from the one. (*Steles Seth VII, 122.22–25*)

Again, the one has the definite article. It refers to a reality superior to Barbelo that communicates a power to the inferior level in the form of shadows, the first indefinite forms that pour forth from the one. The one can probably be identified with the highest entity, the Spirit, even though it might refer to only an aspect of it.

Barbelo has further been represented as the principle that gave rise to multiplicity: she derives her own unity as well as her threefoldness from the one.

ἀγαθῶς ἀρετῆς ἡνιοχῶν· ἀγαθῶς ἀρετῆς ἡνιοχῶν· ἀρετῶν ἐπέσει ἡνιοχῶν· ἐπέσει ἡνιοχῶν
ἀε ἐπιπέσει ἡνιοχῶν οὐρανῶν· κωβ· τεκνῶν ἡνιοχῶν ἡνιοχῶν· ἀπονομιζαμένη ἐπιπέσει
ἡνιοχῶν ἡνιοχῶν· ἀγαθῶς ἡνιοχῶν ἐβόλῃ ἡνιοχῶν οὐρανῶν· ἡνιοχῶν οὐρανῶν
ἡνιοχῶν οὐρανῶν ἡνιοχῶν· ἀπονομιζαμένη ἡνιοχῶν· ἀε ἐπιπέσει ἡνιοχῶν ἡνιοχῶν·

7. See Claude 1983, 106. The author bases his interpretation on Hadot's commentary of Marius Victorinus, *Adv. Ar.* 1.50.4–8.

8. For an overview of the passages in all four of the “Sethian Platonizing treatises” mentioning the intellectual triad and its variants, see Brankaer 2008, 72–73.

And you have given (rise to) multiplicity and (on the one hand) you found that you had remained one, (on the other hand) while you gave (rise to) multiplicity, to be divided, you are triple and really thrice. You are one of the one and you come from its shadow. You are hidden, you are a cosmos of the knowledge, knowing that those who belong to the one come from a shadow. (*Steles Seth VII,122.8-17*)

Again, the Coptic $\text{OY}\lambda$ (one) is used to express a predicate, this time of the second member of the divine triad, Barbelo. Compared to the Father, Barbelo’s oneness is secondary, because it is derived from a higher one. Not only oneness is attributed to her, but also multiplicity and division. The term $\text{WP} / \text{HP}\epsilon$ (number) is only connected with Barbelo, while $\text{Π}\text{W}\text{W}\epsilon$ (be divided) also occurs at the level of the Autogenes. The transition from oneness, also understood as self-containedness and unity of different elements, to multiplicity is situated at the level of Barbelo. She is still one, but unlike the Father, the different elements do not coexist in her without division. The same could be said about the Plotinian second hypostasis, which is intellect and intelligibles.

The use of “one” ($\text{OY}\lambda$) with a definite article seems to be reserved to the oneness of the Father. This is referred to as “the one” ($\text{Π}\text{OY}\lambda$) when considered with respect to a derived reality (the shadows that pour forth from it, Barbelo who is also “one” [$\text{OY}\epsilon\text{I}$], etc.).

The Father as well as Barbelo are also called monads:

$\text{†}\Delta\text{T}\text{OY}\text{C}\text{I}\Delta\ \epsilon\text{B}\text{O}\lambda\ \text{?}[\text{Π}] \text{OY}\lambda\ \bar{\text{Π}}\Delta\text{T}\text{'}\text{Π}\text{W}\text{W}\ \bar{\text{Π}}\text{W}\bar{\text{M}}\text{T}\text{' } [\text{Σ}\text{O}]\text{M}\ \bar{\text{Π}}\text{T}\epsilon\ \text{OY}\text{W}\bar{\text{M}}\text{T}\text{'}\ \text{Σ}\text{O}\text{M}\ \bar{\text{Π}}\text{T}\text{'}[\epsilon\ \text{OY}]\text{M}\text{O}\text{N}\Delta\text{C}\ \epsilon\text{N}\Delta\Delta\text{C}\ \epsilon\text{B}\text{O}\lambda\ \text{?}\text{Π} [\text{OY}\text{M}]\text{O}\text{N}\Delta\text{C}\ \epsilon\text{C}\text{T}\bar{\text{B}}\bar{\text{B}}[\text{H}\gamma]\ \bar{\text{Π}}\text{T}\epsilon\ \text{OY}\text{M}[\text{O}]\text{N}\Delta\text{C}\ \epsilon\text{C}\text{C}\text{O}\bar{\text{T}}\bar{\text{T}}\text{'}$

Insubstantiality coming [from] (an) indivisible triple-powered one, you are triple-powered, you are [a] great monad coming from a pu[re mon]ad, you are an elect monad. (*Steles Seth VII,121.30-122.1*)

The term “monad” in this context seems interchangeable for the term “one”: it refers to the unity of the indivisible triple power that these two levels of reality share. Like the “one,” the “monad” is transmitted from the Father to Barbelo; the latter participates in the being of the first. This monad does not reflect simplicity, but rather the unity of the three powers.⁹ The pure monad from which Barbelo takes her unity could be compared to the $\kappa\alpha\theta\alpha\rho\acute{\omega}\varsigma\ \acute{\epsilon}\nu$ of Plotinus (*Enn.* 5.5 [7].4). It is not surprising to find the term monad with reference to the first principle. In Gnostic texts the unfolding of the pleroma is often described in mathematical terms. Since all other numbers come after one, the monad represents of course the most eminent entity.

9. A similar concept of a triple one is found in the Chaldean Oracles (des Places frg. 26).

The unity, a characteristic of the two highest levels, is also encountered on the level of the Self-begotten, who is divided in every place (and thus seems to represent real multiplicity, whereas the multiplicity of Barbelo seems to exist on a more conceptual level) and yet remains one (121.10–11), probably because of some kind of participation in the one from which it derives and to which it reaches back (120.32–34).

ΔΚΨΩΠΕ ΕΒΟΛ Ζ̄̄ ΟΥΔ ΕΒΟΛ Ζ̄̄ΙΤ̄̄ [Ο]ΥΔ· ΔΚΜΟΩΨΕ ΔΚΙ ΕΟΥΔ·

You have proceeded from one by (the hand of) one, you went and came to one. (*Steles Seth VII,120.32–34*)

ΔΚΠΩΨ Ζ̄̄ ΜΔ ΝΙΜ' ΔΚΩ ΕΚΕ Π̄ΟΥΔ·

You have been divided in every place (and) you continue to be one. (*Steles Seth VII,121.10–11*)

The one is transmissible to every level of divine being and, ultimately, also to the Gnostics that are to be saved by being assembled and becoming a part of the whole.

The movement of the Autogenes prefigures the entire process of salvation. Derived from a higher reality, the Father, its oneness is shared by those whose salvation is promised.

“One” does not appear as a separate entity or level of being (even less beyond being); it is a predicate attributed to the entities of the divine triad. This predicate refers

- a) to the “first principle” which is “the one” when it is described in its relation to inferior, derived realities;
- b) to the oneness that is transmitted from the first level of reality to the inferior ones; this oneness is at each level coexistent with some kind of multiplicity. It could indeed be very well the unity of multiple elements;
- c) to the unity of different elements, or to a “whole” (τὸ ὅλον), rather than to a primordial “oneness” (τὸ ἕν);
- d) to the self-containedness of the members of the triad;
- e) to the ineffable character of these realities (that seems however “transcended” by a positive theology of the *via eminentiae*);
- f) to the salutary relation between the Gnostic (who reads the hymns) and the divine reality.

The fact that oneness is merely a predicate implies that a pure one does not exist, which is also the conclusion of the first hypothesis of the *Parmenides*. This does not mean that the text elaborates on this Platonic antecedent. The speculations about the one are not very thorough.

ZOSTRIANOS

Just like *Marsanes* and *Allogenes*, *Zostrianos* is an example of a Gnostic “ascensional apocalypse.”¹⁰ Being the longest treatise from Nag Hammadi, this text is preserved in a very poor condition, which does not always make it easy for the interpreter to have a global view of the very complex “system” that underlies the text and that might present itself with some incoherencies from a purely systematic point of view.

The text describes the mystical experience of the protagonist *Zostrianos*. This ascent reveals the structure of the Pleroma. The questions that haunt *Zostrianos* in the narrative beginning of the text concern not only the higher realities, but also their link to the intra-cosmic experience.

†‡ΥΠΑΡΞΙ[ϸ] ΧΕ ΠΩϸ ΗΕΤΨΟΟΠ' ΕΖΕΝΕΒΟΛ ΖΜ ΠΕΩΝ ΝΤΕ ΗΕΤΨΟΟΠ
 ΗΕ ΕΒΟΛ ΖΗ ΟΥΠΠ̄Ᾱ Π̄ΗΑΤΗΑΥ ΕΡΟϸ ΔΥΩ ΗΗ Δ[Τ]ΠΩΨΕ ΠΗΑΥΤΟΓΕΝΗϸ
 ΕΖΕΝ̄ Ν[ΕΙ]ΗΕ Π̄ΗΑΤ'Μ[Ι]ϸΕ ΕΥΝΤΑΥ ΜΜΑΥ ΗΗ ΟΥΑΡΧΗ ΕϸϸΟΤΠ'
 ΕΤ'ΖΥΠΑΡΞ[Ιϸ] ΔΥΩ ΕΥΡ ΨΟΡΠ' ΝΨΟΟΠ [Ε ΗΔΙ ΤΗ]ΡΟΥ· ΕΑΥΨΩΠΕ ΔΕ
 ΜΠΙϸ[ΟϸΜΟϸ]

And, concerning existence (ὑπαρξίς): the existents, that come from de eon of those who exist (ἔτψοοπ), (coming) from of the invisible and undivided self-begotten Spirit, having three aspects, unborn, having a principle superior to existence (ὑπαρξίς) and pre-existing (ῑ ψοῑπ̄ π̄ψοοπ) [with regard to all of tho]se, how have they come (into being) in the world? (*Zost.* VIII.2.24–32)

According to this interpretation—which diverges from the main editions¹¹—this question is concerned with the existence of realities that, in spite of their belonging to the pleromatic level, have come to be in the cosmos; the question thus refers to *Zostrianos*’s own experience, who desperately finds himself in the created world. J. D. Turner has interpreted the guiding question of the treatise as follows: “How can the pluriform ideal world of determinate being arise from a unitary source that is beyond, and therefore without, determinate being?” (Turner 2000a, 490). Formulated this way, the question seems not only concerned with ontology, but also with the derivation of plurality from an initial unity or “oneness.” The word ὑπαρξίς should in that case, just as for Porphyry, be understood as a henological term. We would have to do with a kind of speculation linking

10. For this typology, see Attridge 2000, 173–211.

11. Layton and Sieber 1991, 35; Barry, Funk, and Turner 2000, 239; and Schenke 2003b, 639 translate the circumstantial ΕΥΠΤΑΥ ΜΜΑΥ Π̄ΗΟΥΑΡΧΗ ΕϸϸΟΤΠ̄ ΕΤΖΥΠΑΡΞ[Ιϸ] as the main clause. If the question would really concern the manner in which the existents have a principle superior to existence, the rest of the text does not provide any answer. Even the Spirit is never qualified as being superior to existence (ὑπαρξίς) in the remainder of the text (or what has been preserved of it).

henology with ontology. In my interpretation however, the henological level does not appear: the question concerns the connection between complete transcendence and its derived realities in the world (the existents). This question is related to Zostrianos's own feeling of alienation in the cosmos. Henology is thus, in my interpretation, not a primary feature of our text. The term ὑπαρξίς seems interchangeable with notions expressing being (e.g., in the "intellectual triad"). So it does not refer to a level exceeding existence or being (ΨΟΟΠ) itself.

This does not necessarily mean that the text is completely devoid of henological language and/or speculations. A meaningful element we encounter is "simplicity," expressed by the Greek adjective ἀπλοῦς and derived forms. This characteristic is often combined with the Coptic term ΟΥΔ (one), which does not usually designate "the One," but is rather another predicate attributed to the Spirit, the elements and principles, the content of the aeons and even of the human.¹² This oneness occurs thus at different levels of being, just as it was the case in *Steles Seth*.

During his encounter with the Perfect Child, Zostrianos asks about how the Father can be a simple one and yet be different from himself because he is different things (e.g., the elements of the triad).

ΠΩΣ [ΕΟΥ]Δ ΠΕ ΠΡΑΠΛΟΥΝ ΕCΨΕΒΗΟΥΤ' [ΕΡΟΥ] ΗΔΥΔΔC· ΕCΨΟΟΠ
 ΠΟΥΖΥ[ΠΑ]ΡΞΙC ΠΗ ΟΥΕΙΔΟC· ΔΥΩ ΟΥΜΗΤ' [Μ]ΔΚΑΡΙΟC· ΔΥΩ ΕC†
 ΠΟΥΔΟΜ ΕC[Ο]ΗΖ ΖΗΠΩΗΖ·

How, being a simple (ἀπλοῦν) one (ΟΥΔ), is he different from [him]self,¹³ existing (ΨΟΟΠ) as existence (ὑπαρξίς) and form (εἶδος) and blessedness, and giving living power from the life? (*Zost. VIII.3.6–11*)

The simplicity of the Father (or Spirit) appears to be paradoxical because of his being three powers or three principles. J. D. Turner links the context in which this citation appears with the *Anonymous Commentary on the Parmenides* (XII.23–33; Turner 2000a, 491–92). The term ὑπαρξίς refers, according to him, to the pure infinitival being (τὸ εἶναι) mentioned earlier in the *Commentary* as opposed to determinate being (τὸ ὄν). The ὑπαρξίς would in that case correspond to infinitival being.¹⁴ It is true that ὑπαρξίς transcends being (3.12: ΕΤΕ ΝCΨΟΟΠ ΔΝ), but in other passages ὑπαρξίς seems to express being instead of a reality beyond

12. Cf. *Zost. VIII.44.12–13; 66.20; 74.6; 76.12–13.*

13. Layton and Sieber 1991, 35 have: ΠΩC [ΕCΨΩ]ΠΕ ΗΖΑΠΛΟΥΝ ... : How [does he come into existence] as simple (yet) differing from himself?

14. The opposition between ἡ ὑπαρξίς and τὸ ὄν is also found in Porphyry; Turner 2001, 427.

existence.¹⁵ One could ask the same question as the *Anonymous Commentary on the Parmenides*: If the One is, can it be and yet not participate in being?¹⁶ This has to do with the reception of form(s) from the transcendent realm. It reflects the essentiality of the one in the second hypothesis: it has being in an enigmatic way, transformed and sublimated. Ὑπαρξίς appears in itself without being, but it is at work (as a power) in the things that exist, that have being. The fact that it has no being in itself accentuates its transcendence and its inarticulateness. It does not refer to its being one in the way of the Plotinian One.

The Coptic ΟΥΔ could as well be the numeral “one” as the indefinite “someone.” It is unclear whether we should suppose there was a εἷν in the Greek original. Just as in many passages of the *Three Steles of Seth*, it should be noted that the Coptic ΟΥΔ has no article. The principle that this passage is about is thus not “the One.” For it being “a one” among other “ones,” as we find it in some Neoplatonists,¹⁷ one should expect there being other “ones” articulated in relation to this one, which is not the case. Central to this passage is the Spirit’s simplicity rather than its oneness. The same thematic recurs in 23.23–24.1.

ΠΟΥΘΕΙΩ Η[ΙΜ] ΕC[ΙΝΗ]ΟΥ ΕΖΡΑΪ Ε ΟΥΔ ΜΠ[ΙΡΗΤΕ· ΠΟΥΘΕΙ]Ψ ΝΙΜ
ΕCΤΟΥΒ[ΗΟΥΤ· ΠΖΑΠ]ΛΟΥ· ΨΑCΜΟΥΖ ΕΒΟ[Λ ΖΠ] †ΜΝΤΕΙ]ΜΕ ΖΠ
ΟΥΖΥΠΑΡΞΙC Η[Π] ΟΥΠΠ]Δ̄ ΔΥΩ ΟΥΠΠΔ̄ ΕCΟΥ[ΔΔΒ] ΗΠΛΔΔΥ ΝΤΑC
ΝCΑΒΟΛ ΜΜΟC·

Whenever he [co]mes to one(ness)¹⁸ in this way, when[er] he is pu[re and simp]le (ἀπλοῦν), he is filled with [comprehension], with existence (ὕπαρξις) and [spirit] and a ho[ly] spirit. There is nothing from him outside of him. (*Zost.* VIII.23.23–24.1)¹⁹

Again, the Coptic ΟΥΔ is ambiguous: it could refer to the oneness of the Spirit or it could be the indefinite pronoun “someone,” which might in its turn be determined by the expression “of this kind.” This expression could then refer to the Spirit. In the first case, it is the recipient of the Spirit who attains for himself some state of oneness. This state is then further described as pure and simple. These are characteristics of the highest principle shared by the one on whom mystic vision is bestowed. He conforms himself to the reality to which he ascends.

15. This might be the case in the intellectual triad, which consists of Existence of Being, Life and Mind (or blessedness). In *Zostrianos* the term ὕπαρξις is normally used in a triadic context, but other writings have sometimes ΠΕΤΨΟΟΠ or other terms implying being. For an overview, see Brankaer 2008, 72–73.

16. See *The Anonymous Commentary on the Parmenides* 11 (93r) (CPF 123–124).

17. The most prominent of which is probably Iamblichus. See, e.g., Finamore 2000, 256–57.

18. Barry et al. 2000, 281, translate ΟΥΔ as “unity.”

19. Layton and Sieber 1991, 73 have, “there is nothing of this outside of him.”

The simplicity, here connected with pureness,²⁰ is attributed to “one” who completely contains himself. The simplicity does not exclude the possession of different principles, which every level of being might derive from the same tension between simplicity and comprehensiveness in the first principle. There is a slight variation in the enumeration of these principles, which makes it quite difficult to find in this text a systematic elaboration of the “intellectual triad.” The question of the existence of the one in itself and outside itself (ἐν ἄλλῳ) is also treated in the *Parmenides* (e.g., 138a).

ΔΥΩ ΠΙΠ̄Ν̄Δ [ΤΗ]ΡϞ ΝΤΘΛΙΟϞ ΝΖΔΠΛΟῩ [Δ]ΥΩ ΝΝΑΤΝΔΥ ΕΡΟϞ
[ΕΔ]ϞΨΩΠΕ ΝΟΥΜ̄Π̄Τ̄ΟΥΨΤ̄ Ζ̄Ν ΟΥΖΥΠΔΡΞΙϞ Μ̄Ν [ΟΥ]ΕΝΕΡΓΙΑ Μ̄Ν
ΟΥΨΜ̄Τ̄ [ΔΟΜ] ΝΖΔΠΛΟΥΝ̄

And the [whol]e Spirit, perfect, simple and invisible, has become a singularity²¹ in existence (ὑπαρξίς), in activity/actuality and in a simple triple [power]. (*Zost.* VIII.79,16–22)

The unity appears as the product of the union of the three powers. The text explicitly states that the Spirit has become (ΨΩΠΕ) a singularity (Μ̄ΝΤΟΥΨΤ̄). Thus Μ̄ΝΤΟΥΨΤ̄ does not appear as a primary characteristic of the Spirit. It is something it becomes when it becomes actualized. This actualization takes place on the level of Barbelo. This might be connected to the communicability of the first principle. It becomes a singularity in its appearance in Barbelo²² in order to be known, as it could be inferred from the following passages. Here simplicity is a characteristic that one has to acquire in order to comprehend the superior principles. Again, it is a feature of the mystical experience of becoming conformed to the level of being it wants to reach.

ΕΥΕΙΜΕ ΕΡΟϞ ΕΒΟΛ ΖΙΤΟΟΤ̄Ϟ ΝΟΥΜ̄Π̄Τ̄ΖΔΠΛΟΥϞ Μ̄Ν ΟΥΜ̄Π̄ΤΜΑΚΑΡΙΟϞ

It is by simplicity and blessedness that he is known. (*Zost.* VIII.124.7–9)

The higher realities can only be known by like realities. This is also expressed in the following passage, where the Gnostic himself becomes simple and “one.”

ΔϞΧΙ Ν̄ΠΟΥΕΙ [ΝΕ ±ΤΟ] Ζ̄Ν ΜΑ ΝΙΜ ΕΔ[Ϟ]Ψ[Ω]ΠΕ Ι [ΖΔ]ΠΛΟΥΝ̄ ΔΥΩ ΝΟΥΔ

20. This reminds us of a similar passage in *Steles Seth* VII,121.30–122.1.

21. Layton and Sieber 1991, 159 and Barry et al. 2000, 383 have “unity.”

22. Turner 2000a, 616, compares this passage and its context to the *Anonymous Commentary on the Parmenides* where the “first One” is instantiated at a secondary level as a “second One.” In this context Barbelo is, however, not presented as a “one.” There is a relation of instantiation, but it does not concern the “oneness,” but rather the unity of different elements in simplicity. The relation between the two highest realities is not thought of in a henological way.

He (man) has taken their (= the superior entities) re[ssemblance ...] in every place, having become (ϠΩΠЄ) simple (ἀπλοῦν) and one (ΟΥΔ). (*Zost.* VIII.44.11–13)²³

It is clear that ΟΥΔ expresses oneness in this passage. Just like on the higher levels of reality, oneness is associated with simplicity. Maybe we should understand this as *hendiadys* meaning “a simple one” or the like. The characteristic of simplicity is attributed to different levels of being, whereas “one” usually does not appear as an attribute, but rather as a state. The predicate ΟΥΔ does not add any new information, it is rather a—less articulated—synonym of the foregoing adjective, which expresses the actual requirement for experiencing mystic knowledge.

So we also read that Barbelo is simple so as to be able to know god.

ΔΛΛΑ ΕCϠOOP' ΠΖΔΠΛΟΥΗ ΧΕ ΕCЄΔΜ[Δ]ΟΜ ΕCΟΥΩΗ ΠΗΟΥΤΕ

... but (because) she (Barbelo) is simple in order to be ab[le] to know god. (*Zost.* VIII.83.19–21)

According to my interpretation the difficult passage in 84.15–22, enumerates the elements that give us access to the knowledge of the primordial ὑπαρξίς:

†ΓΗΩCIC ΗΤΕ †ϠOP[Π'] ΠΖΥΠΔΡΞIC ΠΖΡΑΙ ΖΠ †ΜΠΤ'ΖΔΠΛΟΥC ΠΤΕ
Π[Δ]ΤΗΔΥ ΕΡΟC ΜΠΠΔ ΠΖΡΑΙ ΖΠ †ΖΕΠΗΔC ΕCЄΠΗЄ ΠΖΡΑΙ ΖΠ †ΜΠΤ'ΟΥΩΤ'
Τ[Η] ΕΤ'ΤΟΥΒΗΥ ΔΥΩ [Η] vac Δ[Τ]ΕΙΔOC·

The knowledge of the primordial existence (is) in the simplicity of the invisible Spirit; in the henad, which it (the Spirit) resembles²⁴; in the singularity, the one that is pure and [with]out form.) (*Zost.* VIII.84.15–22)

The three elements contributing to knowledge of the first principle are (a) the simplicity (or “simpleness”) of the invisible Spirit; (b) the henad resembling the Spirit; (c) the pure and formless singularity (or singleness) of the Spirit. All of these elements are expressed in “henological” technical vocabulary. Two Coptic words formed with the abstraction prefix ΜΠΤ-, and the Greek ἐνάς.

23. Barry et al. 2000, 323 have *unifié* “unified.” The restitution of this passage is very unclear. The context renders the general meaning more or less conspicuous: the human can attain salvation by passing through all these realities. Doing this he “becomes” each of them (ϠΩΠЄ) (44.13–17).

24. My translation of these lines differs from those found in the main editions of the text. I presuppose the reading ΕCЄΠΗЄ <ΠΜOC>. The object might have been left out because of the nearness of the antecedent it resumes.

The simplicity of the Spirit (in which one has to participate) appears elsewhere as an epistemological principle.²⁵ The henad is that which the Spirit resembles: it might be its “mathematical” expression: literally, it means “unit” (LSJ 557a),²⁶ but when used in theological sense, it came to mean “unity or oneness,” predicated of God alone or of the Trinity in a Christian context (PGL 466a). It has to do with an original status preceding multiplicity. We cannot be sure of the theological implications of the use of the term in this context, but it seems to refer to a reality that is coeval with the Spirit. It can also refer to it as a “unity” of different “principles.”²⁷ It seems to be used in a similar way in 85.16–19, where the author speaks about the one that is the henad. ΜΝΤ̄ΟΥΩΤ also occurs in other passages and refers to the singularity of the Spirit and the derived levels of being.²⁸ This concept might imply some kind of autonomy or autarchy, the Spirit’s being in and of itself. It is conspicuous that the term ΟΥΔ is not used in this technical passage. Its absence from this passage might contribute to the general impression that it is used with little precision. Its technical equivalent might be ἐνάς. This can be inferred from the following:

ΔΥΩ ΝΖΡΔΙ ΖΗ ΟΥΔΕ ΔΕ Π̄ΟΥΔ· ΕΤΕ ΠΔΙ ΠΕ ΝΟΥΜΕΡΙΚΟΝ ΔΝ ΑΛΛΔ ΝΗ
ΝΤΕ ΠΤ̄[ΗΡ]Δ· ΧΕ ΟΥ Π̄Ε ΠΙΟΥΔ ΕΤΕ †ΖΕΝΗΔΣ ΤΕ

In what (way) is he one, that is, not something partial,²⁹ but those (things) that belong to the [al]l?³⁰ What is the one³¹ that is the Henad? (Zost. VIII.85.16–19)³²

This passage might deal with Kalyptos, the first sub-aeon of Barbelo (see Turner, 2000a, 622). This is the sole example where ΟΥΔ is used with the definite article

25. See 83.19–21 and 124.7–9 cited above.

26. This is the way Plato uses the word in his *Phileb.* 15a.

27. We might deal here with a comparison with a known Christian concept.

28. See 79.16–22 cited above.

29. Schenke 2003b, 655, has *etwas partikuläres* “something particular.”

30. The entity we are dealing with is “one” (ΟΥΔ): this implies it is not μερικός, but that it pertains to the “all,” to a totality or whole (ΠΤΗΡ̄Δ). Barry et al. 2000, translate μερικός as “individual”; Sieber (1991, 167) has opted for “partial.” Both translations are possible. Even if “partial” is the first meaning according to LSJ, the other meaning is more often used by philosophers in a technical context. In this passage, the notion of μερικός is opposed to that of the “all” or the “whole.” This opposition seems to justify the translation “partial.” The μερικός is however not simply opposed to “all,” but to “those who belong to the all.” Maybe this notion expresses that what belongs to the partial, the particular or the individual? The translation “particular,” proposed by Schenke (2003b, 655), seems a better translation than “individual,” which is mostly expressed by the Coptic ΚΔΤΔ ΟΥΔ, because it also implies partiality.

31. Layton and Sieber 1991, 167, translate ΟΥΔ as “unity”; Barry et al. 2000, 395, have “unité”; Schenke 2003b, 655, has “der eine.”

32. Layton and Sieber 1991, 167, translate “unity.”

in *Zostrianos*. It is identified with the Henad. This concurs with the conclusion that Henad is the technical—henological?—term referring to the oneness of higher beings. Note that we are probably not dealing with the first principle here, but with the highest level of the second principle. The attribute “one” is also predicated of this entity. It indicates the absence of division.

There has been much ado about the parallels between certain portions of our text and a writing by the fourth-century Neoplatonic Christian writer Marius Victorinus. It is beyond question that both texts share a common source. That this source is similar to the Turin *Anonymous Commentary in the Parmenides* seems likely. Without arguing for these intertextualities, I would like to take a closer look at the *differences* between both versions.

<i>Zost. VIII.75.12–21a</i>	Marius Victorinus, <i>Adv. Ar.</i> 1.50.18–21
[ΝΑΪ Τ]ΗΡΟΥ ΔΕ ΠΕΥΨΟΟΠ' [ῶ]Ν †]ΜΝΤ'ΑΤ'ΠΩΡΧ ΝΤΕ [ΠΙ]ΠΠΔ· †ΜΝΤ'ΕΙΜΕ ΔΕ [ΕΤΕ] ΕΤΒΗΗΤC ΠΕ †ΜΝΤ'ΝΟΥΤΕ ΜΗ †ΜΝΤ'ΑΤΟΥ[ΣΙ]Δ ΔΥΩ †ΜΝΤ'ΜΑΚΑ[ΡΙΟ]C ΜΗ ΠΙΩΝΙΖ· ΔΥΩ †[ΜΝ]Τ'ΕΙΜΕ ΜΗ †ΜΝΤ'ΑΓΔΘΟC· ΔΥΩ ΟΥΖΕΗΝΔC Μ[Η] ΟΥΜΝΤ'ΟΥΩΤ'·	indiscernibilis spiritus <i>counitio</i> , divinitas, <i>substantialitas</i> , beatitudo, intellegentialitas, vitalitas, optimitas

Al[1 of these] existed [in the] indivisibility of [the] Spirit. And it was because of the comprehension that were the div[ini]ty and the insubstan[tial]ity, and the blessed[ness] and the life, and the comprehension and the goodness, and a henad³³ a[nd] a singularity.³⁴

This is one of the rare passages where *Zostrianos* has the longer text. In *Zostrianos* the spirit is indivisible, while in *Adversus Arium* it is represented as a unity, the union of different elements. The Latin *counitio* has no equivalent in the Coptic text. This could be explained by an error in the Greek *Vorlage* of *Zostrianos*.³⁵ This does not eliminate the possibility that the Coptic text as it is made sense to its public. The absence of a mention of the union of the Spirit might account for the addition at the end of the Coptic passage.

33. Layton and Sieber 1991, 153, translate “unity”; H.-M. Schenke 2003b, 654, has “Einheit.”

34. Layton and Sieber 1991, 153, have “singleness”; Barry et al. 2000, 377, translate “unité”; Schenke 2003b, 654 has “Einzigkeit.”

35. The Coptic text seems to be based on a mistake in its Greek original that might have read (συν-)νοότης instead of συνένότης. This would explain the Coptic ΜΝΤ'ΕΙΜΕ. See, e.g., Tardieu 1996, 109.

The elements of the triad have two names and follow the reversed canonical order: Divinity/Substantiality, Blessedness/Intellectuality, and Vitality/Goodness in *Adversus Arium*. Interestingly, the Coptic text has ⲧⲙⲏⲧⲁⲧⲟⲩⲘⲓⲁ (insubstantiality) where the Latin has *substantialitas*.³⁶ In a way, transcendence is pushed further in *Zostrianos*. The negation of substance might however be a quite “superficial” way to suggest a higher degree of transcendence.

This expression of utmost transcendence might be connected with the addition of ⲉⲛⲁⲥ and ⲙⲏⲧⲟⲩⲱⲧ at the end of the Coptic passage, with no equivalent in the Latin version. These terms seem to resume other passages, where these predicates are associated with the Spirit (79.16–22 and 85.16–19).

Zost. VIII.64.13–66.14	Marius Victorinus, <i>Adv. Ar.</i> 1.49.9–40
ⲛⲉⲟⲩⲱⲛⲉ ⲁⲩⲱⲟⲩⲁⲟⲩⲱⲧⲛⲉ ⲉⲘⲓⲱⲟⲟⲛⲉⲗⲁⲑⲏⲛⲏⲁⲓⲧⲏⲣⲟⲩⲱⲛⲉ ⲉⲧⲱⲟⲟⲛⲉⲟⲩⲧⲱⲥⲓⲟⲩⲛⲏⲁ	<i>ante omnia quae vere sunt, unum fuit, sive ipsum unum</i> <i>antequam sit ei esse, unum</i> <i>Illud enim unum Opportet dicere et intellegere quod nullam imaginationem alteritatis habet, unum solum, unum simplex, unum per concessionem, unum ante omnem existentiam ante omnem existentialitatem et maxime ante omnia inferiora, ante ipsum ⲟⲩⲱ; hoc enim ante ⲟⲩⲱ; ante omnem igitur essentitatem, substantiam, subsistentiam, et adhuc omnia quae potentiora; Unum sine existential, sine substantia, sine intellegentia – supra enim haec –</i>
ⲛⲏⲁⲧⲧⲱⲓⲉⲣⲟⲘⲓ ⲁⲩⲱⲟⲩⲛⲁⲧⲧⲱⲣⲧⲧ ⲛⲏⲓⲟⲩⲁⲟⲩⲛⲏⲏⲧⲏⲣⲟⲩⲱⲛⲉ ⲉⲧⲧⲱⲟⲟⲛⲉⲛⲓⲗⲏⲧⲧⲓⲙⲏⲛⲏⲓⲟⲩⲁⲟⲩⲛⲏⲟⲘⲓ	<i>inmensum invisibile, indiscernibile, universaliter omni alteri et his quae in ipso</i>

36. Several commentators think this is another error in the Coptic text and translate “substantiality”; e.g., Tardieu 1996, 109; Turner 2000a, 606. The same “error” occurs also in *Allogenes* (49.33). In the logic of the Coptic texts this appears to make sense. It is a way of expressing a higher transcendence that is beyond being.

Μ̄Ν ΠΗ ΕΤ̄Μ̄[Ν̄]Π̄CΩC·
 Ε̄ΝΤΟC Μ̄ΔΥ[ΔΔC]
 ΕΤ̄ΧΙΟΡ̄ Π̄ΜΟC Ν̄[ΟΥΔ]

]ΔΤ[±4
 Π̄ΔΤCΧ]Η[Μ]Δ
 Π̄ΔΤ[±5

Π̄]ΔΤ[ΔΥΔΝ
 Π̄]ΔΤΕ[ΙΔΟC]
 Π̄ΔΤ[ΜΟΡΦ]Η

ΝΔΙ [ΤΗΡ]ΟΥ·
 Ε[ΥΨΟΡΠ̄ Π̄Ε] Π̄[ΤΕΝ]ΔΙ ΤΗΡ[ΟΥ
 ΕΥΨΟΡΠ̄ Π̄]ΔΡ[Χ]Η Π̄Ε Π̄[ΤΕΔΡΧΗ
 ΝΙΜ

ΕΥΨΟΡΠ̄ Π̄Ε[ΝΝΟΙΑ Π̄Ε Π̄]ΤΕΕΝΝΟΙΑ
 ΝΙ[Μ
 ΟΥΧΡΟ Π]Ε Π̄ΤΕΔΟΜ ΝΙ[Μ
 ΕCΔΕΠΗ] ΕΖΟΥ[Ν] ΕΠΕ[CΚΙΜ]
 ΕCΧΕΜΝΗΥ ΕΖΟΥ[Ν]
 [ΕΥ]CΔΖΕΡΑΤ̄C

ΕCΟΥΟ[ΜΤ̄ Ε] ΕΖΟΥ[Ν] ΕΠΙΕῙ ΕΥΜΑ
 [ΔΥΩ] Μ̄Ν ΟΥΔ̄Τ̄ΝΔΡΗΧ̄C

[ΔΥ]Ω ΕCΧΟCΕ ΕΖΟΥΕ Δ[Τ̄Ν]ΡΑΤ̄C
 ΝΙΜ·
 ΔΥΩ ΕC†[ΤΟΥ]
 ΕΝΕΔC ΕCΩΜΑ ΝΙΜ
 [Ε]CΤΟΥΒΗΥ ΕΔΤCΩΜΑ [ΝΙ]Μ
 ΕCΙΝΔ ΕΖΟΥ[Ν] ΕΕΝ[ΝΟΙ]Δ ΝΙΜ Μ̄Ν
 CΩΜΑ ΝΙΜ
 [ΕC]Ε Π̄ΔΟΜ ΕΝΔΙ ΤΗΡΟΥ
 [ΓΕΝ]ΟC ΝΙΜ Μ̄Ν ΕΙΔΟC [ΝΙΜ]
 ΕΥΠΤΗΡ̄C Π̄ΤΔΥ Π̄Ε

*et his quae post ipsum,
 etiam quae ex ipso,
 soli autem sibi*

*et discernibile et definitum, ipsa sua
 existentia, non actu, ut non quiddam
 alterum sit ab ipso consistentia et
 cognoscentia sui inpartile undique,*

*Sine figura,
 sine qualitate, sine inqualitate, sine
 qualitate, quale,*

*sine colore,
 sine specie,
 sine forma,
 omnibus formis carens, neque quod sit
 ipsa forma qua formantur omnia; et
 universalium et partilium*

*Omnia quae sunt causa prima,
 omnium principiorum praeprincipium,*

*omnium intellegentiarum
 praeintellegentia,
 omnium potentiarum fortitudo,
 ipsa motione celebrior,
 ipso statu stabilior
 —motive enim ineloquibili status est,
 statu autem ineffabili superrelativa motio
 est—*

Continuatione omni densior

*distantia universa
 altior
 definitior universo corpore
 et maius omni magnitudine,
 omni incorporali purius,
 omni intellegentia et corpore
 penetrabilius,
 omnium potentissimum,
 potentia potentiarum,
 omni genere, omni specie magis totum,*

<p>[ΠΙΟΝΤΩΣ ΕΤ]ΨΟΟΠ [ΤΗΡ̄Ω] ΔΥ[Ω ΗΗ ΕΤΨ]ΟΟΠ ΟΝ[ΤΩΣ] Ἰ̄Τ[ΟΩ ΠΕ ΗΔ]Ἰ̄ ΤΗΡ[ΟΥ·</p> <p>ΝΕΔΩ] ΓΑΡ Ε[ΠΤΗ]Ρ̄Ω· ΠΩ[ΩΜΔΤΙ]ΚΟΝ Δ[Ε Δ]ΥΩ Ἰ̄Ν[ΔΤΩΜ]Δ· ΕΥΜΕΡΙΚ[ΟΝ ΠΕ Ἰ̄ΤΕ Η]ΜΕΡΟΣ ΤΗΡ[ΟΥ ΕΩΨΟΟ]Π Ἰ̄ΖΡΑἸ̄ ΖἸ̄ ΟΥ[ΔΟΜ Ἰ̄ΔΤ]ΩΟΥΠ̄Ω ΕΩΤ[ΟΥΒΗΥ ±3]</p> <p>ΠΔἸ̄ Ε]Τ̄Ε ΕΒΟΛ Ἰ̄Μ[ΩΩ ΠΕ Ἰ̄ΔἸ̄ ΤΗ]Ρ̄ΟΥ ΕΤΨΟ[ΩΠ ΟΝ]ΤΩΣ ΕΤΕ ΕΒΟΛ Ἰ̄ΜΩΩ [ΝΕ] ΠἸ̄Π̄Δ ΕΤΨΟΟΠ ΟΝ[ΤΩΣ] ΠΙΟΥΔ ΜΔΥΔΔΩ</p>	<p>vere ὄν totum, vere quae sunt omnia ipsum existens,</p> <p>omni toto maius, corporali et incorporali, omne parte magis pars, inenarrabili potentia pure (or: pura) existens</p> <p>Omnia (or: prae omnibus) quae vere sunt</p>
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There w[as o]ne and (it) was a single one [that] existed before all those that really exist, [an] immeasurable spirit and undivisible from any other one, in (concerning) the all that ex[ists] in it and outside of it and that which is [a]fter it. He alone crosses (or: transcends; cf. Barry et al. 2002 361) himself as [something limi]ted [... without a fo]r[m], without [... with]out [color] without f[orm], without [contours] for them [all], [being something prior] to th[em all], be[ing a first] prin[ciple] of [each principle], a first th[ought of] e[ach] thought, [a strongness] of ea[ch] power, [that is faster] than that whi[ch moves], that is more firmly established than stability (itself), more [dense] than the coming close together, [and] also without limits [and] superior to any inaccessible (entity), and that sets [limits], being greater than each body, [being] purer than everything incorporeal, being more penetrating than every thou[ght] and every body, [being] more powerful than all of them, every [gen]re and [every] form, being the whole of them, [the really] existent [entirely], an[d (as to) those who really ex]ist: h[e is] all of [them], for [he is greater] than the wh[ole], the cor[poreal] and the [incorpore]al, being a par[t of all the] parts, [exist]ing in an [un]known, pu[re power] [...], that out of [which (are) all of those] that re[ally ex]ist that [came] out of him, the spirit that re[ally] exists, the one alone.

A synopsis of both texts (taken over, with minor changes, from the edition of Tardieu) shows that, compared to the *Adversus Arium*, *Zostrianos* has only a limited interest in henological speculation. The whole enumeration of different kinds of “one” in *Adv. Ar.* 1.49.9–18, lacks in *Zostrianos*. The interest of our author seems to be rather with the negative theology and with the expression of the *via eminentiae* than with the technical distinctions of different ways the “one” can be one.

Only at the very end of both sections, we find a statement about the one that does not appear in the text of Marius Victorinus, identifying the Spirit with the only one. This may be a statement about the uniqueness of the Spirit rather than about its "oneness."

To conclude this section about *Zostrianos*, I offer just a few remarks:

- a) The technical term to refer to the one seems to be the Greek *ένάς*. This is identified as *the One* (the only use with definite article). This is not used however as a synonym for the Spirit, the first principle, that is said to resemble the Henad. Where this Henad is to be situated and how it interacts with other realities remains unexplored. It might be a characteristic attributed to the first principle, not in an eminent way, however, but as one characteristic among others.
- b) The question of the one is often dealt with in the sense of a unity of different elements: the one becomes one because it transcends its parts. The Spirit is the unity of the three main principles (which correspond more or less to the elements of the intellectual triad). This unity presupposes diversity.
- c) The singleness seems to be a characteristic that is opposed to partiality on the one hand and to "mixedness" on the other (which explains the association with purity). It is a necessary condition to obtain knowledge about the Spirit: the knowing subject has to assume the same condition as its object.
- d) The passage from simplicity to multiplicity does not appear as one of the main concerns of this treatise. There is a continual movement between separation and unification that constitutes reality.
- e) "One," "simplicity," and "singularity" are predicates that can be attributed to different ontological levels: they do not constitute a separate reality beyond being (there is nothing beyond existence in this text).
- f) The comparison with the *Adversus Arium* of Marius Victorinus shows that our author was less concerned by henology than by the articulation of a negative and a positive (eminent) theology.

ALLOGENES

Even though *Allogenes* is probably the most systematic treatise of the family that has been referred to as "Platonizing Sethian treatises," it shows very few traces of henological speculation, even if there is a clearly expressed concept of a reality, not only beyond being, but even beyond existence (ΔΤΖΥΠΔΡΞΙΘ). In *Allogenes* transcendence is pushed to its extreme. This utmost transcendent entity is, however, never identified with the one.

Three of the occurrences of what might refer to speculations about one and

oneness are found in the first, the mythological, part of the treatise,³⁷ that is, the revelations by Youel concerning mainly the aeon of Barbelo and its sub-aeons, Kalypotos, Protophanes, and Autogenes. The second part of the text (from 59.3 on) develops a higher “ontology,” concerning the Triple-Powered, structured by the “philosophical” language of the intellectual triad (Being, Life, and Mind).

In this text, the one is used to indicate the unity of the three principles of the intellectual triad, respectively Being, Life, and Mind, which are each composed of itself and the two other elements.

ΑΥΘ ΠΙΨΟΜ̄Τ̄ ΟΥΔ ΝΕ· ΕΥΕ ΠΨΟΜ̄Τ̄ ΚΑΤΑ ΠΟΥΔ ΠΟΥΔ

And the three are one, being three individually. (*Allogenes* XI.49.36–38)

This text could mean either of two things. Each element of the intellectual triad, even if it contains both other elements, is in itself united. That would signify that each one of the powers is one in itself. Alternatively this saying could concern the Triple-powered as unity of the three powers. In the Triple-powered, these three principles (each composed of three elements) become one, obtain unity. This unity is, as we have seen for the other texts, secondary, because it presupposes the existence of multiplicity, it is not a *simplex*. Being one and being more than one are modes of existence that can coexist and depend on the mode of perception. The three powers can be seen as one Triple-Powered principle that transcends the individual elements, but these individual powers are not dissolved in their union. They continue to be individual powers. This means that the Triple-Powered is not “one” in the Plotinian way. The oneness is to be understood as the unity of individual elements, a unity that is more than the sum of its parts and that is to be situated on another qualitative ontological level. One could wonder with the *Anonymous Commentary on the Parmenides* how it is possible that the one is both one and also different from itself (being more than one).³⁸ In *Allogenes* the fact of being one and being three does not seem to call for justification or for an explanation.

This passage does not deal with a reality called *the* one. Oneness is an attribute conferred to either the Triple-powered or one of its elements. The second use of the term ΠΟΥΔ (the one) is distributive. It does not have a technical, henological, meaning in this context. Repeated it means “individually” referring to the

37. *Allogenes* consists of two parts that correspond with the two stages of the the protagonist's mystical experience. In the first part, *Allogenes* receives revelations from Youel concerning the Barbelo aeon and its sub-aeons, Kalypotos, Protophanes and Autogenes. One hundred years after the vision of what Youel had described, *Allogenes* receives further revelations from the luminaries of Barbelo (from 59.3 on). This part concerns the reality of the Triple-Powered and is described in more abstract terms.

38. See *Anon. in Parm.* 14.4–16 (*CPF* 132).

persistence of the three powers in the Triple-Powered. The fact that this expression is juxtaposed to ΟΥΔ as predicate of a nominal sentence seems to reflect on the first use. This might be less technical than it maybe appears. The oneness of the powers is not as such thematized except where its triplicity is concerned.

The next passage has lead different scholars to different interpretations. Again, the precise meaning of ΟΥΔ is not evident. It is not clear whether it is used in an ordinary, indefinite, sense or with a specific technical meaning.

ΠΗ ΔΕ ΕΤΑ[ΦΗΔΥ] ΕΗ[Δ]Ϊ ΔΦΗΔΥ ΕΠΙΚΑΛ[ΥΠΤΟΣ] ΕΨΩΠΕ ΔΕ
ΕΦΩΔΗ[ΔΥ Ε]ΠΟΥΔ ΠΤΕ ΝΙΚΑΛΥΠΤ[ΟΣ ΕΦ]ΗΔΥ ΕΠΙΕΩΝ ΠΒΔΡΒΗΛΩ

He who has seen these, has seen the hid[den] (one).³⁹ And when he sees the one(ness?)⁴⁰ of the hidd[en] (ones), it is the aeon of Barbelo he sees. (*Allogenes* XI.46.30–34)

Many translators have left the definite article before ΟΥΔ untranslated. So I prefer to go either with the literal translation of K. L. King⁴¹ or with the translation “unity” suggested by W.-P. Funk (and the later translation of J. D. Turner). The context of this passage is not entirely preserved and does not really allow us to identify the subject of the sentence. According to M. Scopello, it is the Triple-Powered who sees. This entity was, however, last explicitly mentioned in 45.21–22. According to Turner, we are dealing with the eons or human initiates that follow a path of progression (Turner 1990, 249). The latter solution seems more convincing to me: what we have here, is the description of a progressive knowledge (by vision) of the higher realm: to see the aeon of Barbelo, one has maybe to be able to conceive the oneness or unity of the hidden aeons that constitute it. Kalyptos represents, because of his hiddenness, the highest level of Barbelo. Seeing Kalyptos is being halfway the transcendence of the Triple-powered. In this passage there are apparently several *kalyptoi*, hidden ones. The visionary has to perceive the unity beyond the diversity (see King 1995, 88). “The one of the hidden ones” could very well be Kalyptos as the unity of all hidden things. This interpretation remains however uncertain, because the expression is uncommon. When oneness is meant in an abstract sense, one expects rather a more conceptual expression like ΠΝΤΟΥΩΤ, such as it is the case in other writings.⁴²

39. As well Turner 1990, 195. Funk, et al. 2004, 193, have “if he sees one of the hidden ones,” leaving the definite article untranslated. More recently, however, Turner translates “the unity of the hidden ones”; 2007, 686.

40. Funk (2003, 774), translates “das Eine” (the One) and suggests translating “die Einheit?” (the Unity?)

41. See King 1995, 89: “whenever one sees the One of the hidden ones.”

42. This abstract noun occurs only once in *Allogenes* XI.66.22, quoted above.

Parmenides or in Plotinus’s *Enneads*: movement and action presuppose that there be different parts, which can not be true of the One. Since this concept is not elaborated, it can hardly be considered as a sign of henological speculation, even if this use might allude to a technical (philosophical) context, where the henological implications are explored. This was obviously not the main focus of the author of *Allogenes*.

To recapitulate the references to oneness in *Allogenes*:

- a) Oneness is found at different levels of being. Seeing the one beyond plurality is linked to the mystical experience of returning to the utmost transcendent level. The multiplicity comes first, then comes the union of the different parts. This sequence is described in only one direction. Nothing is said about the origin of plurality.
- b) There does not seem to be any speculation about different “ones.” The Triple-Powered is identified as “the one who really exists.” The stress lays on the existence. It is not clear whether “the one” can also be a name for the Triple-Powered. It is never used in that way.
- c) The singularity or simplicity of the Spirit seems to have some henological meaning. It is situated beyond every movement or action. The oneness refers to a state that precedes everything that is. It is also simplicity in the sense that it is not the union of several other parts.

MARSANES

When we adhere to a semantic analysis, we find hardly any evidence at all in *Marsanes* that points to some kind of henology. The sole reference where the one seems to refer to a reality rather than to an attribute (because of the definite article), occurs in an extremely damaged context. We cannot infer anything from it.

ⲓⲛⲁⲡⲓⲟⲩⲉⲉⲓ ⲓⲛⲟⲩⲱⲧ

those who belong to the [single] one (*Marsanes* X.17.18–19)

Over the last years, there have been several publications that associate the thirteen seals with a system that also comprises a henological level (see Turner 2000, 206–7; Finamore 2000, 256). The tendency to identify the thirteen seals with the “system” of *Marsanes* is easy to understand, since it is one of the longer preserved parts of the texts. We have however no idea how this passage stood in relation to the whole of the text. The absence of any explicit henological language in this passage (or at least in the Coptic text) makes these associations with regard to henological background of *Marsanes*, in my opinion, unlikely. There is no attestation of the term ⲟⲩⲁ, neither of ὑπαρξίς, a technical term often used in a

henological context and that we encounter in the three other texts we studied here (see Brankaer 2005, 21–41).

CONCLUSION

This overview allows us to infer some ideas about Gnostic henological speculation. In what are considered the most philosophical texts of Nag Hammadi, we in fact find very few traces of the elaboration of a henology. We do encounter the idea of oneness with regard to the supreme principles or entities, but this oneness appears often as the unity of a multiplicity that is presupposed from the beginning. We are a far cry from the Plotinian One that constitutes the absolute first principle that comes before any kind of multiplicity.

Our Gnostic writers did give some thought (some more than others) to the articulation of the one and the many, a problem the young Socrates is also confronted with in Plato's *Parmenides*. Do we have to conceive of the one as a "whole" (consisting of parts) or is it something that entirely excludes any concept of multiplicity? We do not find a satisfying answer in the *Parmenides*, which is, after all, one of the most aporetic dialogues. The Gnostic writers seem to content themselves with the notion of a pre-existing unitary and singular principle that exists in a dialectical relation with the multiplicity it brings forth. Its oneness is never presented as its main characteristic: it is one of the many predicates that can be attributed to a principle that seems to evolve towards a greater transcendence expressed in ontological terms (ΔΤΟΥΓΙΔ and even ΔΤΖΥΠΔΡΞΙΘ) and in epistemological terms (invisible, unknowable).

If we find the notion of "the one," it is often connected to (real) being, just as in the *Parmenides*, but not in Neoplatonic speculation. One hardly finds a systematic approach to the One as being "beyond being" (ἐπέκεινα τῆς οὐσίας), a characteristic that is sometimes associated with the supreme principle as such (the invisible Spirit or the Unknowable), which never appears in connection with the "oneness" of this principle.

The main interest of our Gnostic authors is with soteriology and with the articulation of negative and positive theology. Oneness appears in this context as one of many elements and certainly not the main one, even though simplicity can sometimes be a way to salvation (in *Zostrianos*): it is not a salutary element in itself, but it is a criterion that stands for the ontological and epistemological assimilation of the knowing subject and the object of salutary knowledge.

Speculations about the one as we find them in the *Parmenides* might constitute a general background for some themes we encounter in these Gnostic texts, but the focus has shifted from the one to the first. The relation between the one and the many (the others) has been replaced by the complex network of relations between pleromatic entities and their ultimate source. These relations are often explained in a technical language that recalls Platonic and Neoplatonic speculation, but that serves the ultimate goal of describing a salutary Gnostic system.

THE GREEK TEXT BEHIND THE PARALLEL SECTIONS IN
ZOSTRIANOS AND *MARIUS VICTORINUS*

Volker Henning Drecoll

The parallels between *Zostrianos* and Marius Victorinus, *Adv. Ar.* 1.49–50 were first detected in 1996 by Michel Tardieu in collaboration with Pierre Hadot (Tardieu 1996). His observations made it possible to reconstruct the text of *Zostrianos* edited earlier by Layton and Sieber (1991). Subsequently, Catherine Barry, Wolf-Peter Funk, and Paul-Hubert Poirier edited a new text in the Bibliothèque Copte de Nag Hammadi, and John Turner wrote a terrific commentary on it (2000), partially proposing his own and slightly different text.¹ My claim is not to reconstruct the text of *Zostrianos* once again or in a different manner; rather, I will simply use both texts from the Bibliothèque Copte edition, comparing Barry, Funk, and Poirier with Turner.

What I want to offer however, is a new reconsideration of the postulated common source. Already Tardieu put forward the hypothesis that there is a common source behind the parallel sections of *Zostrianos* and Marius Victorinus. And as far as I can see, no one has called into question this general hypothesis. Tardieu's proposal to identify the author of the postulated common source with Numenius, however, was never accepted by other scholars.² Pierre Hadot, for example, suggested that there must have been an anonymous (middle-Platonic) common source first, then a Christianized version as the direct source of *Zostrianos* and Marius Victorinus. Later scholars such as John Turner and Kevin Corrigan developed the hypothesis that the common source is very significant for the history of Platonism, especially the reception of Plato's *Parmenides* (therefore,

1. This becomes clear by an accurate comparison between the main edition pp. 360–69 and 374 and Turner's synopsis of *Zostrianos* and Marius Victorinus on pp. 581–82, 593–95, 602, 606.

2. Tardieu 1996, 12–113; in the same volume Hadot 1996, 115–25, esp. 114, 124, seems rather convinced that it is merely “une source médio-platonicienne” than that Numenius is the author.

Sethian texts like *Zostrianos* and *Allogenes* may depend on the *Anonymous Commentary on Parmenides* of the Turin Palimpsest being Pre-Plotinian).³ Pursuing this strategy of research, I want to analyze the common source. My question is, What can we say in detail about the common source? In this question two assumptions are included: a) that there is a common source; b) that this common source is probably Greek. I have to confess that the results of my search for the common source led me to doubt whether the first of these two assumptions is as certain as the above-cited literature seems to claim. So, my paper contains two parts: a first and longer part, discussing the parallel sections and looking for the common source, and then a second and shorter one, briefly discussing the results of the first part, calling into question the assumption that an independent common source of *Zostrianos* and Marius Victorinus can be considered as established.

1. LOOKING FOR THE COMMON SOURCE

In the past, the parallel sections between *Zostrianos* and Marius Victorinus were used for both the reconstruction of the Coptic text of *Zostrianos* and for the elucidation of its contents. And indeed, the text of Victorinus is very helpful for doing this. But the other side of the question—what is the significance of *Zostrianos* for the interpretation of Victorinus?—has not yet been pursued intensively. My starting point was to ask, What can we say about the source used by Victorinus? That Victorinus used a Greek text in *Adv. Ar.* 1.49–50 (or perhaps even 49–54?), is rather clear from several Greek terms used by him. So in order to delineate the common source, we have to look for a Greek text. Of course we would appreciate a Greek text of the source, but we do not have one, so we have to speculate what the Greek text may have been, reconstructing its individual elements. Any attempt to do so has to deal with two main difficulties:

1. Very often, it is far from certain which Greek terms we have to postulate behind the Latin words of Victorinus and the Coptic words of *Zostrianos*. So we can make only vague and speculative suggestions. Nevertheless, I think it is helpful to look for equivalent Greek terms, because only in this manner will it become clear what precisely we can say about the common source.

2. The text in *Zostrianos* has suffered significant corruption, so there are many words that are only conjectural restorations—and these restorations are based on Victorinus. So we have not two independent sources in these points, but only one, Victorinus. The reconstruction of *Zostrianos* in these corrupt lines is based on the assumption that even at these specific places *Zostrianos* had the same or parallel words as Victorinus—while in many other places *Zostrianos* differs from him. This is not very convincing, so I would prefer to be very careful in

3. For this, see Turner 2000b, 157–210; 2000, 179–224; Corrigan 2000, 141–77.

these places. Only where the text of *Zostrianos* is intact and parallel with Victorinus can we conclude that similar words could be found in the common source. In the other places we can make some suggestions about the common source, following *Zostrianos* or Marius Victorinus, but these suggestions are only speculative, based on an internal interpretation of *Zostrianos* or Victorinus.

In the synopsis included in this article I have given only the words of Victorinus where a parallel word in *Zostrianos* can be discerned in the extant text completely apart from any conjectural restorations of the Coptic text—not because I want to go back to the *status quaestionis* at the time of Layton and Sieber, but in order to demonstrate how many points are uncertain if one refrains from restoring the Coptic text according to assumed parallels in Victorinus:

A. ZOSTRIANOS VIII.64.13–66.11 AND ADV. AR. 1.49.9–40

1. That the parallel section began with an imperative of ἀκούω, is uncertain. Only Victorinus has *audi* (1.49.7), while *Zostrianos* has only Ϛ[(perhaps to be completed to Ϛ[ΩΤΜ]).⁴

2. The common source asserted that there is a One prior to those that truly exist. The generalization “all” is missing in the text of *Zostrianos*, perhaps to be restored in VIII.64.15. So we can conclude that there was the word ἕν, perhaps also a form of εἰμί and then something like πρὸ (perhaps πάντων) τῶν ὄντως ὄντων. Victorinus then goes on to offer ten lines describing the priority of this first One, for which no parallel text is found in *Zostrianos*, so there we have no external evidence for what was in the common source.

3. The One is described as immeasurable and indiscernible (only Victorinus has invisible), so these two attributes can be assumed for the common source, perhaps something like ἀμέτρητον καὶ ἀδιάκριτον (or even ἀδιαίρετον, in *Adv. Ar.* 4.20.15 ἀδιάκριτον is translated by *indiscretum*).⁵ These negative attributes are used for the Spirit only in *Zostrianos*, while Victorinus uses them for the One. This is an important difference, because we don’t know whether the One is identified with the Spirit in the common source or not.⁶ The last attribute “indiscernible” is then distinguished “from anything else,” and this is unfolded in two expressions: “those things in him and those after him.” Victorinus offers relative clauses, perhaps translating Greek participles with article (but of course, the participle of εἰμί could be missing, too), so we may suggest: παντὶ τῷ ἑτέρῳ τοῖς ἐν

4. Abramowski (2007, 148) points to the fact that in *Adv. Ar.* 1.62.25 the *audi* seems to indicate the “literarische Naht,” but on p. 150 ascribes the *audi* in 49.7 to the common source.

5. See Tardieu 1996, 68; Turner 2000b, 586–87.

6. Hadot 1996, 114 proposes the distinction between “un Ur-exposé sans Pneuma” et “un exposé christianisé ou gnosticisé (avec Pneuma)” as two stages of the common source, but cf. Turner 2000b, 585–86 on this point. See the review of the contributions of Tardieu and Hadot by Abramowski 2005, 536–43, arguing for the distinction between the One and the Spirit.

Table 1. The Greek text behind the parallel sections in Zostrianus and Marius Victorinus.

Victorinus	Zostrianos	Common Source— conjectured Greek
49.7: audi [...] 49.9: ante omnia quae vere sunt 49.9: unum fuit [...] 49.12 unum solum [...] 49.18 inmensum, 49.19 invisibile, indiscernibile universaliter omni alteri	64.12 ϸ[64.15f. ϷΔ-ΘΗ ΠΗΔΙ Τ[...] ΕΤΨΟΟΠ ΟΗΤΩϸ 64.13 ΝΕΟΥ[64.14 ΟΥΔ ΟΥΩΤ Π[64.17 ΠΗΔΤ†ΨΙ ΕΡ[64.18 ΠΔΤΠΩΡ̄ϸ 64.18f. Π̄[...]ΟΥΔ Μ̄ΠΗ ΤΗΡ̄ϸ 64.19f. ΕΤ[...]ΟΠ Π̄ΖΗΤ̄ϸ 64.21f. Μ̄Ν ΠΗ ΕΤ̄Μ̄[] Π̄ΟΩϸ cf. 64.20f. Μ̄Ν Π̄Π̄[...] Π̄ΜΟϸ (or Π̄Π̄[?]) cf. 64.22–65.1 ΕΗΤΟϸ ΜΔΥ[...] ΕΤΧΙΟΟΡ Π̄ΜΟϸ Π̄[.....]ϸ̄ϸ	ἄκουσον ? πρὸ (πάντων) τῶν ὄντως ὄντων (Iamblicus, <i>Myst.</i> 8.2) ἔν μόνον ἀμέτρητον (ἐν or τὸ πνεῦμα ?) (μὴ σύμμετρον <i>Parm.</i> 140c; οὐ μετρούμενον Plotinus, <i>Enn.</i> 5.5.4) ἀδιάκριτον (or ἀδιαίρετον, <i>Adv. Ar.</i> 4.20: ἀδιάκριτον) παντὶ τῷ ἑτέρῳ = indiscretum) τοῖς ἐν αὐτῷ τοῖς μετ' αὐτό (cf. Plotinus, <i>Enn.</i> 6.4.1) τοῖς ἐξ αὐτοῦ (οὐσί) or ἐξ αὐτοῦ ? expression with μόνον, πέρας, διαπεραίνω and/or ὀρίζειν/ ὀριστικός ?? ἄμερές ? (<i>Soph.</i> 245a, <i>Parm.</i> 138a) ἀσημάτιστον ? (<i>Phaidr.</i> 247c) ἄποιον ? (epithet of ἡ ὕλη)
49.19f. et his quae in ipso 49.20 et his quae post ipsum, etiam quae ex ipso, 49.20f. soli autem sibi et discernibile et definitum [...] 49.23 inpartile undique sine figura 49.24 sine qualitate neque inqualitate sine qualitate quale	65.1]ΔΤ[65.1f.]Η[]Δ 65.2 Π̄ΔΤ[65.2f.]ΔΤ[ἄμερές ? (<i>Soph.</i> 245a, <i>Parm.</i> 138a) ἀσημάτιστον ? (<i>Phaidr.</i> 247c) ἄποιον ? (epithet of ἡ ὕλη)
49.24f. sine colore 49.25 sine specie sine forma, omnibus formis carens [...]	65.3 Π̄ΔΤϸ[(or only]ΔΤϸ[?) 65.3f. Π̄ΔΤ[.....]Η 65.4 ΗΔΥ [...]ΟΥ	ἄχρώματον ? (<i>Phaidr.</i> 247c) ἄμορφον ? (<i>Tim.</i> 50d, Plotinus, <i>Enn.</i> 6.7.17) ἀνείδεον ? (Plotinus, <i>Enn.</i> 6.7.17)

49.26f. et universalium et partilium omnium quae sunt prima causa	cf. 65.5 ἤ[]ἀϊ ΤΗΡ[πάντων
49.28 omnium principiorum praeprincipium	65.6]ΔΡ[]Η ΠΕ ἤ[ἀρχή, perhaps: πασῶν ἀρχῶν προαρχή (cf. Corp. Herm. I,8: τὸ πρόαρχον τῆς ἀρχῆς)
49.28f. omnium intelligentiarum praeintellegentia	65.7f.]ΥΨΟΡΠ ἡ[.....]ΤΕ ΕΝΝΟΙΑ ΝΙ[πασῶν ἐννοιῶν προέννοια (οἱ πρῶτέν-νοια)
49.29 omnium potentiarum fortitudo	65.9]Ε ἡΤΕ ΔΟΜ ΝΙ[δύναμις οἱ ἰσχύς, perhaps something like: πασῶν δυνάμεων ἰσχύς ?? (cf. Corp. Herm. I,31: πάσης δυνάμεως ἰσχυρότερος)
49.30 ipsa motione celebrior (= celerior)	cf. 65.10f.]ΕΖΟΥΝ ΕΠΕ[(cf. Turner 583: instead of ΕΖΟΥΕ Ε-)	(cf. Sap.Sal. 7,24: πάσης κινήσεως κινήτικώτερον)
ipso statu stabilior [...]	65.11f. ΕΦΘΕΜΝΗΥ ΕΖΟΥΝ []ΟΔΖΕΡΑΤΩ	expressions like στάσιν ἔχον, ἔστος, perhaps also ἀνορθοῦμαι οἱ μένω ? (cf. Soph. 250c; συνεχείας πυκνότερον? [Plotinus, Enn. 6.9.3])
49.32 continuatione omnidensior,	65.12f: ΕΦΟΥΟ[...]ΖΟΥΝ ΕΠΙΘΙ ΕΥΜΑ (to supply: ΕΦΟΥΟ[ΜΤ] cf. Zostrien, 362)	
49.32f. distantia universa altior,	cf. 65.15f: ΕΦΧΟΟΕ ΕΖΟΥΕ Δ[]ΡΑΤΩ ΝΙΜ	ὑψηλότερον παντός διαστήματος / ἀνεξιχνιάστου οἱ similar expressions
49.33 definitior universo corpore	cf. 65.16f. ΕΦ†[...] ΕΝΕΔΩ ΕΩΜΑ ΝΙΜ	ὀριστικώτερον (?) παντός τοῦ σώματος οἱ τοῦ ὅλου σώματος
49.33f. et maius omni magnitudine,	65.18f.]ΦΤΟΥΒΗΥ ΕΔΤΩΜΑ []Μ	καθαρώτερον παντός ἀσωμάτου
49.34 omni incorporali purius,	65.19f. ΕΦΝΑ ΕΖΟΥΝ <...> ΔΕ ΕΝ[...]Δ ΝΙΜ ἡΝ ΩΜΑ ΝΙΜ	πάσης ἐννοίας καὶ σώματος and something like δικνοῦμαι ?
49.34f. omni intellegentia et corpore penetrabilis,		
49.35 omnium potentissimum,	65.21]Ε ἡΔΟΜ ΕΝΔΙ ΤΗΡΟΥ	πάντων κράτιστον / ἰσχυρότατον / δυνατότατον οἱ πάντων δύναμις etc.
49.35f. potentia potentiarum		

Victorinus	Zostrianos	Common Source— conjectured Greek
49.36 omni genere, omni specie magis totum,	cf. 65.22]OC NIM 65.22 MN̄ EIDOC [̄ 65.23 EYPTHP̄C̄ N̄TAY ΠΕ	γένους παντός καὶ (παντός ?) εἶδους (μᾶλλον ?) ὅλον ἢ τὸ πᾶν
49.36f. vere ὄν totum, 49.37 vere quae sunt omnia ipsum existens 49.37f. omni toto maius, 49.38 corporali et incorporali,	cf. 66.1]ΨΟΟΠ [̄ 66.2f.]ΟΟΠ ΟΗ [̄ ...] N̄T [̄.....] Ī THP [̄ cf. 66.3f.]ΓΔΡ Ε [̄.....] P̄C̄ cf. 66.4-6 Π [̄.....] ΚΟΝ Δ [̄... Δ] ΥΨ N̄N [̄.....] Δ (or ΠCΨ [̄.....] ΚΟΝ ?) 66.6f. ΕΥΜΕΡ̄ Κ [̄.....] ΜΕΡΟΣ THP [̄ cf. 66.8f.]Π N̄ZPΔĪ Z̄N̄	(ὄντως ?) ὄν πάντα τὰ ὄντως ὄντα (τοῦ παντός μείζον ?) (σωματικοῦ καὶ ἀσωμάτου ?) expression with πᾶν μέρος, perhaps also μερικός ? expression with ἀρρητον or similar ? καθαρός ??
49.38f. omni parte magis pars, 49.39 inenarrabili potentia pure/pura existens	ΟΥ [̄.....] CΟΥΩN̄C̄ cf. 66.9: ΕCΤ [̄ cf. 66.11:]ΡΟΥ cf. 66.11f: ΕΤΨΟ [̄.....] ΤΩC 67.21f:]ΤΟΠΟΣ N̄TΔC̄ ΠΕ MN̄ [̄...] ΕCΨΩΠΕ Z̄PΔĪ N̄ZH̄T̄C̄	
49.39f. omnia/prae omnibus quae vere sunt. [...]		πάντα τὰ ὄντως ὄντα
50.8 ipse sibi et locus et habitor, 50.9: in semet ipso manens, solus in solo, 50.9f. ubique existens et nusquam,	74.17f: N̄ZPΔĪ Z̄MMΔ NIM ΔΥ [̄Ω] Z̄N̄ΛΔΔΥ MMΔ ΔN̄	αὐτὸ καὶ τόπος καὶ ἐνοικῶν ? (cf. Philo, <i>Leg.</i> 1.44; <i>Somn.</i> 1.63)
50.10 simplicitate unus qui sit, tres potentias couniens	cf. 66.14–16: N̄Ψ [̄M̄T̄] ΔΟΜ ΓΔΡ ΝΕ N̄TEC̄ [̄...] NΔC̄	πανταχοῦ καὶ οὐδαμοῦ (ὑπαρχον?) (cf. Plotinus, <i>Enn.</i> 3.9.4; οὐδαμοῦ: <i>Parm.</i> 138a) τρεις δυνάμεις (συνενῶν ?) (ὡς τῆς ἐνάδος?) (cf. <i>Anon. in Parm.</i> IX.4: ἐν τῇ ἀπλότητι συνηνῶσθαι) ὑπαρξίς καὶ ζῶη καὶ μακαριότης (πάσα?)
50.11 existentiam omnem, vitam omnem et beatitudinem 50.12: sed ista omnia et unum et simplex unum [...]	66.16–18 †Z̄YΠΔP̄Z̄IC̄ T̄ [̄H̄P̄C̄] ΠΩN̄Z̄ ΔΕ MN̄†MN̄T̄ [̄MΔ] ΚΑΡΙΟΣ 66.20: ΟΥΔ ΠΕ N̄ZΔΠΛΟΥN̄	ἐν ἀπλοῦν (cf. Plotinus, <i>Enn.</i> 6.9.5; 6.6.3–4)

50.16 et idea et λόγος sui ipsius,	66.20f: ΟΥΓ[...]ΧΕ ΠΤΔϞ ΜΠ ΟΥΕΙΔΕ[καὶ ἰδέα καὶ λόγος ἑαυτοῦ (Plotinus, <i>Enn.</i> 6.5.9: ἕνα λόγον ἔχον ἑαυτὸν περιέχοντα, Numenius, frg. 16.11)
50.16f. et vivere et agere habens	68.4–6: ΠΙΩΠ̄ Δ[...]ΕΡΓΙΑ ΔΕ	τὸ ζῆν καὶ τὸ ἐνεργεῖν (cf. Plotinus, <i>Enn.</i> 1.8.2)
50.17 secundum ipsam suimet ipsius inexistentem existentiam,	ΠΤΕ†[.....]Ϟ ΠΗΔΤΟΥϞΔ	τῆς ὑπάρξεως ἀνουσίου ?
50.18 indiscernibilis spiritus cunitio, divinitas,	cf. 75.13f:]ΜΠΤΔΤΠΩΡ̄ ΠΤΕ []ΠΠΔ	τὸ ἀδιαίρετον τοῦ πνεύματος ,
50.18f. substantialitas,	75.15f: †ΜΠΤ[]ΥΤΕ cf. 75.16f. ΜΠ †ΜΠΤΔΤΟΥ[]Δ	θειότης, οὐσιότης (or ἀνουσιότης ?, cf. <i>Allogenes</i> XI.49.33)
50.19 beatitudo, intellegentialitas,	75.17f. †ΜΠΤΜΔΚΔ[]Ϟ 75.18f. †[]ΤΕΙΜΕ (cf. 75,14)	μακαριότης νοότης ? (or νοερότης ?) ζώοτης (or ζωή ?)
vitalitas, optimitas et	75.18f. ΜΠ ΠΙΩΠ̄ 75.19f. †ΜΠΤΔΓΔΘ̄Ϟ cf. 75.22: ρ[]ΠΛΩϞ	ἀγαθότης (or ἀριστότης ?)
50.20 universaliter omnimodis omnia pure ingentum,	75.22 ΝΔΪ ΤΗΡΟΥ 75.22f. ΠΙΤ[]ΒΟ ΠΤΕ †ΜΠΤΔΤΜΙϞΕ	τὰ πάντα καθαρῶς ἀγέννητον
προόν, unalitas counitionis nulla counitione	75.24]Ρ̄ΨΟΡ̄Π̄ ΠΨΟΟΠ̄ cf. 75.20f: ΟΥΖΕΠΗΔϞ Μ[]ΟΥΜΠΤΟΥΨΤ	or τὸ καθαρὸν τῆς ἀγεννησίας (or similar) (<i>Phaedr.</i> 245d: ἀγέννητον)
		προόν ἐνότης συνενώσεως ? (or ἐνάδος)? (or paradoxical expression ?)

αὐτῷ, τοῖς μετ' αὐτό (the neuter is probable for both the One and the Pnuma). *Zostrianos* and Victorinus have a third expression, but there is a difference: Victorinus adds as third element: *etiam quae ex ipso* (cf. Plotinus, *Enn.* 5.4 [7].1: πάντων ἕτερον τῶν μετ' αὐτό ... οὐ μεμιγμένον τοῖς ἀπ' αὐτοῦ), while *Zostrianos* has the opposite to “the things *in* him,” namely “the things *outside* him.” It is possible to assume a wording containing ἐκ or ἔξω, but there is no certain result. The following expression is different, too: in *Zostrianos* only the Spirit can transcend its own limits (if the supplement of $\bar{\eta}[\dots]\bar{\chi}\bar{\zeta}$ to $\bar{\eta}[\text{OYAPH}]\bar{\chi}\bar{\zeta}$ is right), while Victorinus says that the One is discerned and limited only by itself—perhaps there is a common expression behind these two expressions (concerning the ὀρίζειν and the πέρας of the One or the Spirit), but we have no certainty about what the common expression could have been.

4. A few words later, Victorinus describes the One using negative attributes. Unluckily, the text of *Zostrianos* is very corrupt in these lines, so only the privative base ΔΤ and few single letters survive. Of course, it is possible to supplement the text by comparing Victorinus, but this does not lead to external evidence for the common source. Again, it is possible to look for Greek negative attributes by analogy with the terms used by Victorinus; for example one can compare expressions from Plato and Plotinus: ἀμερές, ἀσχημάτιστον, ἄποιον, ἀχρώματον, ἄμορφον, ἀνείδειον (Tardieu 1996, 70–74), but while the text of *Zostrianos* is almost entirely missing, a certain text for the common source cannot be established here.

5. A few lines further on, Victorinus compares the One with several terms. It seems that a similar structure was in the common source as well, but the corruption of *Zostrianos* again prevents us from clarifying each Greek expression. It is not clear what expression corresponds to *prima causa* (πρώτη αἰτία, αἴτιον or ἀρχή?); it seems certain only that *omnium* and ΤΗΡ[are translations of πάντων.

Zostrianos seems to use $\Psi\text{O}\bar{\rho}\bar{\pi}$ for translating such nouns as προαρχή etc., so perhaps *omnium intellegentiarum praeintellegentia* corresponds to $\text{O}\bar{\gamma}\Psi\text{O}\bar{\rho}\bar{\pi}$ $\bar{\eta}\bar{\epsilon}[\text{NHOIA PE } \bar{\eta}] \bar{\tau}\bar{\epsilon}$ $\bar{\epsilon}\text{NHOIA NI}[M]$, both being probable translations of πασῶν ἐννοιῶν προέννοια (or πρωτέννοια).⁷ If we accept this, it is probable that the common source contained also: πασῶν ἀρχῶν προαρχή, perhaps also πασῶν δυνάμεων ισχύς (Tardieu 1996, 78–79).

6. The following section pursues comparisons of the One (or the Spirit?) in the manner of a *via eminentiae*: The One is faster than any motion, etc. In detail, however, it is hard to establish what could have been in the common source. The first expression of Victorinus is a *crux interpretum*: *ipsa motione celebrior* (archaism or instead of *celerior*?). Since *Zostrianos* is corrupt here again, we only know that there was a comparative form. We may think of *Sap. Sal.* 7.24: πάσης κινήσεως κινητικώτερον (Hadot 1960, 849; Tardieu 1996, 81), but it is far from being certain that a biblical reminiscence would be used by *Zos-*

7. Προέννοια is more probable than πρωτέννοια, see Turner 2000b, 588.

trianos or the common source. The Greek equivalent behind *ipso statu stabilior* and ΕΙΣΘΕΜΝΗΥ ΕΖΟΥΝΙ [...]ϸΑΖΕΡΑΤ̄ϸ̄ is difficult to establish. ΟΜΙΝΕ can translate στάσιν ἔχω or μένω, ΟΟΖΕ + ΕΡΑΤ- (Crum 380b) would be better for ἀνορθοῦμαι perhaps, but which expression was used as comparative form in the common source is again uncertain (perhaps a kind of neologism as a comparative form to ἐστός; for the opposite of κίνησις and στάσις concerning the supreme principle, compare, e.g., Plotinus, *Enn.* 6.9 [9].3). *Continuatio* and ΠΙΘ̄Ι ΕΥΜΑ seem to be the translation of συνέχεια (one wonders whether the Coptic text is not using the Greek term here), so *densior* (and perhaps ΕΙΟΥΟΥ[Μ̄Τ̄] or ΕΙΟΥΟΥ[Τ̄Β̄])⁸ leads to the assumption of πυκνότερον (Turner 2000b, 590), while Victorinus's generalization (*omnis*) is again missing in *Zostrianos*.

The next two expressions are a bit different in *Zostrianos* and Victorinus as well: *altior* is nearly the same as ΕΙΧΟΟΕ, for which one can imagine ὑψηλότερον, but the *genitivus comparationis* is not certain; *distantia* could be the translation of διάστημα or διάστασις, but Δ[Τ̄Π̄]ΡΑΤ̄ϸ̄ (Crum 1939, 303a: “untraceable”) is more probably something like: ἀνεξιχνίαστον. *Corpus* and ΟΩΜΑ correspond clearly to σῶμα, but whether the common source used πᾶς (cf. ΝΙΜ) or ὅλος (perhaps better for *universus*) is uncertain, as is the case for the comparative form corresponding to *definitior* (and perhaps ΕΙΤ̄[ΤΟΥ]; Turner 2000b, 583), perhaps the common source had ὀριστικώτερον or something like that.

The next three expressions are rather similar in Victorinus and *Zostrianos*: *purius* and ΤΒΒΟ could be translations of καθαρός, *incorporale omne* and ΔΤΟΩΜΑ could be the translation of πᾶν [τὸ] ἀσώματον; *omnis intellegentia et corpus* is nearly the same as ΕΝ[ΝΟΙ]Δ ΝΙΜ Π̄Π̄ ΟΩΜΑ ΝΙΜ, so one can imagine: πάσης ἐννοίας καὶ σώματος. The Greek word behind *penetrabilis* and ΕΙΝΔ ΕΖΟΥΝΙ <ΕΖΟΥΕ> Ε-, however, is hard to determine. The following expression is a superlative in Victorinus instead of a simple noun in *Zostrianos* (perhaps [ΕΙ]Ε Ν̄ΔΟΜ ΕΝΔ̄Ι ΤΗΡΟΥ, “he is power for them all” should be emended to [ΕΙ]Ε Ν̄ΔΟΜ <ΕΖΟΥΕ> ΕΝΔ̄Ι ΤΗΡΟΥ “he is <more> powerful than them all”), so perhaps there was δυνατώτατον or δύναμις (or similar expressions).

In both Victorinus as in *Zostrianos*, this chain of comparisons comes to an end by describing the One (or the Spirit) as a “whole.” Here again, the corruption of *Zostrianos* and minor, but important differences prevent us from establishing the common source. The character of the One (or the Spirit?) as a “whole” is compared with “any form”: *species* and ΕΙΔΟC are the translation of εἶδος, and we may conclude that even πᾶν γένος was in the common source (even if there is only the ending -OC in *Zostrianos*, but the combination of both terms seems rather probable). The following expressions in *Zostrianos* only admit the

8. The text in the BCNH critical edition (Barry, Funk, Poirier 2000), 362 reads: ΕΙΟΥΟΥ[Μ̄Τ̄], but Turner in his commentary (2000b, 583) reads ΕΙΟΥΟΥ[Τ̄Β̄].

assumption that there was the phrase ὄντως ὄντα (Victorinus has a plural, τὰ ὄντως ὄντα, with which the One is identified). That this was compared with the opposition of corporeal and incorporeal being is only attested by Victorinus, and there seems to have been an expression like μέρος in the common source (although less likely the expression μερικός), probably stating the superiority of the One as a whole over all partial beings. The being of the One (or the Spirit) was qualified as something like *inenarrabilis* or unknowable (cf. COYΩN̄-, but the equivalent for *potentia* is missing in *Zostrianos*), suggesting that the text of *Zostrianos* is very corrupt at this point. Additionally, even in Victorinus there seems to be an important *varia lectio*, attested only in the sixteenth-century copy made by Sichard (1529 at Basel). We do not know whether *pure* or *pura* is the right reading, and even the comparison with *Zostrianos* does not clarify this. Even the different reading *prae omnibus* instead of *omnia* is not clearly attested in *Zostrianos*, only the expression ΤΗΡ≠ is sure. Finally, there is the wording τὰ ὄντως ὄντα again, but the common source is hidden: while *Zostrianos* seems to describe the dependency upon, or perhaps even a kind of emanation of all beings from, the first Spirit, Victorinus only states the One's identity with, or—preferring the reading of Sicard—priority to, all those that truly exist (but even this is not the same as the expression ΕΤΕ ΕΒΟΛ ΜΜΟΙ VIII.66.12 suggests). In Victorinus these expressions refer to the *pars* (1.49.39) and the (neuter) One as a whole (cf. 1.49.36–37), while *Zostrianos* expresses the identity of the described object with the πνεῦμα, who is the only One: ΠΙΠΝΔ ΕΤΨΟΟΠ ΟΗ[ΤΩC] ΠΙΟΥΔ ΜΑΥΔΔC (VIII.66.13–14)⁹.

B. ZOSTRIANOS VIII.66.14–68.13 + 74.17–75.21 AND ADV. AR. 1.50.1–21

1. In the next lines Victorinus identifies the first principle, the One, with the Father. For eight lines there is no exact parallel text in *Zostrianos*. This is very important for the interpretation of the assumed common source. In these lines Victorinus uses the term spirit, but he does not identify the One with “the spirit”; “spirit” seems to be just one among other attributes like *non indigens* or *perfectus*. Even the expression *perfectus spiritus* is missing in Victorinus (*Zostrianos*, however, says: ΕΥΠΝΔ ΝΟΥΩΤ [Π]Ε ΝΤΕΛΙΟC ΝΖΔΠΛΟΥΝ VIII.67.19–20). Victorinus says only that the first principle is perfect, *perfectus super perfectos*, and *tripotens in unalitate spiritus*, *perfectus et supra spiritum*. The second clause and the parallel expression of 1.50.18 (*spiritus cunitio*) make clear that it is not the *spiritus* that is the subject of *tripotens* and the following expressions, but the *father* of 1.50.1 (Abramowski 2005, 537–39). So we have to understand *spiritus* in 1.50.5 as a genitive attribute to *unalitate*: The spirit is the *means* of unity, which is

9. The expression *unus qui sit* compared by Turner (2000b, 582) comes from *Adv. Ar.* 1.50.10 and is only a vague parallel expressing the being [but not the truly being] of the One, not the single character of the One.

why the father, the One, is *spiritus* in relation to himself, that is, he cannot be separated from himself. For this reason I cannot accept the hypothesis of Hadot that there must have been an older version of the common source that did not mention the Spirit and an earlier stage of the text that perhaps contained Christian or Gnostic elements, e.g., the Spirit; the argument for the unity of spirit is in fact Victorinus's own contribution.¹⁰ Whatever the case, we have no external evidence for the assumption that the common source identified the One with "the Spirit."

Beginning with *Adv. Ar.* 1.50.8, one finds a second passage in Victorinus that contains words in parallel with *Zostrianos*, but with an important difference from the parallel passages discussed above, since the parallel words in ch. 50 are scattered over the next ten pages of *Zostrianos*, and so we have no external evidence for a parallel, shared argumentation that may have been contained in the common source. The single expressions are as follows:

2. The supreme principle is "place and inhabitant": *ipse sibi et locus et habitator*, very similar to the expression of *Zostrianos*:]ΤΟΠΟΣ Ν̄ΤΑϞ ΠΕ Μ̄Η [ΟΥΡ] ΕϞΩΠΕ ρΡᾹΙ Ν̄ΖΗΤ̄Ϟ (VIII.67.21–22), so we may conclude that there was something in the common source like: αὐτὸ καὶ τόπος καὶ ἐνοικῶν.¹¹

3. The supreme principle is "everywhere and nowhere": *ubique existens et nusquam* is nearly the same as Ν̄ΖΡᾹΙ ρ̄ΜΜΔ Ν̄Μ ΔΥ[Ω] ρ̄Ν̄ΛΔΔΥ Μ̄ΜΔ ΔΗ (only the existential verb is missing), so we may conclude that the common source read something like: πανταχοῦ καὶ οὐδαμοῦ (ὑπαρχον; Tardieu 1996, 99).

4. Both Victorinus and *Zostrianos* know the triad Existence, Life, and Blessedness. This is an important and significant congruence. The triad is well attested by Victorinus, who calls them *tres potentiae*, united by the Father: *existentia, vita, beatitudo*. Victorinus adds the generalization "omnis," and pursuing his own theory of the unity of the second and the third element, he says: *existentiam omnem, vitam omnem et beatitudinem* (not *beatitudinem omnem*) (1.50.11). In *Zostrianos* there is the expression of a threefold power; we would expect an expression like ΤΩΟΜΤΕ Ν̄ΔΟΜ, but there is only ΝΩ[so we probably have to restore ΝΩ[Μ̄Τ̄]ΔΟΜ, "triple powered" (perhaps there was a textual corruption in the Greek alternating between τρεῖς [or τριάς] and τρίς?). Thereupon, the three powers are clearly attested: †ΖΥΠΑΡΞΙϞ Τ̄[ΗΡ̄Ϟ] Ρ̄ΩΝ̄Ζ ΔΕ Μ̄Ν†Μ̄Ν̄Τ̄[ΜΔ]ΚΑΡΙϞ (VIII.66.16–18).¹² On the other hand, even Victorinus says that the Father is *tripotens* (1.50.4, cf. *Adv. Ar.* 4.21.26: τρισδύναμος *est deus, id est tres potentias habens, esse, vivere, intellegere*). An equivalent to *couniens* (unifying) is missing in *Zostrianos*, but *Zostrianos* says that the threefold power depends on the ἐνάς

10. See note 9 above.

11. For the parallel expressions of Philo, see Tardieu 1996, 99; Turner 2000b, 602.

12. Turner's text has no Τ̄[...], but only [Μ̄ΕΗ].

(a probable restoration for VIII.66.15–16), so perhaps there was in the common source an expression of unity such as *συνενόω*.¹³

5. The supreme principle is one and simple: *simplex unum* (1.50.12) is nearly the same as ΟΥΔ ΠΕ ΝΖΔΠΛΟΥΝ (VIII.66.20), translating perhaps *ἓν ἀπλοῦν*.

6. The supreme principle is the concept and the idea of itself: *et idea et λόγος sui ipsius* (1.50.16) is nearly the same as ΟΥ[ΨΔ]ΧΕ ΝΤΔϞ ΜΝ ΟΥΕΙΔΕ[Δ] (VIII.66.20–21): as the Greek wording we can postulate: *καὶ ἰδέα καὶ λόγος ἑαυτοῦ* (but the expression of Numenius, frg. 16.11: *ιδέα ἑαυτοῦ* is referred to the action of the second God in demiurgic action, so the context is rather different, even if this was the initial point where Hadot detected the parallel between Victorinus and *Zostrianos*)¹⁴.

7. Not very surprising is the connection between life and acting: *et vivere et agere habens*, but Victorinus adds: *secundam ipsam suimet ipsius inexistentem existentiam*, and this could be an expression from the common source, because we find in *Zost.* VIII.68.4–6: ΠΙΩΝΖ Δ[...].ΕΡΓΙΑ ΔΕ ΝΤΕ†[.....]Ϟ ΜΝΔΤΟΥϞΙΑ, so probably the restorations ΕΝΕΡΓΙΑ and †[ΖΥΠΑΡΞΙ]Ϟ are right. If we accept this, there could have been in the common source something like: *τὸ ζῆν καὶ τὸ ἐνεργεῖν τῆς ὑπάρξεως ἀνουσίου*.

8. Finally there is a close parallel between Victorinus 1.50.18–21 and *Zostrianos* VIII.75 containing probably a description of the unity of the supreme principle. This unity is *indiscernible*: Victorinus uses the term *indiscernibilis cunitio*, while *Zostrianos* uses the abstract noun: ΜΝΤΔΤΠΩΡΞ. Both texts seem to link the concept of unity to the Spirit. But while for Victorinus the Spirit seems to be an attribute or a kind of medium of the One's unity, in *Zostrianos* the Spirit could be also the subject of the following attributes. So we do not know how it functioned in the common source. In both texts the list of the following attributes contains very similar terms as well as different and even opposite terms. We can accept as certain that *θειότης* and *μακαριότης* were present. For Victorinus's terms *intellegentialitas* (corresponding to an abstract noun such as ΜΝΤΕΙΜΕ), *vitalitas* (corresponding to the simple noun ΠΙΩΝΖ) and *optimitas* (corresponding to the abstract noun ΜΝΤΔΓΔΘΟϞ), there are some minor differences. However, it is not clear whether Victorinus was transforming these terms, or if there were strange terms in the common source such as *ἀριστότης*, *νοότης* (or *νοερότης*?) or *ζωότης* (but not imitated by the Coptic translator). To the term *substantialitas* in Victorinus, *Zostrianos* offers the opposite: ΜΝΤΔΤΟΥ[ϞΙ]Δ, so we cannot

13. This word was compared by Hadot 1968, 2:91, with a similar expression in *Anon. in Parm.* IX.3–4: *νοῦν ἐν τῇ ἀπλότητι αὐτοῦ συνηνώσθαι*; the context, however, is not very similar. See Tardieu 1996, 100–101; Turner (2000b) proposes that there could be a confusion between *συννοέω* and *συνενόω* in the common source.

14. See Tardieu 1996, 15; cf. Abramowski 2005, 543 points out the considerable “Erfolg der Wendung ‘Idee und Logos seiner selbst.’”

know what was in the common source (we may compare an instance from *Allogenes* XI.49.33, but it is not certain if it is the same case in *Zostrianos*). This list of attributes comes to a close by identifying the supreme principle with all things: *omnia* and ΤΗΡΟΥ correspond to πάντα, and stress that this supreme principle is pure and not generated. It is not clear, however, what the exact terminology in the common source was. Probably there was καθαρός (or even the verb καθαίρειν or the noun ἀκαθαρσία), but while Victorinus uses the adverb *pure* and the neuter *ingenitum*, equivalent to καθαρῶς ἀγέννητον, *Zostrianos* uses the abstract noun as a genitive, equivalent to τὸ καθαρθῆναι τῆς ἀγεννησίας or something similar. As such, the supreme principle is προόν (this Greek term used by Victorinus has a Coptic equivalent ΨΟΡΠ ΠΨΟΟΠ and has to be assumed for the common source, although it is not clear whether as an attribute to ἀγεννησία or as additional independent attribute). Finally, there was perhaps a synonymous expression of the concept of unity in the common source, something like ἐνότης ἐνώσεως, but it is not clear whether there was also a paradoxical expression (only Victorinus offers the opposite term, *nulla cōnitione*).

The result of looking at this last parallel section is rather odd: we do not know who or what is the object of reference for these attributes; we do not know whether this object of reference was substantiality or insubstantiality, and we do not know whether this unity was described in a paradoxical manner or not. So we can only conclude that this last passage is probably referring to the supreme principle (the One or the Spirit), expressing the concept of unity with several positive attributes, namely, its priority to all those that exist and its purity in the sense of being unengendered.

Immediately after Victorinus, *Adv. Ar.* 1.50.22, there is no other parallel text common to *Zostrianos* and Victorinus. This is rather odd, too, because scholars like Turner who are concerned with *Zostrianos* suggest that there could be the continuation of the common source in *Zostrianos*, and, what is more, I have the impression that chs. 49–50 of *Adv. Ar.* 1 are very deeply connected with the subsequent chs. 51–54, which Victorinus has added as a kind of excursus. Moreover, Pierre Hadot, Michel Tardieu, and Luise Abramowski had already pointed out that there are relevant Gnostic themes in this section, for example, the androgyny and passibility of the Logos, as well a specific exegesis of several biblical sentences. But since there are no further parallels in this section, there is no certainty whether the following sections of Victorinus are close to the common source, or even if *Zostrianos* is pursuing the common source (including the pages between the individual parallel words of the second half).

The result of this investigation is that we have as certain only the description of the supreme principle as it is transformed in Victorinus, *Adv. Ar.* 1.49–50 and in the parallel words of *Zostrianos*. This description is not very specific, in my opinion. We do not even know the exact subject of this passage; it may be either the Spirit (*Zostrianos*) or the One (Victorinus). The description of this supreme principle uses negative attributes together with a kind of *via eminentiae*, as well

as abstract nouns that aim at stressing its unity. The most specific idea seems to be the concept of three powers or a threefold power including existence, life, and blessedness¹⁵

This result calls into question whether the reception of Plato's *Parmenides* has to be assumed for the common source in a more explicit sense than the reception of, say, the *Sophist* or the *Phaedrus* (of course, a slight flavor of nearly all important Platonic dialogues can be found in nearly all philosophical texts of the third and fourth century, but an explicit interpretation or reception of Plato's *Parmenides* is a different matter). We have no clear distinction between a first One and a second One,¹⁶ and no explicit references to the first and the second hypothesis of the *Parmenides*. We have only a few expressions used in the first hypothesis: the problem of μέρος and ὅλον (see 137cd), the problem of κίνησις (and the opposite: ἐστάναι, see 137e–138a. 138b–139b), the description as οὐδαμοῦ (in the *Parmenides*, however, πανταχοῦ is missing, 138a), but these are only a few, rather common points. They are much less significant than the differences: in the common source the problem of identity with or diversity to itself is not discussed (139b–e), neither is the problem of ὅμοιον, ἀνόμοιον (139e–140b) or that of ἴσον, ἄνισον (140b–d), the problem of time in the One, being πρεσβύτερον, ἔτερον or νεώτερον (140e–141d), and even the ontological status of the supreme principle as described by the common source is not clear; indeed in this respect, there is a strange difference between Victorinus and *Zostrianos*. So my question is: what are the exact reasons for assuming that there is an explicit reception of Plato's *Parmenides*? What we can say about the common source has nearly nothing to do with the differentiation of ontological levels, nor with a kind of concept of hypostases. These problems are involved in the text of *Zostrianos* and Victorinus only in those passages where no parallel words have been found and where both authors are very different. In *Adv. Ar.* 1.51–54 Victorinus states his own doctrine of the trinity as well as his doctrine of the second, twofold principle as the energy of God (using, however, Gnostic thoughts), while *Zostrianos* is developing his specific Sethian theory that cannot be my subject here. This leads me to my next topic.

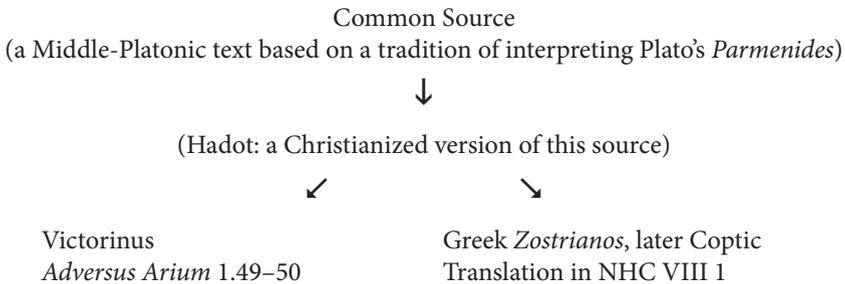
15. For the wide background of this triad see Majercik 1992, 475–88 and Turner 2000 in Barry et al., 181–89, 596–97.

16. In Victorinus, the *unum unum* appears only in 50.22, where parallels between *Zostrianos* and Victorinus are missing; in *Zostrianos* we have the distinction between the pre-existent One and the “Triple-Powered One,” a kind of dynamic mediator between the highest principle and the second level, the Barbelo; see Turner in Barry et al. 2000, 83–90. The problem is that the dynamic function can even be ascribed to the Invisible Spirit in general, so sometimes it looks like a dynamic component of the highest principle (see Turner in Barry et al. 2000, 90, 596). What part of this could have been in the common source, is unclear. Therefore it seems to me rather questionable that the first two hypotheses of Plato's *Parmenides* are in the background of the common source, as Turner 2000b, 594 proposes.

2. DOUBTS ABOUT THE COMMON SOURCE

The result of my looking for the common source is quite modest. I detected only a rather small list of common expressions, and these expressions seem to me to be common currency in philosophical texts of the fourth century. So I have some doubts whether the hypothesis of the common source that has up to now often accepted in the most important literature about this subject is as well established as one might believe. There are at least three possible variants of this hypothesis.

The generally accepted hypothesis could be schematized as follows (Hypothesis 1):



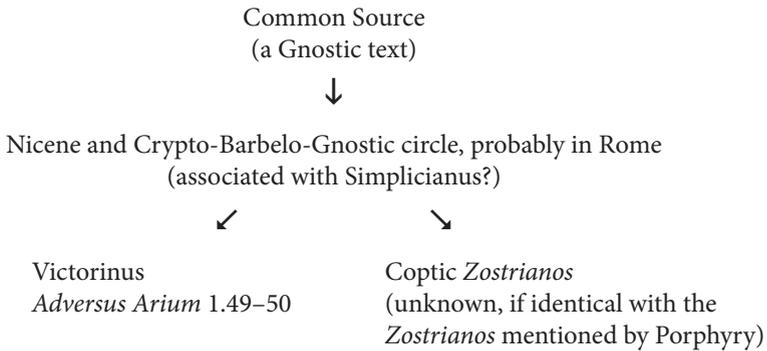
The preceding investigation of the Greek wording of the common source suggests that this hypothesis should be reconsidered in the light of another hypothesis about the common source behind *Zostrianos* and Victorinus developed by Luise Abramowski in a fifty-page review of Tardieu's book in the *Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum*.¹⁷ Abramowski's main question is how Victorinus can utilize apparently Gnostic conceptuality in many passages throughout his *Adversus Arium* (including 1.51–54), and at the same time reject Valentinianism (see *Adv. Ar.* 1.16.1)?¹⁸ The answer would be: because he was adopting theories of a specific intellectual circle in Rome whose dependence on Gnosticism was not known to him.¹⁹ This circle must have been a Nicene one, because Victorinus is clearly adopting Nicene theories of the Trinity, combining them with Gnostic (or Crypto-Gnostic) concepts deriving from "kirchlich im höchsten Grade assimilierte Gnostiker" (Abramowski 2005, 560). These must have been based on several texts that were perhaps circulating as "Gnostisches Sondergut" without any ref-

17. See Abramowski 2005, 2007; see also the earlier study, Abramowski 1983a, 108–28, before the detection of the parallels between *Zostrianos* and Victorinus.

18. This rejection of Valentinianism seems only to be a direct reception of another source without any direct knowledge of Valentinianism, see Abramowski 2005, 543–44.

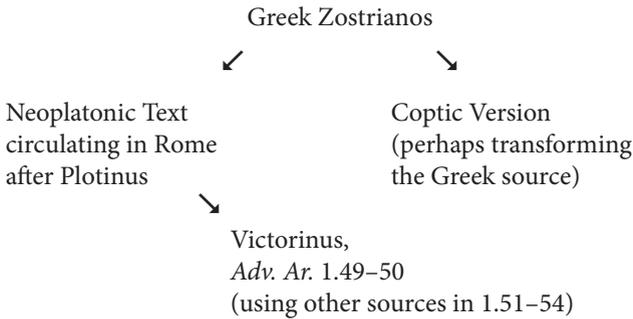
19. Abramowski 2005, 561–62 speaks of an "erstaunliche Entwicklung" of this group: eliminating "das vorweltliche Drama des gnostischen Mythos," they moved into the Church "wegen des ὁμοούσιος?!"

erence to explicit Gnostic myths, so that Victorinus was adopting them without knowing their “Barbelo-Gnostic” origin. Thus Abramowski, supposes that behind the parallel sections in Victorinus, *Adv. Ar.* 1.49–50 and *Zostrianos* there was a common source produced by this Crypto-Gnostic and Nicene circle at Rome. Moreover, the circle that used this text was ultimately responsible for Victorinus’s conversion to Christianity. Her hypothesis can be schematized as follows (Hypothesis 2):



I am not totally convinced by this hypothesis of a “Crypto-Gnostic and Nicene circle,” because there are only very few hints of a possible combination of some kind of “Gnostic” (perhaps only a polemical sense) and non-Arian, perhaps even Nicene thinking.²⁰ But there is a point where I think Abramowski’s theory is very elucidating. It must have been just as possible to adopt Gnostic ideas in fourth-century Rome as it was during the lifetime of Plotinus or Porphyry in the third century. But I do not think it is necessary to suggest that Victorinus was dependent on Gnostic texts without knowing their Gnostic origin. It seems possible to me, instead, that a person like Victorinus was reading an explicitly Gnostic text, rejecting Gnosticism and, in the same instance, transforming some of its ideas into his own theories, adopting certain of its expressions only in a small section of his text. This would explain, in my opinion, why the following section of *Adversus Arium*, that is, chs. 51–54, contains Victorinus’s very own specific theory of the Trinity which also includes Gnostic notions, but which is not dependent on the

20. Neither the term ὁμοούσιος nor the defense against Patripassianism (Abramowski 2005, 522–30) are, in my eyes, striking arguments for establishing the link between Nicæanism and certain Gnostic thoughts. The careful analysis of all aspects in favor of such a connection by Abramowski (2005, 552–58) is clear: “Keiner dieser Fälle, alle aus dem 4. Jahrhundert, ist für sich genommen vollständig mit dem Fall des Marius Victorinus vergleichbar” (2005, 558). In my eyes this is especially the case for the word *tripotens* in Augustine, *Ord.* 2.16.51, which cannot be regarded as a sufficient basis for the assumption that Simplicianus belonged to the assumed Crypto-Gnostic Nicene circle in Rome.



3. CONCLUSION

The result of my investigation is that what we know as certain about the Greek words behind the parallel sections of *Zostrianos* and Victorinus does not lead to such a specific philosophical doctrine that we have to assume an independent tradition. So I would like to ask: what would be a decisive argument against Hypothesis 3, that Victorinus was reading the Greek *Zostrianos* directly, or on Hypothesis 4, that this doctrine was mediated by a more philosophical, probably Neoplatonic text, and that he was adopting only its description of the supreme principle—perhaps even transforming it—as well as pursuing other sources and transforming them all to his own theory of the Trinity?

In this case, the question of what could be the exact place of the Anonymous *Commentary on Plato's Parmenides* is not touched upon. It may be that the *Commentary* is prior to both *Zostrianos* and Plotinus, but this hypothesis can be neither corroborated nor refuted by the parallel sections between Victorinus and *Zostrianos*. Personally, I doubt whether the *Anonymous Commentary* can be fixed at a time before Plotinus, but this is an independent and difficult question. My point is that the parallel sections between Victorinus and *Zostrianos* are of no help for this question, mainly because they do not concern the distinct differentiation between the first and the second Ones and other very specific problems of the first hypothesis of the *Parmenides*. So, perhaps there is a tradition of interpreting Plato's *Parmenides* behind *Zostrianos*, but such a hypothesis should be based on the internal analysis of *Zostrianos*, not on the assumption of an unknown common source. That Victorinus directly used *Zostrianos* (or an earlier stage of it) or a text that depended on it is an alternative we cannot exclude by referring to the common source. Perhaps somebody will detect a new dependence between known texts or will find a new library in the desert—the Greek *Zostrianos*, for example, would be very fine!—but until this moment we can only continue to move about the small pieces we have, without excluding possible alternatives.

THE CHALDAEAN ORACLES AND THE METAPHYSICS OF
THE SETHIAN PLATONIZING TREATISES¹

John D. Turner

In this paper, I would like to discuss the metaphysical structures and functions of the various entities comprising the transcendent realms depicted in the *Chaldaean Oracles*, the Sethian Platonizing treatises, especially *Allogenes*, and in the *Anonymous Commentary on the Parmenides*, focusing mostly on certain apparent triadic structures featured in each, namely the Father, Power, Intellect triad in the *Oracles*, the Triple-Powered One in the Sethian treatises, and the Existence, Life, and Intellect triad in the *Commentary* as well as upon their associated feminine principles, the figures of Barbelo in the Sethian treatises and of Hecate in the *Oracles*.

THE CHALDAEAN ORACLES

The *Chaldaean Oracles* are roughly contemporary with Numenius, being attributed to Julian the Theurgist who was credited with a miraculous deliverance of Marcus Aurelius's troops in 173 C.E.² The *Oracles*, which share several points of

1. Reprinted with permission from ZAC 12 (2008), 39–58 (© Walter de Gruyter 2008).

2. According to L. Brisson (unpublished abstract of the article “Plato’s *Timaeus* and the Chaldean Oracles,” in *Plato’s Timaeus as Cultural Icon*, ed. G. J. Reydam-Schils [Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003], 111–32): “In the reign of Marcus Aurelius (161–180 AD), Plato expressed himself through the mouth of a medium (Julian the son), and set forth the essential features of his doctrine, as presented in the *Timaeus*, in the context of oracular consultations requested by Julian senior. The surviving fragments of the *Chaldaean Oracles* bear witness to this strange interpretation of the *Timaeus*, developed within a magical context. Here we shall consider its contents. The interpretative context in which the *Chaldaean Oracles* were written is that of Middle Platonism, which developed around the three principles of God, the Models, and Matter. God appears in threefold form: he is the Father, Hecate, and the Demiurge. Hecate, the female divinity, could be considered as the spouse of the Father and the mother of the Demiurge. The Forms, which correspond to the Models, the thoughts of the

contact with Numenius, exhibit a hierarchical metaphysics with many Middle Platonic features. Perhaps under the influence of Numenius, the *Oracles* posited as the highest god a first intellect that contains all the Ideas and is entirely self-directed and self-sufficient, and a second god or intellect that looks both to the first intellect and to the world, in order to instantiate the Ideas as the Forms of worldly and maintain the universe in existence. Between and separating these two intellects stands Hecate, functioning as a mediating principle.

THE SUPREME FATHER

The supreme God is called the Father, Bythos (frg. 18 des Places), who is totally transcendent and silent (frg. 16), having nothing to do with creation, and can only be apprehended by “the flower of the mind,” a non-knowing, cognitively vacant intellectual contemplation (frg. 1).³ The Father, who does not appear to be identified with the One (ἓν) beyond being of the first Parmenidean hypothesis (137c–142a), is the paternal Monad (frg. 6, perhaps identical with the “once transcendent, ἅπαξ ἐπέκεινα of frg. 169) or “paternal Depth” (βυθός, frg. 18), apparently also called the first Intellect (frg. 7).

Associated “with” the supreme Father is a feminine entity, his “power,” constituting one member of what seemed to later Neoplatonists⁴ to constitute a triad comprised of the Father himself, his power,⁵ and his intellect, the last of which is

Father, are called *Iynges* and considered to be fire. The Demiurge uses this fire to carry out within the *Kratêr*, assimilated to Hecate, the mixture from which all souls derive: the World Soul, to be sure, but all the other souls as well, and in particular the human soul, which are all pieces of fire. The Demiurge also uses this fire to fabricate sensible bodies, by directing the intelligible fire downwards. This fire is first distributed among the four elements, from which the world in its totality and the whole of our body derive their form. The point of departure for each derivation is called a ‘spring’: we then encounter fountains, channels, and finally brooks. This is why sensible bodies may be described as ‘particular channels.’ Matter comes forth from the Father; it furnishes a ‘bed’ for bodies, which are ‘channels.’ The individual soul must flee, via a movement of conversion, from this place of perdition into which it has descended, to return up to the Father, where it will find the fire which constitutes its nature. In order to ensure salvation, several divinities must participate in the framework of specific rites and prayers. See also Brisson, 2000, 109–62.

3. A notion found also in *Allogenes* XI.61.22–64.36 and in the anonymous *Commentary, Anon. in Parm.* II.14–27; V.7–6,35.

4. Παντὶ γὰρ ἐν κόσμῳ λάμπει τριάς, ἧς μονὰς ἄρχει. Lydus (*Mens.* 2.6.23,10–12 Wachsmuth) claims that Proclus identified the “once beyond,” (frg. 169, an epithet of the paternal Monad) as three-in-one with the oracular-sounding verse “For the world, seeing you as a triadic Monad, has honored you” (frg. 26* [Majercik], Μουνάδα γὰρ σε τριούχον ἰδὼν ἐσεβάσαστο κόσμος).

5. Damascius (*Dub. et sol.* 61 = 1.131.17 Ruelle; cf. frg. 1, line 10 des Places) calls this power “existence” (ὑπαρξίς).

said to proceed “from” him as a secondary, demiurgic intellect (frgs. 3, 4, and 5). Evidently the Father remains aloof from both his power and intellect, from which he extracts or snatches himself (ἤρπασσεν ἑαυτόν), apparently in the form of the “fire” that represents his hypostatic reality.⁶ As in the case of Moderatus’s “unitary logos” or “Monad,” whose self-deprivation of all unitive elements gives rise to quantity,⁷ the *Oracles* too seem to begin with the Father as an already conceptually articulated entity from which its essential unitary or monadic reality retreats so that a secondary, demiurgic intellect can come into being (as “self-generated,” frg. 39) and ontogenesis can proceed.⁸ In Moderatus this occurs on a secondary ontological level, such that the unitive elements of the Monad apparently retreat from and contract themselves to constitute a superior One on the highest, primary level, while in the *Oracles*, the Father is already on the highest level, leaving the destination and result of his self-retreat rather unclear, thus raising the question of the identity and status of the Father’s fire: does it become an even higher monadic supreme principle transcending the Father himself together with his power and Intellect according to the dictum of frg. 27, “for in every world there shines a triad ruled by monad”?⁹

6. Frg. 3 [des Places]: ὁ πατήρ ἤρπασσεν ἑαυτόν, οὐδ’ ἐν ἐῆ δυνάμει νοερᾶ κλείσας ἴδιον πῦρ. Frg. 4: ἡ μὲν γὰρ δύναμις σὺν ἐκείνῳ, νοῦς δ’ ἀπ’ ἐκείνου. Frg 5: οὐ γὰρ ἐς ὕλην πῦρ ἐπέκεινα τὸ πρῶτον ἐῆν δύναμιν κατακλείει ἔργοις ἀλλὰ νόῳ· νοῦ γὰρ νόος ἐστὶν ὁ κόσμου τεχνίτης πυρίου. Cf. the *Anon. in Parm.* 9.1–8 (Hadot 2:90): Οἱ δὲ ἀρπάσαι ἑαυτὸν ἐκ πάντων τῶν ἑαυτοῦ εἰπόντες δύναμιν τε αὐτῷ διδόασιν καὶ νοῦν ἐν τῇ ἀπλότητι αὐτοῦ συνηνῶσθαι καὶ ἄλλον πάλιν <ν>οῦν (probably the second [demiurgic] Intellect of frg. 7) καὶ τῆς τριάδος αὐτὸν οὐκ ἐξελόντες ἀναρεῖν ἀριθμὸν ἀξιοῦσιν, ὡς καὶ τὸ ἐν λέγειν αὐτὸν εἶναι παντελῶς παρατεῖσθαι.

7. Simplicius, *In phys.* 9.231.5–12 (231,5–12 Diels): “And in the second book of *On Matter* Porphyry, citing from Moderatus, has also written that the Unitary Logos, [as Plato somewhere (*Tim.* 29d7–30a6) says], intending to produce from itself the origin of beings, by self-deprivation made room for [ms. ἐχώρησε; ἐχώριζε, “separated from itself” conj. Zeller, Festugière in Festugière 1954, 38 n. 3] Quantity (ποσότης), having deprived it (Quantity) of all its (the Logos’) proportions and Forms” (i.e., unitive elements).

8. Here I follow the interpretation of Bechtle (2006, 578): “Therefore the Father, perfect unity, snatches himself [‘his fire’] away from this pre-existent fullness. He leaves behind the intellectual power only, that is not the same as Power, but rather the seed from which the second Intellect can spring by interaction with Power. This means that he leaves behind that which will become actual second Intellect, precontained in the threefold unity of the Father. See also Bechtle 1999a, 239.

9. Damascius summarizes the possibilities in *Princ.* 43 = 2:1,4 Westerink-Combès = 1:86,3–10 Ruelle: “We now come to examine the question concerning the first principles prior to the intelligible triad: are they two in number, namely an absolutely ineffable principle and (another one below this) uncoordinated with the triad, as the great Iamblichus in book 28 of his most perfect *Chaldaean Theology* says, or, like most of his successors (i.e., Theodore, Syrianus, and Proclus), does the first triad of intelligibles come after an absolute and unique (single) cause, or should we descend even lower and say with Porphyry that the father of the intelligible

In her discussion of Neoplatonic exegesis of the *Chaldaean Oracles*, R. Majercik has argued that the earliest evidence for conceiving the monadic Father as consisting of a triad containing himself (i.e., the Father as the first “fire”), his power, and his intellect is furnished by the fourth fragment of the *Anonymous Commentary on the Parmenides* 9.1–8:

Others (i.e., the authors of the *Oracles*), although they affirm that He has robbed himself of all that which is his (i.e., his “fire”), nevertheless concede that *his power and intellect are co-unified in his simplicity*, and assign him even still another intellect, and although they do not separate him from the triad, they believe that he abolishes number such that they absolutely refuse to say that he is the One.

This was achieved by conflating the language of frg. 3 of the *Oracles*: “the Father snatched himself away and did not enclose his own fire in his intellectual Power” [trans. Majercik] with that of frg. 4: “For power is with him (for the commentator, the Father), but *Intellect* is from him” [trans. Majercik] so as to form an implicit triad of Father, Power, Intellect. According to the *Commentary*, since the Father snatched himself away, he cannot be called a solitary “One”; as the first member of a triad, he is instead “co-unified” within an entire triad as a three-in-one unity. The *Commentary*’s phrase “yet another intellect” could refer either to the primary paternal Intellect (πατρικός νοῦς of frgs. 39, 49, 108, 109 (cf. νοῦς πατρός, frgs. 22, 36, 37, 134), or, more probably, to the second, demiurgic intellect of frg. 7 (“For the Father completed all things and handed them over to the second intellect which you, the totality of the human race, call the first”).¹⁰ In any case, it

triad is (itself) the unique principle of all things?” Cf. Proclus, *In Parm.* 1070.15–1071.3 Saffrey-Westerink and *Eclog. phil. chald.* 4.38–42 [des Places]: εἰ γὰρ ὁ πρῶτος « Πατήρ » ἀρπάξει « ἑαυτὸν » λέγεται τοῦ νοῦ καὶ τῆς « δυνάμεως », τίς ὁ μηδὲ οὕτως ἀρπάσαι δεηθεὶς ἑαυτὸν, ἀλλ’ ὑπερηρασμένος ἀπὸ πάντων ἀπλῶς καὶ θεὸς πάντων ὑμνούμενος;

10. See Majercik 2001, 267–68 and frg. 7 (Πάντα γὰρ ἐξετέλεσσε πατήρ καὶ νῶ παρέδωκε δευτέρῳ, ὃν πρῶτον κληῖζετε πᾶν γένος ἀνδρῶν) and 8 (... δυὰς παρὰ τῷδε κάθηται ἀμφοτέρῳ γὰρ ἔχει, νῶ μὲν κατέχειν τὰ νοητά, αἴσθησιν δ’ ἐπάγειν κόσμοις) of the *Oracles*. Majercik observes that the reference of the term paternal Intellect “paternal intellect” (e.g., νοῦς πατρός frg. 37; πατρικός νόος, frg. 39), is often unclear: does it refer to the intellectual faculty of the first intellect or Monad (conceived as a primal triad of Father, Power, and Intellect) or to the second, demiurgic Intellect, perhaps also considered as a triadic entity? Likewise unclear is the relation between the third term of the primal triadic Monad and the separately existing second intellect. H. Lewy (1956) relates frg. 3 (ἡ μὲν γὰρ δύναμις σὺν ἐκείνῳ [scil. τῷ πατρὶ] νοῦς δὲ ἀπ’ ἐκείνου, Proclus, *In Alc.* 37; *Theol. Plat.* 365.3–4) to the *Anonymous Commentary on the Parmenides* 9.1–8 (rev. ed. Tardieu 1978, 79, n. 47). While Lewy thinks this νοῦς is an emanation of the Chaldaean πατρικός νοῦς, it is also possible that it is the πατρικός νοῦς itself. Although Plotinus seems to have largely ignored them, this verse and the *Oracles*’ notion that all levels of reality (“worlds,” frg. 27) are triadically organized may have led the author of the *Anonymous Commentary on the Parmenides*, various members of his circle (such as the authors of the

appears that the commentator did not wish to equate the supreme Father of the *Oracles* with an absolute “One” (ἕν) beyond being of the sort described in the first Parmenidean hypothesis, as apparently Porphyry did.¹¹

THE SECOND, DEMIURGIC INTELLECT

On balance, it seems to me that the resulting secondary intellect most likely refers to a separately existing demiurgic intellect (frg. 5) that both contemplates the intelligible Ideas contained in the supreme Father and then sows them throughout the cosmos (frgs. 8 and 37) as the ideas (variously called symbols, frg. 108, fire and light, frg. 39, or Iynges, the Father’s self-thinking thoughts, frgs. 77–78) that inform matter (by striking it like lightning, frgs. 35 and 37), imparting to the resulting entities a ceaseless vitality and motion (frg. 49), as well as bringing sense-perception to the world; frgs. 7 and 8). Much like the second God of Numenius, this second Intellect is a Dyad (frg. 8, perhaps identical with the “twice transcendent,” δις ἐπέκεινα implied by frg. 169), in the sense that it is oriented towards both the physical realm below it and what is above it by contemplating the Ideas contained in the monadic Father that, as in Plato’s *Timaeus*, serve as the model of the universe. Like the supreme Father with his own power and intellect from which he has withdrawn, this second, demiurgic Intellect is also a triadic entity, perhaps itself also monadic (frg. 27), called in frgs. 23 and 31 the triad that “measures” the primordial intelligible thoughts that flow from the Father.¹² From “both,” that is, from both the first (the Father) and the second triad, flows the “bond” (δέμα) of the second triad (“which is not the first,” frg. 31; cf. frgs. 26–29).

Sethian Platonizing treatises), and his Neoplatonic successors to construe the supreme principle as a triad or “Triple Power” constituted by its existence (ὑπαρξίς), power (δύναμις) or life (ζωή), and intellect (νοῦς), which they saw as corresponding to Plotinus’s intelligible triad of Being, Life, and Intellect, and perhaps even to the main moments of permanence (μονή), procession (πρόοδος), and reversion (ἐπιστροφή) in the generation of reality from a supreme principle.

11. Although I do not share her view of the Porphyrian authorship of the *Anonymous Commentary on the Parmenides*, Majercik (2001, 268–69) rightly points out that later Neoplatonists claimed that Porphyry did equate the supreme Father of the *Oracles* with the supreme principle of all things (Damascius, *Princ.* 1.86.9–10 = 2:1,11–13 Westerink-Combès: “Or do we say with Porphyry that the supreme principle of all things is the Father of the intelligible triad?”; see also Proclus, *In Parm.* 1070.15–1071.3 Saffray-Westerink).

12. The terms “measuring” and “measured” (frgs. 1 and 23; in frg. 31 the νοητά are measured by the bond of a first triad “which is not the first”) recall the principle of the Unlimited or of the More and Less of Plato’s *Philebus*, which submits to Unity or Measure so as to produce the Forms.

THE FIGURE OF HECATE

This “bond” of the second intellect or “measuring triad” seems to be none other than Hecate, whom frg. 6 calls an intellectual diaphragm or membrane that separates the first and second fires, (ὡς γὰρ ὑπεζωκῶς τις ὑμῖν νοερός πῦρ πρῶτον καὶ πῦρ ἐῴτερον σπεύδοντα μιγῆναι) and frg. 50 calls the “center between the two Fathers” (μέσσον τῶν πατέρων Ἐκάτης κέντρον πεφορηθῆναι), i.e., the paternal Monad (πατρικὴ μονάς, frg. 11; cf. frgs 12, 27) and the second, demiurgical Intellect (πατρικὸς νόος, frg. 39). Thus Hecate not only separates the first and second Fathers or intellects as a membrane, but also, as the “bond” of the measuring triad (i.e., the second, demiurgical intellect)¹³ and as the Father’s generative womb,¹⁴ she associates them together, almost as if she were the first father’s consort and mother of the second, demiurgical intellect.¹⁵ Psellus (*Exp. Orac. Chald.* 7.1152a = 74,9 Kroll 1894; 189 des Places) says that she is in the middle of the “source-fathers” (πηγαῖοι πατέρες), sandwiched between the ἅπαξ ἐπέκεινα (“once beyond,” which Dillon (1990, 123) translates “Transcendental I,” frg. 169, Psellus, *Hypotypōsis* 7 = 74,7 Kroll 1894¹⁶) above her, and the δις ἐπέκεινα (“twice beyond” or “Transcendental II”) below her.¹⁷ As such she seems to be identical with the power (δύναμις) of the supreme Father mentioned in frgs. 3 and 4.

13. Frg. 31: Ἐξ ἀμφοῖν δὴ τῶνδε ῥέει τριάδος δέμα πρώτης οὔσης οὐ πρώτης, ἀλλ’ οὐ τὰ νοητὰ μετρεῖται.

14. Apparently identified as the Orphic goddess Rhea in frg. 56: “Truly Rhea is the source and stream of blessed intellectual entities, for she, first in power, receives the birth of all these in her inexpressible womb and pours it (the vivifying fire) forth on the all as it runs its course” (ῥεῖη τοι νοερῶν μακάρων πηγῆ τε ῥοή τε πάντων γὰρ πρώτη δυνάμει κόλποισιν ἀφράστοις δεξαμένη γενεὴν ἐπὶ πᾶν προχέει τροχάουσαν). H. Lewy (1956, 18 n. 65, 159 and n. 350) interprets ῥεῖη here not as a reference to Rhea, but as an adjectival variant of Homeric ῥεῖα (= ῥαδίως), yielding “easy-flowing”; even though this interpretation is unlikely, it does seem probable that Hecate was the original reference of this verse.

15. According to Brisson (2003, 120–23), “In traditional mythology, Rhea is the spouse of Kronos and the mother of Zeus; thus her assimilation to Hecate seems to imply that this goddess if the spouse-daughter or the first Father, and the mother-sister of the Demiurge, in accordance with a scheme we find elsewhere, particularly in Orphism.”

16. Majercik (2001, 286–88) points out that, although no verse of the *Chaldaean Oracles* includes both of these terms, des Places (frg. 169) isolates the expression ἅπαξ ἐπέκεινα as the final hemistich of a truncated hexameter despite the difficulty of fitting it to the metrical scheme of the *Oracles*.

17. Lydus (*Mens.* 4.53.31–35 says Porphyry’s commentary on the *Oracles* identified the twice beyond with the universal demiurge and the once beyond with the Good. These titles seem to result from an interpretation of the Chaldaean deities Ad (the first principle) and Adad (= “Haddad,” the second principle). “Adad” is “Ad” doubled; cf. Proclus, *In Parm.* 4.512,1–7 Steel.

But as Dillon¹⁸ has pointed out, by serving as the median element in the second “measuring” triad, Hecate may thereby represent the supreme Father’s “power” on the immediately subjacent, demiurgic level, as suggested by frg. 5: “For the first Fire beyond (πῦρ ἐπέκεινα τὸ πρῶτον) does not enclose its own power in matter by means of its works, but by Intellect; for Intellect derived from Intellect (νοῦ νόος) is the craftsman of the fiery cosmos (ὁ κόσμος τεχνίτης πυρίου).”¹⁹ Indeed, in frg. 37, the “intellectual fire” that divides and delimits the intelligible thoughts sprouting from their primordial source in the Father into distinct Ideas seems to be none other than Hecate as the source of ideal multiplicity.

On the level of the demiurgic or measuring triad, Hecate is generated by the Father (πατρογενούς Ἐκάτης) as the womb²⁰ that receives these ideal Forms as his lightning, rather like the receptacle of Plato’s *Timaeus*.²¹ The *Oracles* conceive these Forms as the Iynges,²² the self-thinking thoughts of the Father (frg. 77) anchored to their sensible copies by the divine Connectors (συνοχῆς, frg. 82) that insure the cohesion of the cosmos by causing the participation of particulars in their Forms; these in turn are assisted by the divine Teletarchs (“masters of initiation”) that inhabit the divine (empyrean), celestial (ethereal), and physical realms and enable the soul’s eventual return to the intelligible realm.²³

18. Dillon 1990, 122; cf. 1996, 392–96, where he suggests that Hecate may have been identified as well with the median term of the triad existence, power and intellect which characterized the supreme Father.

19. Majercik (2001, 290–91) observes that Neoplatonists interpreted the two Fathers of frgs. 7 and 50 in the light of frg. 5 understood as referring to the first and second Intellects, with Hecate occupying the center between them (the two Fathers).

20. Frg. 35: “For implacable thunders leap from him and the lightning-receiving womb of Hecate who is generated from the Father. From him leap the girdling bloom of fire and the powerful breath [πνεῦμα] beyond the fiery poles. Cf. frgs. 28, 30.

21. Perhaps an implementation of Plato’s doctrine of the receptacle or matrix of becoming in *Tim.* 48e–52d, who receives the copies of the Forms but is herself without form, “invisible, unshaped, all-receptive, and in some most perplexing and baffling way partaking of the intelligible” (51a7–8).

22. “Binders,” “connectors,” or “maintainers” in the sense that the Ideas, such as the Good and Beautiful, have an erotic component that binds them to their copies and thus maintain the universal order (symbolized as the wryneck or *iunx*, a magic bird used as a charm to coax the unfaithful to return to their proper mate).

23. Like the Teletarchs of Chaldaean theology that enable the return of souls to their home in the divine aeons, the Sethian Platonizing treatise *Zostrianos* posits a large class of “glories” that inhabit all ontological levels, from the top level of the Barbelo Aeon to the earth itself. Thus *Zostrianos*’s body, left on earth during his ascent, is guarded by glories (VIII.4.23–25); glories likewise guard “those who are worthy” and who have been truly baptized in knowledge, i.e., all Sethians (VIII.24.18–30). Indeed, they are conceptual “patterns of salvation” available as helpers to anyone who wishes to transcend this world (VIII.47.15–31). *Allogenes* also places these glories in the Barbelo Aeon (XI.55.22–24), and likewise conceives the all-glorious (literally “she-of-all-the glories”) Youel as *Allogenes*’ chief helper. In both *Zostrianos* and *Allogenes*, it is Youel

As the apparent conduit of the Father's intellectual fire, Hecate also serves as the mixing bowl or life-giving womb in which the demiurgic intellect mixes the primordial ingredients of all souls (frgs. 32, 42, 56).²⁴ From her womb flows both sensible reality (πολυποιλίλου ὕλης, "variegated matter" frg. 34) and the primordial, precosmic soul-stuff (frg. 51, πολλὴ ἄδην βλύζει ψυχῆς λιβάς ἀρχιγενέθλου) that is shaped by the second, demiurgical intellect into the body of both the cosmos (frg. 68) and all sensible realities (the "channels," ὄχετοί of frgs. 65, 66). These are respectively animated by the cosmic and individual souls²⁵ that are incarnated into primal Matter *per se*, conceived as receptacle-like "hollows" of the cosmos (frgs. 34; 61d, 90).²⁶

In short, Hecate is the source of life (frg. 32, τὸν ζωογόνον Ἐκάτης κόλπον), a veritable mother of the all. While Dillon points out that Hecate exists on both a higher and lower level, both as the "center" between the two Fathers—perhaps identical with the supreme Father's power—and as the immanent aspect of the World Soul itself on a lower level,²⁷ one might suggest that in fact she may function even on three levels.²⁸ First she functions on the highest level as the Father's emanative power, playing a role similar to that of Plotinus's intelligible matter or "trace" of unbounded Life emitted from the One to become bounded Intellect (*Enn.* 6.7 [38].17). Second, in her capacity as the cosmic "womb" and source of soul and multiplicity, she serves as both the "center" or "membrane" separating the two Fathers (or "fires," frgs. 6, 50) and the "bond" of the measuring triad that conjoins them. Third, on a still lower level, she is conceived both as the womb

who, either by anointing Allogenes (XI.52.13–33) or baptizing Zostrianos (VIII.60.24–63.8), prepares the ascending hero for the reception of the final revelation of the highest realities from the Luminaries of the Barbelo Aeon.

24. See Brisson, 2003, 114.

25. Here Hecate is pictured as the life-producing fount (frgs. 30 and 32; cf. frgs. 96, 136 [ζώση δυνάμει], cf. ἐν δυνάμει ζῶν, frg. 137) from whose right side flows the World Soul, while her left side retains the source of virtue (frgs. 50–55).

26. Cf. the "cosmic hollows" of frgs. 34 (and 35), and the πολλῶν πληρώματα κόλπων of frg. 96.

27. Dillon (1996, 394) suggests that in the *Oracles*, as in Speusippus (and probably also in Moderatus, Nicomachus, Plutarch, and Numenius), there is a female principle of indefiniteness and multiplicity that manifests itself at every ontological level from the primordial Dyad through the pre-cosmic World Soul. See also Turner 1991, 221–32, and Johnson 1990, ch. 5.

28. Hecate's triform nature (three heads, six arms) is well-known from antiquity. She is guardian of forks in the road (as τριοδίτις) and identified with the three phases of the moon; see Roscher 1965, 4:1886–1910. According to Hesiod (*Theog.* 412–428), Hecate is awarded three cosmic spheres of influence (earth, sky, sea), first by the Titans in the older order and then by Zeus in the new, and she also exercises influence over the world of men in the Indo-European trifunctional spheres of sovereignty, force and productivity outlined by G. Dumézil; see Boedeker 1983, 79–93. In the Hellenistic period, Hecate becomes goddess of heaven, earth, and especially of the underworld.

of the world within which all things are sown and contained (frg. 32, καὶ τὸν ζωογόνον πληροῦσ' Ἐκάτης ὑπόκολλον; 28, 30) that receives the Father's intelligible fire used by the demiurge to fabricate all souls and sensible realities (frg. 34; cf. 90, 96), and also as the crater or bowl (frgs. 28, 30, 32) in which the demiurge mixes the ingredients of the all souls (cf. *Tim.* 34b3–8) and introduces them into the world. Thus Hecate is not the World Soul, but its source.

THE WORLD SOUL

The *Oracles* go on to identify the World Soul *per se* as the realm of boundless Nature (identified with Fate, εἰμαρμένον, frgs. 102–3), which is said to float on the back of Hecate (frg. 54), whose serpentine hair represents the Father's winding noetic fire in the form of the celestial luminaries (frg. 55). The World Soul is positioned immediately below the second, demiurgic Intellect (“the Paternal Thoughts”), animating the sensible world (“the All”) as its lower “self-revealed image (frg. 101), with its heat (frgs. 53, 70).

THE SENSIBLE WORLD AND MATTER

Finally, the lowest ontological level of the *Oracles* is occupied by the “cosmic hollows,” the realm of primal, pre-existent Matter that ultimately derives from the “source of sources” (either the supreme Father or his power, frg. 34), a formless, twisted and turbulent (frg. 180) abyss devoid of intellect or breath that receives sensible images of the forms (frgs. 34, 163). In the *Oracles*, the already-qualified “variegated matter” that springs from Hecate as “Source of Sources” (πηγή πηγῶν, frg. 34)²⁹ seems to be sensible realities of different sorts, sometimes positive (as generated and shaped in the womb of Hecate by the demiurgic intellect, frgs. 216, 173) and sometimes negative, even evil or “bitter” (as yet unmastered by the demiurge, frg. 129).

THE CHALDAEAN HIERARCHY

Thus the *Chaldaean Oracles* seem to exhibit an ontological hierarchy of entities somewhat like the following:

1. The “once transcendent” paternal Monad, comprising the Father, his power and intellect, from which the Father retreats, leaving behind:
2. Hecate as the Father's emanative power, the bond, center and membrane between the two Fathers

29. Cf. Theodore of Asine's prefigurative world soul, πηγαία ψυχή, *apud* Proclus, *In Tim.* 2.275.2.

3. The second, "twice transcendent" demiurgical (Paternal?) Intellect from the Father, as the measuring triad containing the Ideas as Iynges, Synocheis, and Teletarchai
4. Hecate, as womb, fount of life. and source of souls and sensible reality
5. The World Soul or Nature
6. The sensible realm ("channels")
7. Matter, the cosmic "hollows"

PORPHYRY'S INTERPRETATION OF THE *Oracles*

Based on these features, the testimony of Augustine³⁰ and John Lydus,³¹ and his own analysis of the Chaldean exegesis preserved in the *Anonymous Commentary on the Parmenides* 9.1–8 (cited above n. 10), Pierre Hadot³² postulates that Porphyry was the first to systematize the highest entities of Chaldean theology into a supreme ennead or hierarchy of three triads.³³ The supreme triad was the "once transcendent," consisting of the Father, his power, and his intellect; the second or mediating triad was the triform Hecate who, as the expression of the supreme Father's power as the indeterminate multiplicity of the Ideas from the Father; and the third was the demiurgical intellect or measuring triad that delimits this multiplicity into determinate Forms. On the highest level, Hecate is the Father's power co-unified in his simplicity; on the median level she is his processing power or life-giving fire (frg. 32) as yet indeterminate; and on the third level she is the womb and source of the world soul and boundless Nature. Hadot also thinks that Porphyry himself must have been inspired by the *Oracles* to locate Hecate at this upper level in his own metaphysics and he provides a diagram (slightly modified) to show the structure presupposed in the Chaldaean "system," in which the verti-

30. *Civ.* 10.23: *Dicit enim Deum Patrem et Deum Filium, quem Graecae appellat paternum intellectum uel paternam mentem ... non utique diceret horum medium, patris et filii medium.*

31. Derived from Porphyry *apud Mens.* 4.122.1–4 = 159,5–8 Wuensch: "Divine is the number of the ennead completed by three triads and, as Porphyry says, maintained as the summits of the theology according to the Chaldean philosophy" (Θεῖος ὁ τῆς ἐννάδος ἀριθμὸς ἐκ τριῶν τριάδων πληρούμενος, καὶ τὰς ἀκρότητας τῆς θεολογίας κατὰ τὴν Χαλδαϊκὴν φιλοσοφίαν, ὡς φησιν ὁ Πορφύριος, ἀποσώζων). Majercik (2001, 276) also points out that, although they do not cite a specific verse, both Proclus (*In Parm.* 1090.25–28: "It is necessary to keep in mind that among the intelligibles there are many orders, and as praised by the theologians, there are three triads among them") and Damascius (*Princ.* 111 = 3:109,4–5 Westerink-Combès = 1:285,5 Ruelle: "For the theurgists hand down to us that there are three triads there, having been instructed by the gods themselves") mention a doctrine of three triads in connection with the *Oracles*.

32. See Hadot 1968, 1:260–72.

33. Such triads might have been suggested by frg. 22: "For the intellect of the Father said for all things to divide into three, governing all things by the intellect <of the very first> eternal <Father>. He nodded his assent to this and immediately all things were divided."

cal axis represents the processional hierarchy, and the horizontal axis represents the relative functional predominance (italicized) of the components of the triad at each level:

ἄπαξ ἐπέκεινα (Father)	<i>father</i>	power	intellect
Hecate, Father's power	father	<i>power</i>	intellect
δις ἐπέκεινα	father	power	<i>intellect</i>
(second, demiurgical intellect)			

Nevertheless, one must conclude with Majercik³⁴ that the evidence for an ennead of first principles in the *Chaldaean Oracles* themselves is weak, and likely derives from later Neoplatonic exegesis of the *Oracles*, perhaps beginning with Porphyry, along the lines of Neopythagorean arithmological schemes.³⁵ On the other hand, the Sethian Platonizing treatise *Allogenes*, which (along with *Zostrianos* and perhaps *Marsanes*) was read by members of Plotinus's Roman seminar during the period of Porphyry's association with it (ca. 240–265 C.E.)³⁶ and perhaps itself composed shortly before 250 C.E., appears to offer a pre-Neoplatonic version of this supreme ennead in its doctrine of the supreme Invisible Spirit's Triple-Powered One.

THE SETHIAN PLATONIZING TREATISES *Zostrianos* AND *Allogenes*

Somewhat like the metaphysics of the *Chaldaean Oracles*, the metaphysics of the four Platonizing Sethian treatises from the Nag Hammadi Library is laid out on four ontological levels: a highest realm beyond being occupied by the supreme

34. Majercik 2001, 277.

35. In the late-first century Moderatus of Gades entertained the emanation of multiplicity from a monadic first One in three stages: Permanence (μονή), Progression (προποδισμός), and a Return (ἀναποδισμός) upon its source. According to Stobaeus (*Anth.* 1:8,1–9,9 Wachsmuth), he conceived the Monad as the formal principle that limits primal Quantity (πραινουσι ποσότης): “Number is a collection of monads, or a progression (προποδισμός) of multiplicity beginning from a monad, and reversion (ἀναποδισμός) terminating at the monad. The Monad is what remains (μειουμένον; cf. μονή) and is stable after the subtraction of each number in turn from Multiplicity. According to Theon of Smyrna in the early-second century: “First exists the Monad, called a triangular number not in full actuality, ... but rather potentially, for, since it is, as it were, the seed of all things, it contains in itself also a triform potency” (*Exp.* 37,15–18 Hiller). So also Theon's contemporary, Nicomachus of Gerasa wrote: “Thus the Monad appears also potentially as a triangular number, although in actuality the first (triangular number) is three” (*Arith. Intro.* 2.8 = 88,9–10 Hoche). Compare the remarks of Dillon 1996, 344–51.

36. In his paper entitled “Plotin citateur du Zostrien. paper (Colloquium on “Thèmes et problèmes du traité 33 de Plotin contre les Gnostiques” (2005), Michel Tardieu plausibly showed that in *Enn.* 2.9 [33].10.19–33, Plotinus's refutation *Against the Gnostics* actually cites the Sethian Platonizing treatises *Zost.* VIII.9.17–10.20.

Triple-Powered Invisible Spirit, below which one finds an intelligible realm of pure determinate being occupied by a divine Intellect called the Aeon of Barbelo with her own three subaeons Kalyptos, Protophanes, and Autogenes, followed by one or more psychic realm of becoming occupied by disincarnate souls, and finally the physical realm of "Nature" at the bottom of the scale.

THE TRIPLE POWERED ONE

As the entity that mediates between the supreme Unknowable One or Invisible Spirit and the Aeon of Barbelo, the Invisible Spirit's Triple Power is the most distinctive metaphysical innovation of the four Platonizing Sethian treatises from Nag Hammadi. Mediating between the Unknowable One and the threefold Aeon of Barbelo, the Triple Power of the Invisible Spirit is endowed with the three powers of Existence, Vitality, and Mentality (or Blessedness in *Zostrianos*).

Allogenes XI.49²⁶ He (the Triple Powered One) is Vitality and²⁷ Mentality and Essentiality.²⁸ So then, Essentiality²⁹ constantly includes its³⁰ Vitality and Mentality,³¹ and³² Vitality includes³³ Substantiality and³⁴ Mentality; Mentality includes³⁵ Life and Essentiality.³⁶ And the three are one,³⁷ although individually they are three.... XI.61³² Now he (the Unknowable One) is³³ an entity insofar as he exists, in that he either³⁴ exists and will become,³⁵ or lives or knows, although he {lives}<acts>³⁶ without Mind³⁷ or Life or Existence³⁸ or Nonexistence,³⁹ incomprehensibly.

The Triple-Powered One is the emanative means by which the supreme Unknowable One generates the Aeon of Barbelo in three phases. 1) In its initial phase as a purely infinitival Existence (ὑπαρχις or ὄντοτης), it is latent within and identical with the supreme One; 2) in its emanative phase it is an indeterminate Vitality (ζωότης) that proceeds forth from One; and 3) in its final phase it is a Mentality (νοήτης) that contemplates its source in the supreme One and, thereby delimited, takes on the character of determinate being as the intellectual Aeon of Barbelo.

In *Allogenes* XI.45.17–30, the Aeon of Barbelo emerges through the Invisible Spirit's Triple Power by a process of initial contraction, subsequent expansion, and final instantiation through the contemplation of its source:³⁷

37. In this way the Triple Power combines both the dyadic function of indefinite extension and the monadic function of limitation. Cf. Pse.-Clementine *Homilies* (1:224,3–4 Rehm): κατὰ γὰρ ἕκτασιν καὶ συστολῆν ἢ μονὰς δὺς εἶναι νομίζεται; cf. 1:234:18 Rehm: ἀπ' αὐτοῦ εἰς ἄπειρον ἕκτασιν and Sophia in Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 1.3.3 (54,293–55,294 Rousseau-Doutreleau): ἐκτεινομένης αὐτῆς καὶ εἰς ἄπειρον ῥεούσης τῆς οὐσίας; cf. 1.2.2) In Christian trinitarian theology the Sabellians and Marcellus of Ancyra explain how, by extension and spreading out (πλατύνειν), God is a Triad as well as a Monad; cf. Athanasius, *Adv. Ar.* 4.13 (Stegmann): μονὰς ἐστὶν ὁ πατήρ, τριάς δέ πατήρ. Cf. Moderatus *apud* Stobaeus, *Anth.* 1:8,1–11 (Wachsmuth): "In brief, number is a collection of monads, or a progression of multiplicity beginning from a

Allogenes XI.45 ¹⁵ the ¹⁶ eternal [light of] the knowledge ¹⁷ that has [appeared], the ¹⁸ male virginal [glory], ¹⁹ [the first] aeon, the one from ²⁰ [a] unique triple-powered [aeon], ²¹ [the] Triple-Powered One who ²² [truly exists]. For after it (the Barbelo Aeon) [contracted], ²³ [it expanded] and ²⁴ [spread out] and became complete, ²⁵ [and] it was empowered [with] ²⁶ all of them, by knowing [itself] ²⁷ [in the perfect Invisible Spirit]. ²⁸ And it [became] ²⁹ [an] aeon who knows [herself] ³⁰ [because] she knew that one.

Here ontogenesis begins, not with the First One—the Invisible Spirit—but on a secondary level with the self-contraction of the Triple Powered One as the prefigurative state of the second One prior to its expansion into the Aeon of Barbelo. The act of the Triple Power's self-contraction here seems indeed to be rather close to the *Chaldaean Oracles*' description of the Father's act of his self-extraction (ἤρπασσεν ἑαυτὸν) from his own power and intellect in frg. 3, while the Triple Power's subsequent act of self-expansion seems quite parallel to frg. 12: "for the Monad is extensible which generates duality," ... ταυαῆ (γαρ) μονάς ἐστιν ἥ δὺο γεννᾷ. *Zostrianos* applies a similar act of self-expansion to the procession of Barbelo from the Invisible Spirit, but with no mention of the Triple Power:

Zostrianos VIII.81 ⁶ She [was] existing [individually] ⁷ [as cause] of [the declination]. ⁸ Lest she come forth anymore ⁹ or get further away ¹⁰ from perfection, she ¹¹ knew herself and him (the Spirit), ¹² and she stood at rest ¹³ and spread forth ¹⁴ on his [behalf] ... ¹⁹ to know herself ²⁰ and the one that pre-exists.

Alternatively, in *Allogenes* XI.49,5–26, the Triple-Powered One is said to be the delimiter of the indeterminate boundlessness subsisting in the Invisible Spirit.³⁸ Here there is no intermediate phase of Life or Vitality, and the act of indeterminate knowing immediately precedes reversionary determination. As an initially *unbounded* entity, the Triple-Powered One emerges from its source in the Invisible Spirit (IS) as a processing boundlessness (B) that turns itself back to its source in an act of delimiting (D) self-knowledge; becoming stable and bounded, it gives rise to the realm of determinate being (τὰ ὄντως ὄντα) located within the Barbelo Aeon, functioning as the divine Intellect or self knowledge of the Invisible Spirit:

monad, and reversion terminating at the monad. Monads delimit Quantity, which is whatever has been deprived and is left remaining and stable when multiplicity is diminished by the subtraction of each number" and Plotinus, *Enn.* 6.3 [44].12.7–12: "numerical plurality ... is simply an expansion of number (ἐπέκτασις αριθμοῦ), its contrary being a contraction (συστολή). The same applies to the continuous [magnitude], the notion of which entails prolongation to a distant point. Quantity, then, appears whenever there is a progression from the unit or the point."

38. Translating ΡΕΧΙΟΟΡ as "delimiter" (<* διαπεραίνω) rather than "traverser" (< διαπεράω).

Allogenes XI.49 ⁵ He is endowed with ⁶ [Blessedness] and ⁷ Goodness, because when he ⁸ is intelligized as the Delimiter (D) ⁹ of the Boundlessness (B) of the ¹⁰ Invisible Spirit (IS) [that subsists] in him (D), ¹¹ it (B) causes [him (D)] to revert to [it (IS)] ¹² in order that it (B) might know what it is ¹³ that is within it (IS) and ¹⁴ how it (IS) exists, and ¹⁵ that he (D) might guarantee the endurance of ¹⁶ everything by being a ¹⁷ cause for those who truly exist. ¹⁸ For through him (D) ¹⁹ knowledge of it (IS) became available, ²⁰ since he (D) is the one who knows what ²¹ it (IS; or he, D?) is. But they brought forth nothing ²² [beyond] themselves, neither ²³ power nor rank nor ²⁴ glory nor aeon, ²⁵ for they are all ²⁶ eternal.

The Triple-Powered One's identity as both indeterminate boundlessness and as delimiter reminds one of the *Chaldaean Oracles'* characterization of Hecate: on the one hand she seems to be identified prefiguratively with the supreme Father's indeterminate power, and on the other hand as both the "center" or "membrane" separating the supreme Father from the paternal Intellect (the "fires" of frgs. 6, 50) and the "bond" of the measuring triad that conjoins them. In her capacity as the cosmic "womb" (frg. 32) and source of soul and multiplicity Hecate also serves as a cause of things that truly exist; indeed it is interesting that two other Sethian treatises characterize Barbelo as the womb of all things (*Ap. John* II.5.5; cf. *Trim. Prot.* XIII.38.15), while *Zostrianos* (VIII.91.15) apparently characterizes her as an "all perfect [receptacle]."

While the initial and final phases or modes of the Triple-Powered One have hypostatic instantiation respectively as the supreme Invisible Spirit and the Aeon of Barbelo, the ontological status of the indeterminate transitional mode between the two, Vitality, is less clear. In *Zostrianos*, the Triple Power mostly seems to be a faculty of the Invisible Spirit itself, while in the *Three Steles of Seth* it seems to be identified with Barbelo herself. In both *Allogenes* and *Marsanes*, the Invisible Spirit's Triple Power becomes the "Triple-Powered One," which seems to constitute a sort of quasi-hypostasis between the supreme One and the Barbelo Aeon, as if it were the hypostatic instantiation of its indeterminate processing activity or median power, Vitality.³⁹

39. The Invisible Spirit and the Triple-Powered One are mentioned sometimes separately (*Zost.* VIII.15.18; 17.7; 24.9–10; 93.6–9; 124.3–4; *Allogenes* XI.45.13–30; 52.19; 52.30–33; 53.30; 55.21; 61.6, 13, 20, 34 and *Marsanes* X.4.13–19; 6.19; 8.11; 9.25; 14.22–23; 15.1–3); sometimes as identical with or in close conjunction with the Invisible Spirit (*Zost.* VIII.20.15–18; 24.12–13; 63.7–8; 74.3–16; 79.16–23; 80.11–20; 87.13–14; 97.2–3; 118.11–12; 123.19–20; 128.20–21; *Allogenes* XI.47.8–9, 51.8–9; 58.25; 66.33–34; *Steles Seth* VII.121.31–32; *Marsanes* X.7.16–17 [the "activity" of the Invisible Spirit]; 7.27–29; 8.5–7), often as "the Triple Powered Invisible Spirit" or "the invisible spiritual Triple Powered One"; and sometimes in conjunction with Barbelo (*Steles Seth* VII.120.21–22; 121.32–33; 123.18–30; *Marsanes* X.8.19–20; 9.7–20; 10.8–11). As the activity of the Invisible Spirit, the Triple Powered One is perhaps identical with all three in *Marsanes* X.7.1–9.29.

Moreover, it appears that *Allogenes* conceives the Triple-Powered One to be a dynamic enneadic sequence of three triads deploying themselves in three phases in which each term of the triad sequentially predominates and contains the other two within each phase of its unfolding. Thus at the level of the Invisible Spirit, the Being–Life–Mind triad is present as pure infinitival activity (Existing, Living, Thinking, though dominantly existing); on the level of the Triple-Powered One, it is present as a triad of abstract denominative qualities (Existence, Vitality, Mentality, though dominantly Vitality); and apparently on the level of the Barbelo Aeon, as a triad of substantial realities, (Being, Life, and Mind, though dominantly Mind). The first—infinitival—phase coincides with the supreme One (or Invisible Spirit) and the third—substantial—phase with the Aeon of Barbelo, in effect giving rise to a median—qualitative—phase in which one might view the Triple-Powered One as distinct from—but simultaneously coordinate with—both the Invisible Spirit and Barbelo. In the following diagram, the italicized terms indicate the relative predominance of each of the three modalities.

Unknowable One / Invisible Spirit	<i>exists</i>	lives	knows
Triple-Powered One / Eternal Life	existence	<i>vitality</i>	mentality
Barbelo / First Thought	being	life	<i>mind</i>

This diagram should be compared to the previously described enneadic structure that Hadot proposed as the structure of first principles that, according to Lydus, Porphyry placed at the head of his metaphysics on the basis of the *Chaldaean Oracles*. Indeed, there is a certain parallel between the Sethian Triple-Powered One and the Chaldaean Hecate, in terms both of emanative and intermediary functions, in terms of a common triplicity, and in terms of a strong association of both with Vitality and the source of Life and multiplicity.

THE AEON OF BARBELO

While there appears to be a structural and functional resemblance between the Chaldaean Hecate and the Sethian Triple-Powered One, there is also a striking resemblance between the three phases of Hecate's existence as the prefiguration, source and place of the instantiation of ideal multiplicity and the Sethian figure of the Aeon of Barbelo itself. This is especially evident in the *Three Steles of Seth*, where Barbelo seems not only to be identified with the Invisible Spirit's Triple Power (VII.121.30–33) but also, like the Chaldaean Hecate, as the source or conduit of ideal multiplicity (frgs. 31, 32, 34, 35, 37, 50):

Steles Seth VII.122 ⁸ You (Barbelo) have been a cause of multiplicity, and ⁹ you have come to pass and remained ¹⁰ One, while yet being a cause of multiplicity in order to become divided. You are ¹¹ truly threefold: truly you are ¹² thrice replicated.

As a universal Intellect containing the archetypes of all things, the Barbelo Aeon comprises the highest realm of pure, determinate being. As a One-in-Many, it is completely unified, yet also contains three distinguishable ontological levels usually referred to as Kalyptos, Protophanes and Autogenes. These names seem originally to have designated three phases in the unfolding of the Barbelo Aeon: its initial latency or potential existence as “hidden” (καλυπτός); its initial manifestation as “first appearing” (πρωτοφανής); and its final self-generated (αὐτογενής) actualization. Once instantiated, these generative phases have come to be considered as three distinct subaeons of the Barbelo Aeon: Kalyptos would be the contemplated Intellect containing the paradigmatic ideas or authentic existents (τὰ ὄντως ὄντα), Protophanes would be the contemplating Intellect (νοῦς νοερός), containing a subdivision of the ideas, “those that are unified” with the minds that contemplate them, distinguished from the “perfect individuals,” the particular ideas and souls that are contained in Autogenes, who as demiurgic Intellect shapes the realm of Nature below according to the forms contemplated by Protophanes.⁴⁰

In one way or another, these three triadic entities, Hecate, the Triple Powered One, and the Barbelo Aeon, all seem to play a prominent role in the emanation of the realm of true being from a supreme principle. Each is closely associated with the concept of Life and Vitality. The median term of the Sethian Triple Powered One is explicitly named Life or Vitality, while in the *Apocryphon of John* the third of Barbelo's principal attributes is named Eternal Life. And in the case of Hecate, we have noted that the Chaldaeans regarded her right side as the source of the primordial soul that animates the realms of light, divine fire, ether and the heavens (frg. 51 des Places). In this capacity, both Hecate and Barbelo are characterized as cosmic wombs (*Ap. John* II.5.5; *Trim. Prot.* XIII 38.14; in *Zost.* VIII.91.15 Barbelo is called a “receptacle”). Indeed, there is a certain parallel between the Sethian Triple-Powered One and the Chaldaean Hecate, in terms both of emanative and intermediary functions, in terms of a common triplicity, and in terms of a strong association of both with Vitality and the source of Life and multiplicity. The Triple-Powered One, although its name is masculine, comprises three aspects, and depending on the terminology used, either the median phase (in the case of the Being, Life, and Intellect terminology) or all three of its phases (in the case of the Existence, Vitality, and Mentality terminology)

40. Sethian literature frequently associates Barbelo with a triad of attributes, perhaps under the influence of Middle Platonic speculation (as in Numenius or Amelius) on the tripartition of the divine Intellect into a contemplated Intellect, a contemplating Intellect and a demiurgical Intellect based on an exegesis of *Tim.* 39e. In the *Apocryphon of John* they are Prognosis, Aphtharsia, and Aionia Zoë (*Ap. John* II.5.32–6.2 adds Truth as a fourth). Or, based on Stoic theories about the relation of thought and language, the *Trimorphic Protennoia* portrays Barbelo as the divine First Thought successively manifesting herself as inarticulate Voice, verbal Speech, and fully discursive Word (λόγος).

bear names in the feminine gender. But in all cases the median aspect of these three figures is feminine, according well with their role as the feminine mediators of theogonical generation. No doubt, much of this may also be influenced by Plato's doctrine of the receptacle or matrix of becoming in *Tim.* 48e–52d, who receives the copies of the Forms but is herself without form, “invisible, unshaped, all-receptive, and in some most perplexing and baffling way partaking of the intelligible” (51a7–8).

It surely seems that the authors of *Zostrianos* and especially *Allogenes* were familiar, not only with the Father–Mother–Child protology and soteriology of earlier Sethian treatises, but to a greater degree than they also with contemporary Neopythagorean arithmological speculation on the generation primal principles on the basis of the first three numbers⁴¹ as well as speculation on the relationship between being, life, and mind or thought in the realm of true being derived from Plato's *Sophist*.⁴² and may even have been familiar with the triadic nature and function of Hecate implied in the metaphysics of the *Chaldaean Oracles*, which in turn may have been inspired by the three forms of Hecate symbolizing the three phases of the moon, at first hidden, then first appearing and growing to fullness as a self-begotten being.

THE ANONYMOUS *Commentary on the Parmenides*

Finally, a few words are in order concerning another witness to the emanative process similar to that implied in both the *Oracles* and the Sethian Platonizing treatises, namely the anonymous Turin palimpsest *Commentary* on Plato's *Parmenides*. Its sixth fragment, which concerns the second Parmenidean hypothesis, apparently constitutes the closest attested contemporary parallel with both the terminology and sequence of the emanative phases in the Sethian Platonizing treatises, while its fourth fragment paraphrases frgs. 3, 4, and perhaps 7 of the *Chaldaean Oracles* concerning their supreme Father–Power–Intellect triad as an unsuitably complex and positive interpretation of the absolutely unitary and only negatively conceivable One of the first Parmenidean hypothesis, which could only apply to the pure Father, characterized as a fire having withdrawn from his power and intellect.⁴³

41. See notes 35 and 37 above.

42. *Soph.* 248e–249a: “Are we really to be so easily persuaded that change, life, soul and intelligence have no place in the perfectly real (παντελῶς ὄν), that is has neither life (ζωή) nor intelligence (νοῦς), but stands aloof devoid of intelligence (φρόνησις)?”

43. See the citations and discussion in the first section of this paper and Bechtle 2006a, 563–81, who notes (p. 577) that the *Oracles* seem to present a contraction model of derivation, whereas the anonymous commentator uses an expansion model. Interestingly, we have seen that *Allogenes* XI.45.17–30 conceives the emergence of the Barbelo Aeon according to a combination of both models.

In the sixth fragment of the *Commentary*, the author's discussion of the second Parmenidean hypothesis (the One-who-is or Monad) posits two phases in the generation of the Second One—conceived as the divine Intelligence—from the First One. Its initial state, transcending the subject-object dichotomy, it is identical with the absolute existence (εἶναι) of the supreme One. Its final state it is identical with the determinate being (τὸ ὄν) characteristic of a self-objectivizing, self-generating Intellect rather like Numenius's second God; it is no longer simple, but corresponds to a version of the "Chaldaean" triad of Existence (ὑπαρξίς), Life or Power, and Intelligence.⁴⁴

While the *Chaldaean Oracles* seem to present a contraction model⁴⁵ of ontogenesis, the anonymous commentator uses an expansion model.⁴⁶ Specifically, the unfolding of the Second One or Intellect from the First One occurs in three phases or modalities in which each modality of the Intellect predominates at a given phase. First, as a pure infinitival Existence (εἶναι or ὑπαρξίς), Intellect is a purely potential Intellect identical with its prefiguration in the absolute being (τὸ εἶναι) of the supreme first One. In its final phase, it has become identical with the determinate or participial being (τὸ ὄν) of Intellect proper, the second hypostasis; it has now become the hypostatic exemplification of its "idea," the absolute being (τὸ εἶναι) of the One. The transitional phase between the first and final phases of Intellect in effect constitutes a median phase in which Intellect proceeds forth from the first One as an indeterminate Life:

Taken in itself as its own idea it—this power, or whatever term one might use to indicate its ineffability and inconceivability [i.e., the potential Intellect still identical with the One]—is one and simple. But with respect to existence (ὑπαρξίς), life (ζωή) and thought (νόησις) it (the potential Intellect still identical with the One) is neither one nor simple. Both that which thinks and that which is thought (are) in existence (ὑπαρξίς), but that which thinks—if Intellect passes from existence to that which thinks so as to return to the rank of an intelligible and see its (prefigurative) self—is in life. Therefore thinking is indeterminate with respect to life. And all are activities (ἐνεργεῖαι) such that with respect to

44. Hadot thinks that Porphyry was the first to adopt the term ὑπαρξίς for the first member of the triad, and that he may have discovered it in the *Chaldaean Oracles*, where it apparently designated the high deity, the Father (see. Damascius, *Dub. et sol.* 61 = 1:131,17 Ruelle ἡ μὲν πρώτη ἀρχὴ κατὰ τὴν ὑπαρξίν θεωρεῖται, ὡς ἐν τοῖς λόγοις and 221 = 2:101,25 Ruelle: ὡς Χαλδαϊκῶς εἰπεῖν, ὁ μὲν νοῦς κατὰ τὴν ἐνέργειαν ἴσταται μᾶλλον, ἡ δὲ ζωὴ, κατὰ τὴν δύναμιν, ἡ δὲ οὐσία, κατὰ τὴν τοῦ πατρὸς ὑπαρξίν. Cf. Hadot, 1966, 140–41 and 1968, 1:255–272.

45. Withdrawal, division or contraction from the Monad: Calcidius, *In Tim.* 295 (= Numenius frg. 52 pp. 95–96 des Places 1973); Iamblichus, *Theol. Arith.* 5.4, 8.20–9.7, 13.9–11 de Falco; Ps.-Clement, *Homilies* 224,34 Rehm. See the article by N. Hubler in this volume.

46. Self-doubling or expansion/extension of the monad: Theon of Smyrna, *Exp.* 21,1–7, 100,9–12 (Hiller); Nicomachus, *Arith. Intro.* 113,2–10 (Hoche); Iamblichus, *Theol. Arith.* 16.4–11; Sextus Empiricus, *Pyrr. hyp.* 3.153; *Math.* 10.261. Hippolytus, *Ref.* 4.43.

existence, activity would be static; with respect to intelligence, activity would be turning to itself; and with respect to life, activity would be turning away from existence. (*Taur in Parm.* 14.10–26 = Hadot 2,110–112)

Intellect is thus a “traveling subject” that deploys itself, or “lives forth” in three phases: first, a stage of infinitival being (εἶναι, ὑπαρξις) interior to the One altogether beyond either indetermination or determination, a pure act prior to being (τὸ ὄν); second, the going forth of Life in the sense of “being in the process of determination,” apparently conceived as an indeterminate activity or otherness or trace of life or vitality proceeding from the absolute being of the One; and third, a stage in which this Life becomes defined as determinate or participial being (τὸ ὄν) by an act of contemplative reversion upon its own prefiguration or potential being still present in the One.⁴⁷ Although the *Commentary* evinces no traces of an enneadic structure of triads, its scheme should be compared with those attributed to Porphyry and to *Allogenes* above:

	1	2	3
The One (εἶναι, ὑπαρξις)	<i>Existence</i>	(Life or Power)	(Intelligence)
Procession	(Existence)	<i>Life</i>	(Intelligence)
The One-Being (τὸ ὄν)	(Existence)	(Life)	<i>Intelligence</i>

In spite of minor differences in nomenclature, the structural and functional similarity of the existence-life-mind triad in the *Parmenides Commentary* and in the Platonizing Sethian treatises is clear. Both they and the *Commentary* understand the triad as the three phases by which a paradigmatic, indeterminate, prefiguration of determinate Being (τὸ εἶναι, ὑπαρξις) resident in the supreme One becomes determinate Being (τὸ ὄν) characteristic of a divine Intellect, usually identified in Sethian treatises as Barbelo, the First Thought and only direct product of the supreme Invisible Spirit.⁴⁸ The main difference is that, unlike the *Commentary* and perhaps the *Three Steles of Seth*, the Platonizing Sethian trea-

47. Cf. *Adv. Ar.* 1.51.31 (SC 68; 348,31–350,38 Henry-Hadot): “In the first motion, i.e., when it first appears, Life initially withdraws from the Father’s Power and, by its innate desire to vivify and without ceasing to be interior, tends outward by its own movement and thereupon reverts upon itself and, having been turned back toward itself, enters its paternal Existence and becomes male. Completed by its all-powerful excellence, Life has become perfect Spirit by reversion toward the higher, i.e., toward the interior away from its downward tendency.”

48. Like the *Commentary*, the *Three Steles of Seth* portrays the triad as a dynamic structure inherent in the second principle Barbelo, while *Zostrianos* tends to portray it as inherent in the supreme Invisible Spirit. *Allogenes* and *Marsanes* tend to confer a quasi-hypostatic status on the triad by identifying the Triple-Powered One (or Triple-Powered Invisible Spirit) primarily with its median processional phase (e.g., Vitality, Life, Activity) interposed between the supreme Unknowable One and the Aeon of Barbelo, thereby insuring the transcendence of the former, while also preventing any discontinuity in the chain of being.

tises *Zostrianos* and *Allogenes* locate the triad at the level of the first One and understand it as the origin rather than the result of the emanative process.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it is interesting to note that these triads and feminine figures all have something to do with the concept of dynamic emanationism in one way or another. One may indeed wonder whether the concept of dynamic emanation entered Platonism during the late second and early third centuries partially as a result of the dynamism of mythological Chaldaean and gnostic narrative theogonies populated with quasi-personified triadic divine beings of clearly masculine and feminine gender and the various self-expansions, self-contractions, self-reflections, and out-flowings by which they engender and interact with each other.⁴⁹

49. Other recent studies on the relation of the *Chaldaean Oracles* to Gnostic literature include: a) on the Valentinians, Thomassen 2006, 298–307 and Tardieu 1980, 194–231; 1992, 2:521–23; and b) on the *Paraphrase of Shem* (NHC VII,1), Roberge 2006a, 847–71; 2006b, 473–516.

A CRITICISM OF THE *CHALDAEAN ORACLES* AND
OF THE Gnostics in Columns IX and X of the
ANONYMOUS COMMENTARY ON THE PARMENIDES

Luc Brisson

At the beginning of the fourth fragment, which includes columns IX and X, the commentator has apparently just set forth an objection: how can it be said that the One cannot be named, defined, or known, while sacred traditions like the *Chaldaean Oracles* seem to contradict themselves, because, while saying the Father himself snatched himself away, they reveal to us a positive teaching about him?¹

In columns IX and X, the passage from Plato's *Parmenides*, which, in all probability, is being commented upon, reads as follows:

1. This article is intended as a response to the one by Bechtle 2006a, 563–81. My interpretation is set forth in note 8 (pp. 568–69). At the end of this note, Bechtle reaches the following general conclusion: “The *Commentary* may therefore be a text that was written at about the same time as *Zostrianos*, and it may indeed be that *Zostrianos* and the Commentator are involved in a sort of dialogue—a dialogue perhaps initiated by doctrinal problems or questions stemming from the philosophical and religious environment that is common to the Middle Platonic source, Numenius, and the *Oracles*.” My two objections against the interpretation proposed by G. Bechtle are the following. 1) I cannot accept that the representation of the Father in the *Chaldaean Oracles* is the result of an interpretation of the first two hypotheses of the *Parmenides* (p. 579). I believe that the dialogues of reference for the *Chaldaean Oracles* are the *Timaeus* and books VI and VII of the *Republic*, and that it is the commentator who established the link between the *Chaldaean Oracles* and the second part of the *Parmenides*. 2) In addition, my translation and commentary indicate clearly, it seems to me, that the discussion deals exclusively with the status of the Father as the first Intellect, and therefore that the status and role of the second intellect do not come into consideration in any way (p. 580). Finally, even if he displays a great deal of respect and veneration for the *Chaldaean Oracles*, the commentator criticizes their content, and, adopting a Plotinian viewpoint, situates the first God beyond the Intellect and hence beyond Being, which remains the first principle both in the *Chaldaean Oracles* and in *Zostrianos*.

PARMENIDES: Thus, to it there belongs no name; of it there is neither definition, nor knowledge, nor sensation, nor opinion.

YOUNG ARISTOTLE: Apparently.

PARMENIDES: There is therefore no one who names it, expresses it, conjectures it or knows it; there is no being that has sensation of it (*Parm.* 142a3–6).

We ought to point out, however, that no lemma is explicitly indicated by the commentator.

The commentator has mentioned an initial answer, introduced by οἱ μὲν, since our fragment begins with οἱ δέ, which responds to οἱ μὲν and refers to people who base their interpretation on the *Chaldaean Oracles*. These interpreters are criticized from a Neoplatonic viewpoint, which points out that of the first principle there can be only un-knowing. Following Father Saffrey,² I will break down the commentary on this passage from the *Parmenides* into the sections that were indicated by the scribe by means of *paragraphoi*, or small horizontal lines at the beginning and beneath the lines where he wanted to introduce a division of the text. Let us see how the argumentation is developed.

[IX] [1] ... being non-existent, he engenders them within himself.³ Others, although they say that he himself snatched himself away⁴ from all the things that belong to him, nevertheless admit that his power,⁵ his intellect,⁶ and [5] another intellect⁷ are co-unified in his simplicity,⁸ and although they do not exclude him from the triad,⁹ they consider that he abolishes number,¹⁰ so that they also refuse¹¹ absolutely to say that he is the one.¹²

In a way, these things are said rightly and truly, if, that is, as is claimed

2. Saffrey 1988. A translation with commentary of our text is provided.

3. Since οὔσας is feminine, the antecedent is probably the ιδέας which are the thoughts of the first god in a Middle Platonic context.

4. *Or. chald.*, frg. 3.

5. That is, Hecate.

6. That is, the first intellect.

7. That is, Zeus, the demiurge.

8. Marius Victorinus, *Adv. Ar.* 1.50.10.

9. *Orac. chald.* frg. 27. Note the opposition ἐξελόντες / ἀναπειν.

10. In the sense that he cannot be counted among the members of this triad.

11. For another occurrence of this verb παρατείσθαι in a similar context, see X.28: "The soul possesses no criterion it can apply to the knowledge of God, but the representation it has that is its unknowing of him is enough for it, a representation that refuses to admit any form whatsoever which accompanies the knowing subject."

12. The number "one," either as the first number or as the unit of the totality formed by the triad.

[10] by those who have transmitted them,¹³ they have been divulged by gods.¹⁴ But these things transcend all human understanding,¹⁵ and, by proposing in discourse clues¹⁶ concerning [15] things that are higher than all discourse that could describe them, it is as if one were talking about difference in colors to people born blind, who would listen to such discourse: they would, it seems, have genuine definitions of colors, but they would not know what color is, because they do not possess that by which [20] color is naturally apprehended.

We thus lack the faculty that enables the direct grasp¹⁷ of God, even if those who somehow give a representation of him make us understand something by means of discourse, insofar as it is possible to understand something about him, although he remains above all discourse and all intellection [25] in the unknowing of him that is within us. If this is the case, those who, in the knowledge of him, give greater weight to what he is not,¹⁸ are better than those who pay attention to what he is,¹⁹ since even if these are said truly, they (i.e. the second group of interpreters) are not capable of understanding [30] what is said. For even if we heard said of him one of the “attributes²⁰ that belong to him,” as they say, and even if we were to reascend by means of examples borrowed from the things down here below, transposing them and understanding them in another way to obtain some concept of him, [35] it nevertheless remains true that these interpreters themselves, going back once again on what they have just said, [X] consider that not only must we not pay attention to what is said directly,²¹ but that we must renounce both these things and the understanding²² we can acquire of God by considering these things with our intellect. At this point, there also comes to an end [5] the teaching of these things²³ which, according to tradition, are attached to him. It would, I think, be an extraordinary step towards the purification of our concept to renounce, as soon as we have heard about them, the things said to be attached to him, and the fact that this renunciation takes place from the highest ones, that is, from those that are [10] thought immediately after him.

13. The two Julians.

14. The gods who express themselves in the *Oracles*.

15. See Sextus Empiricus, *Adv. Math.* 7.249 = *SVF* 2:65.

16. The term ὑπόνοια refers to the language with double meanings used by allegorical interpretation. On this subject, see Brisson 2004.

17. In ancient Greek, ἐπιβολή.

18. The negative path, or the path by abstraction; cf. Alcinous, *Didask.* 10.165.5–19; and Plotinus, *Enn.* 6.9 [9].3.36–49.

19. The path known as “by induction”; see Alcinous, *Didask.* 10.162.20–26 and 27–33; and Plotinus, *Enn.* 6.7 [38].36.6–10.

20. In ancient Greek, προσόντα; for a frequent use of this verb, see Porphyry, *Sent.* 33 and 40.

21. “See whether Plato does not seem to speak a language with a veiled meaning” (XII.22–23).

22. The term used in Greek is σύνεσις.

23. The “attributes that belong to him” (IX.30).

To be sure, the Stoics say that it is not impossible to obtain an apprehension²⁴ of realities from a demonstration,²⁵ but there is no way [15] to grasp the God who is above everything, either by demonstration or by means of intellection.²⁶ Indeed, Plato²⁷ says that it is in vain that “the soul seeks” to know not “what characterizes him,” but “what he is”; that is, it seeks to [20] acquire knowledge of what his nature is, his being or his reality. The cognitive powers, which all inform us only about quality, announce to us not what we seek in accordance with our desire, but what we do not seek. But not only is God not something qualified,²⁸ but in addition the fact that he is prior to reality makes him a stranger to being and to “he is.” [25]

The soul possesses no criterion²⁹ it can apply to the knowledge of God, but the representation it has that is its unknowing of him is enough for it, a representation that refuses to admit any form whatsoever which accompanies the knowing subject.

The soul can thus [30] neither know him nor know the mode of procession³⁰ of the things that come in second place from him, through him or by him.³¹ But they try to explain this mode, too, those who have dared³² to make known how things are with regard to him, and they strive while attaching themselves to the things around him....³³

24. Α κατάληψις.

25. In Greek, λόγος.

26. In Greek, νόησις. Porphyry, *Hist. phil.*, frg. 15. (= Cyril of Alexandria, *Against Julian I* (PG 76, 549A5–B6: “Porphyry says in the fourth book of his *Philosophical History* that Plato not only professed a God who is one, but that he even expressed himself as follows on the subject, [saying] that no name can be attributed to him, and that no human knowledge can grasp him” (see Plato, *Parm.* 142a3–6, Plotinus, *Enn.* 5.3 [49].14.1–8 and 6.9 [9].5.30–40).

27. *Ep.* 7.343b–c.

28. An allusion to *Ep.* 2.313a, which is a reminiscence of *Ep.* 7.343b–c.

29. On the various criteria according to the Stoics, see Diogenes Laertius 7.54: “(1) They [the Stoics] say that the cognitive impression is the criterion of truth, i.e. the impression arising from what is. This is what Chrysippus says in the second book of the *Physics*, and also Antipater and Apollodorus. (2) Boethus admits a number of criteria – intellect, sense-perception, desire and scientific knowledge. (3) Chrysippus, at variance with himself, says in the first of his books *On reason* that sense-perception and preconception are the criteria: preconception is a natural conception of the universals. (4) Some of the older Stoics admit right reason as a criterion, as Posidonius says in his book *On the criterion*.”

30. The term πρόοδος is equivalent to πρόοδος.

31. *Enn.* 2.9 [33].6.24–25.

32. In the treatise *Against the Gnostics* (*Enn.* 2.9 [33]) we find the verb τολμᾶν (in 10, 14) the noun τόλμα (in 11, 22) associated with the Gnostics.

33. This may be a reference to *Ep.* 2: “Upon the king of all do all things turn; he is the end of all things and the cause of all good. Things of the second order turn upon the second principle, and those of the third order upon the third. Now the soul of man longs to understand what sort of things these principles are, and it looks toward the things that are akin to itself, though none of them is adequate; clearly the king and the other principles mentioned are not of that sort” (312e–313a, trans. Morrow-Dillon).

Columns IX and X of the commentary display the following structure:

Two interpretations will be criticized:

- 1) the first cannot be identified;
- 2) the second is based on the authority of the *Chaldaean Oracles* (IX.1–8). This interpretation contains some truth (IX.8–10), but it remains untenable, for there cannot be either direct knowledge or indirect knowledge of God.
 - A) There is no direct knowledge of God. What is said of God is mere words. We lack the faculty that would enable a direct perception of this God (IX.11–26)
 - example of people born blind (IX.12–20)
 - God remains in unknowing (IX.20–26)
 - B) There is no indirect knowledge of God
 - I) either by analogy (IX.26)
 - It is not possible to rise back up from the things down here below to this God (IX.26–30)
 - or in this way, we can know neither the things down here below, nor God (IX.30–X, 11)
 - II) or through the intermediary of language
 - access to God through language (X.11–16)
 - refutation by Plato (X.16–25)

Conclusion: before God, the soul remains in unknowing (X.25–end)

The passage thus ends with a twofold observation: it is impossible to know the supreme God and to describe the mode of procession of realities from him. In this last consideration on procession, we can see an anticipation of the second hypothesis of the second part of the *Parmenides*, which begins at 142b and which, for a post-Plotinian Neoplatonist, has as its object the realities that come after the One. Let us examine all this in detail.

In this passage, we find ourselves faced by two answers to the question of whether the first One can be known. A lacuna prevents us from specifying the first answer. The second answer is due to people who invoke the *Chaldaean Oracles* and who think that one can reach the first God, despite his incomprehensible and unfathomable character, because he remains an intellect, and is as such the first member of a triad, together with his power and another intellect. While admitting that the *Chaldaean Oracles* contain some truth, the commentator criticizes them by developing a Neoplatonist argument against their positive teaching on the Father, which points out that human beings must content themselves with a strictly negative theology, since they do not possess a faculty enabling them directly to apprehend the first God, and because neither the use of analogy nor the help of language, as the Stoics thought, can provide direct or indirect access to him. The soul must therefore content itself with unknowing: such is the conclu-

sion of the Neoplatonist critique of the *Chaldaean Oracles* deriving from a Middle Platonist interpretation of the *Timaeus*.³⁴ Can we specify the position of the interpreters who are being criticized? Here is a list of the features that characterize their interpretation.

1. This interpretation deals with the first hypothesis of the second part of the *Parmenides*, which is supposed to describe the One, considered as the supreme God: this is what is suggested by the lemma.

2. These interpreters seek to base their interpretation of this passage from the second part of the *Parmenides* on the authority of the *Chaldaean Oracles*, whose first divine triad is evoked here: the first Intellect; a power, probably Hecate; and another Intellect. There is nothing surprising about this, since the philosophical system in the background of the *Chaldaean Oracles* is related, as has long been recognized, to that of Numenius. Associated with the first Intellect are what might be the Forms that are its thoughts, that is, the Iynges.

3. The supreme divine triad of the *Chaldaean Oracles*, which stands out against a Middle Platonic background, is akin to that which we find in Numenius, who assimilated the first three gods to three Intellects.³⁵ Numenius had set himself the task of carrying out a synthesis between Platonic and Neo-Pythagorean principles, which manifests itself in particular in the first hypothesis of the second part of Plato's *Parmenides* and in the *Second Letter* attributed to Plato. Above all, he devoted himself, together with Cronius, to allegorical interpretation. All these indications allow us to suspect that the Middle Platonic commentary on Plato's *Parmenides* mentioned at the beginning of column IX was written in a context where the influence of Numenius was strongly felt.

Philosophically, it seems that these followers of Numenius had a very good knowledge of the Stoics,³⁶ who are named in X.12. Stoic terminology, referring to key words, is utilized: κατάληψις (IX.11; X.13; see also IX.19); κριτήριον (X.26). Moreover, allegory is quite widely used to interpret these religious texts;³⁷ this process is described in IX.30–35. We find ὑπόνοια at IX.14, ἐρμηνεία at IX.22 and ἐξηγεῖσθαι at IX.34; compare ἐνεικονιζόμενοι at IX.22, and εἰκόνισμα at X.28. The point is to distinguish between a superficial level of discourse that naturally deals with the sensible, and another level, which alone is appropriate to the description of the first God. To move from one level to another, recourse must be had to an interpretation that uses analogy, which makes it possible to use ordinary language to describe the supreme Being.

34. Brisson 2003, 112–32.

35. See frgs. 11–15.

36. We recall that Amelius, Plotinus's disciple, who had learned almost all Numenius's works by heart, had been the student of a certain Lysimachus, who was a Stoic (*Vit. Plot.* 3.43–44).

37. On the extensive use of allegorical interpretation by the Stoics, see Brisson 2004.

Our author begins by attacking the “criterion” of truth set forth by the Stoics. In the case of God, human beings cannot take either sensation or intellection as a criterion. Consequently, he seeks to show that the type of theology, indirect but positive, practiced by the Middle Platonists, lacks any foundation. We must first note the parallelism between sensible intuition and intellectual intuition. In both cases, there is vision of an object, and this vision is inexpressible in discourse. Sensible knowledge deals with what is determinate, or with qualities, but it cannot seize the being of things, which can only be grasped by intellectual knowledge. Yet neither of these faculties can reach God, for God has no qualities, since he transcends being itself. Consequently, the soul’s desire for him will always remain unsatisfied.

It is in this dissatisfaction, which derives from unknowing, that the soul comes closest to God. This unknowing is a representation (εἰκόνισμα), or a content of consciousness that takes the place of the divine “object,” since God is not an object. In the midst of unknowing itself, the soul experiences something of God. We have here a critique of the Stoics, whose vocabulary is used extensively. Intellectual intuition is conceived as a “comprehensive representation,” applied to an intelligible object, and its certainty comes from the direct apprehension of a reality that is present to the cognitive faculty. However, the soul is deprived of this intellectual intuition when it seeks to grasp God, and it therefore has no “criterion” of truth. This state of unknowing must be described as a non-comprehensive representation. For the Stoics, this expression refers to a non-existent object, or is directed towards an existent object, but which remains obscure and of which no impression is received.

4. These interpreters, referring to the *Chaldaean Oracles*, also seem to be interested in the mode of procession of realities from the first God: “The soul can thus neither know him nor know the mode of procession (τὸν τρόπον ... παρόδου) of the things that come in second place from him, through him or by him. But they try to explain this mode, too, those who have dared (ἐτόλμησαν) to make known how things are with regard to him, and they strive while attaching themselves to the things around him” (X.30–35). In his treatise *Against the Gnostics* (*Enn.* 2.9 [33]) Plotinus reproaches the Gnostics with giving a false interpretation “of the mode of fashioning (τὸν τρόπον τῆς δημιουργίας)” of the world in Plato (6.24–25); and he reproaches them with “their audacity (τολμώντας) when they mock the words, so fine and in conformity with the truth, of the men of yesteryear” (that is, Plato and the Platonists; 10.13–14). This implies that these interpreters could very well be Gnostics. In addition, J. Turner (2001) has pointed out relations between the *Commentary* on the *Parmenides* and Gnostic writings:

Anon. in Parm. IX.1–4

Anon. in Parm. IX.1–8

Anon. in Parm. X.25–29

Zostrianos VIII.66.14–20

Allogenes XI.62–63

Allogenes XI.63–64

These works were read and refuted in the context of the School of Plotinus (*Vit. Plot.* 16).

A few years ago, M. Tardieu,³⁸ basing himself on the work of P. Hadot, published the results of an astonishing discovery. A passage from the *Adversus Arium* (1.49.7–50.21) written by Marius Victorinus around 360 C.E., presents startling similarities to a passage from the Gnostic treatise *Zostrianos*, at least in the Coptic version discovered in the library of Nag Hammadi (VIII.63–68, 74, 75, 84). Since *Zostrianos* was known in the school of Plotinus between 263 and 268, during which period Porphyry was with Plotinus, and was then refuted by Amelius³⁹ at the request of Plotinus, we must, according to M. Tardieu and P. Hadot, hypothesize a common source which was a Middle-Platonic commentary on the first series of deductions of the second part of Plato's *Parmenides*. This hypothesis is strengthened by the fact that at the beginning of column IX of the *Anonymous Commentary on the Parmenides* (IX.1–2) we find the common source by which both *Zostrianos* and Marius Victorinus could have been inspired. This source is none other than the description of the Father (frgs. 3, 4, and 7) in the *Chaldaean Oracles*, which description was influenced by Plato's depiction of the One in the first hypothesis of the second part of the *Parmenides* (142a).

If we take all these points of contact into consideration, we are led to think that a commentary on Plato's *Parmenides* existed at the end of the second century C.E. This commentary turned the first God into an Intellect, which remained at the level of being; it therefore remained within a Middle Platonist framework. Since He remained on the level of being, the supreme God, assimilated to the One of the *Parmenides*, could be known, even if only by indirect means. On the question of the possibility of this knowledge, the authority of the *Chaldaean Oracles* was invoked. This commentary was cited by the author of *Zostrianos*; in my view it is this revelation that is criticized in the *Anonymous Commentary on the Parmenides*. Finally, Marius Victorinus had knowledge of this revelation, whether directly or indirectly.

The author of the *Anonymous Commentary* harshly criticizes a Middle-Platonic interpretation of the second part of the *Parmenides*, which referred to the description of the first God by the *Chaldaean Oracles* and took an interest in the mode of procession of realities from this first God, and he insists on our state of unknowing with regard to the first God. This position is post-Plotinian, it seems to me, because it implies that this first God, that is, the One described in the first hypothesis of the *Parmenides*, is situated beyond being. He is the God that is. Only a strictly negative theology, which rejects even the path by analogy, can be accepted. All theories relative to God's attributes must therefore be renounced. This is the only path towards the purification of the notion of God, and this rejec-

38. Tardieu 1996, 7–114; Hadot 1996, 115–25. See also on this point, Brisson 1999a, 173–88.

39. For a general presentation, see Brisson 1987a, 793–860.

tion must begin with the greatest attributes, to continue with those that follow. Now, this condemnation presents several points in common with ch. 11 of Plotinus's treatise *On God's Freedom and Will* (*Enn.* 6.8 [39]), and it presupposes a knowledge of ch. 8 of Plotinus's treatise *On the Three Hypostases that Have the Rank of Principles* (*Enn.* 5.1 [10]). We therefore have to do with a critique that could only be due to a Neoplatonist later than Plotinus and prior to Iamblichus, who introduces a principle higher than the One.

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THE ANONYMOUS COMMENTARY ON PLATO'S
 PARMENIDES AND ARISTOTLE'S CATEGORIES:
 SOME PRELIMINARY REMARKS

Gerald Bechtle

The first part (13–57) of the second volume of P. Hadot's *Porphyre et Victorinus* (1968) consists of "Porphyrian texts," or, more precisely, *Les textes porphyriens dans l'œuvre théologique de Marius Victorinus*. Hadot divides them into four groups. The texts of group I concern *Dieu non-étant au-dessus de l'étant*, those of group II *L'Un et la triade intelligible de l'être, de la vie et de la pensée*, and those of group III *L'agir et la forme*. The texts of group IV, making up barely a page in Hadot's edition, are entitled *Commentaire sur les Catégories d'Aristote*. This is an intriguing title indeed, since it could mean that we find here some Latin bits of a Porphyrian commentary on Aristotle's *Categories* adapted by Marius Victorinus for his own purposes. But although this is what is suggested by the combined titles *Les textes porphyriens*, etc. and *Commentaire sur les Catégories d'Aristote*, Hadot is rather more diffident in the only passage in his huge work where he explicitly addresses the significance of group IV; for there is no further mention of any "commentary," no actual claim to Porphyrian authorship, and no detailed discussion. Instead only some few parallels are given in the footnotes to the Latin text—parallels from Aristotle's *Categories*, Philoponus's and Simplicius's *Categoriae* commentaries, and only one from Porphyry's commentary. What Hadot does say is this (1968, 1:73):

... I have added a fourth group consisting of fragments relating to the categories of Aristotle and drawn from book I A of Victorinus's *Adversus Arium*. The three first groups will be studied for themselves in the second part of the present work. For the fourth group, I have simply pointed out by note in volume II the textual parallels found in the Greek commentators on Aristotle. It is indeed possible that these short fragments reached Victorinus at the same time as the theological material that he used in his struggle with Basil of Ancyra. It is unclear whether these fragments stem from the same origin as the first three groups. At least one of the arguments taken from Aristotle's *Categories* also appears in Athanasius of

Alexandria. The first three groups, despite the peculiarities that allow one to distinguish them, presuppose on the contrary a very precise and—as we shall show—unique Neoplatonic source.

As we know, Hadot identified this Neoplatonic source with Porphyry, but not exactly with the *Commentary on the Parmenides* (1968, 1:143):

... these coincidences do not yet allow us to assert that Victorinus had read Porphyry's commentary *On the Parmenides*. Indeed Porphyry frequently repeats himself and often literally. Victorinus thus could have found these sequences of ideas in another book by Porphyry. But it remains that they are typically Porphyrian and can be explained only by Porphyry's specific historical situation.

Later (1968, 1:457) Hadot even excludes that “*la source de Victorinus soit à rechercher dans un commentaire, soit de Platon, soit des Oracles*,” speculating (1968, 1:460–61) about Porphyry's *ἱεροὶ λόγοι* as a more likely source, though allowing for the possibility that these “sacred discourses” were embedded in commentaries.

Contrary to what one might expect from vol. 2 alone, Hadot, then, does by no means affirm that the four passages (i.e., texts 90–93 on Aristotle's *Categories*) from Marius Victorinus's *Adversus Arium*—that together form group IV—are derived from, for example, Porphyry's lost commentary on the *Categories*, or any other somehow clearly identifiable source, let alone from the commentary on the *Parmenides*. Despite this tergiversation, the overall *raison d'être* of group IV is pretty clear. For group IV, in line with groups I–III, is meant to provide, on the textual basis of Marius Victorinus, close Porphyrian parallels for the fragments of the *Parmenides Commentary*; and by providing Porphyrian texts comparable to the recurrent *Categories*-related material in the *Parmenides Commentary* the case for a Porphyrian authorship of the latter is strengthened. That this is indeed the purpose of the texts of group IV—notwithstanding the fact that Hadot himself all but renounces his claim to a Porphyrian authorship of the texts of group IV—is made clear by another set of parallels, namely those he adduces in the footnotes to each of the *Categories*-related passages of the *Parmenides Commentary*. These parallels are taken from texts either attested for Porphyry or other authors and texts situated within the *Categories*-related exegetical tradition that may or may not be directly or indirectly influenced by Porphyry. Of course, many other parallels that have nothing to do with Porphyry could be adduced in addition to those given by Hadot.

The following passages in the *Parmenides Commentary* testify to some kind of influence attributable either to the Aristotelian treatise *Categories* itself, or to some later interpretation of it. As we will see, they concern both terminological issues and the use of philosophical concepts. That many of these passages, given Hadot's specific interest, are either Porphyrian or may be somehow inspired by Porphyry does not matter in the context of this paper; for both Porphyrian and

un-Porphyrion parallels equally underline the one fact I am concerned with in this paper (see below), namely that the two exegetical traditions related to the *Categories* and the *Parmenides* respectively are not only not independent from each other but very much intertwined.

2.20: ἐπὶ τὴν αὐτοῦ ἄρρητον προσέννοιαν¹

4.1–4: τὰ δὲ ὑποστάντα αὐτὰ καὶ ἀνομοιούμενα καὶ πρὸς αὐτὸν <έ>αὐτὰ συν-αρτᾶν σπεύδοντα τὰς περὶ αὐτὰ σχέσεις ἀντιστρέφειν καὶ πρὸς ἐκεῖνον οἶεται²

4.9–10: διὰ τῆς αὐτοῦ ἐνάδος καὶ μονώσεως³

4.15–16: τοῦ δὲ τὰ πληρω-τικὰ ἔχοντος⁴

5.27: κατ' ἐν<αντί>ωσιν καὶ στέρησ<ιν>⁵

1. See Hadot 1968, 2:71 n. 2, who refers to Simplicius, *In cat.* 43,25 (ὡς τὸ ζῶ, προσεννοεῖται γὰρ τὸ ἐγῶ).

2. See Hadot 1968, 2:75 n. 1 and 3—Hadot refers to Simplicius *In cat.* 201,24–31 (εἰ δὲ ἄνθρωπος ὅμοιος θεῷ λέγεται καὶ ὅλως εἰκὼν παραδείγματι, ἄρα καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα πρὸς τί ἐστιν τῆς σχέσεως οὐκ ἀντιστρεφούσης; οὐ γὰρ δὴ καὶ ὁ θεὸς ὅμοιος ἀνθρώπῳ ἢ τὸ παράδειγμα τῇ εἰκόνι. ἢ τὸ μὲν παράδειγμα ἀντιστρέφει (ὡς γὰρ εἰκὼν παραδείγματός ἐστιν, οὕτως καὶ παράδειγμα εἰκόνας), τὸ δὲ ὅμοιον οὐκέτι, ἀλλ' ἢ μὲν εἰκὼν ὁμοία τῷ παραδείγματι, τὸ δὲ παράδειγμα ὁμοίας εἰκόνας παράδειγμα. εἰ δὲ δυσχεραίνει τις τὴν ὅποιον ἀπ' ἐκείνων σχέσιν πρὸς τὰ τῆδε, ἐννοεῖται τὴν ἀσχετον καλουμένην σχέσιν) and to Aristotle's *Categories* 6b28 and 36–37 (πάντα δὲ τὰ πρὸς τι πρὸς ἀντιστρέφοντα λέγεται and οὐ μὴν ἀλλ' ἐνίοτε οὐ δόξει ἀντιστρέφειν).

3. See Hadot 1968, 2:77 n. 2—Hadot refers to Simplicius, *In cat.* 154,17–20 (μόνως γὰρ συνεληθούσα τῷ ἐνὶ ὀνομάζεται μόνον. οὐ διαφέρει δὲ μόνωσιν εἰπεῖν ἢ μονάδα· καθ' ἐνὸς γὰρ ὑποκειμένου πράγματος ἄμφω ταῦτα λέγεται· οὐκέτι μέντοι ἐπὶ τῶν δύο καὶ τριῶν καὶ τῶν ἐφεξῆς τὸ ἀνάλογον τῇ μονώσει λέγεται), who quotes Porphyry.

4. See Hadot 1968, 2:77 n. 3—Hadot refers to Porphyry's *Isag.* 10,9 (ἀλλ' αὐταὶ γὰρ αἱ διαιρετικαὶ διαφοραὶ τῶν γενῶν συμπληρωτικαὶ γίνονται); 14,19–20 (δεῖ δὲ διαφορὰς λαμβάνειν, αἷς τέμνεται τὸ γένος, οὐ τὰς συμπληρωτικὰς τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ γένους) and to Porphyry's *In cat.* 95,22 (οὐσιῶδεις εἰσὶν ποιότητες αἱ συμπληρωτικαὶ τῶν οὐσιῶν); 99,15–16 (τῶν δὲ παρὰ τὰς συμπληρωτικὰς οὐσίας ποιότητων ἐπιδεκτικαὶ αἱ οὐσίαι); 125,25–26 (ὅτι ἐν τοῖς ὑποκειμένοις ἐστὶν οὐτε ὡς οὐσίας συμπληρωτικὸν οὔτε ὡς ἄλλο τι τῶν συμβεβηκότων).

5. Hadot 1968, 2:81 n. 5—Hadot refers to Simplicius, *In cat.* 396,3–6 (καὶ τοῦτο δὲ ἰστέον, ὅτι ἐνίοτε μὲν οὐ στερητικὰ ὀνόματα στέρησιν δηλοῖ, ὡς ἡ πενία τὴν στέρησιν τῶν χρημάτων

9.14–16 λογικὰς ὑπονοίας εἰσάγων αὐτῶν
τῶν παντὸς λόγου εἰς παράστασιν ὑπερ-
τέρων⁶

11.2–3: ἄλλον ποι-
εῖται τὸν λόγον⁷

11.9: ἢ τοῦ εἶναι ιδιότης⁸

11.10–11: ἐν τῷ ἐξη-
γητικῷ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου λόγῳ⁹

11.17–19: καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν
παράθεσις ἐνὸς καὶ ὄντος, ἢ ὑποκείμενον
μὲν τὸ ἐν, ὡς συμβεβηκὸς δὲ τὸ εἶναι¹⁰
12,2–3: ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐν τοῖς ἀντι-

καὶ ὁ τυφλὸς στέρησιν ὄψεως, ἐνίστε δὲ στερητικὰ ὀνόματα οὐ στέρησιν δηλοῖ· τὸ γὰρ ἀθάνατον στερητικὸν ἔχον τὸ σχῆμα τῆς λέξεως οὐ σημαίνει στέρησιν).

6. Hadot 1968, 2:95 n. 2—Hadot refers to Porphyry, *In cat.* 55.11 (εἰς παράστασιν); 130.13 (ὅτι τὸ εἶδος τουτί τῆς ποιότητος πάθους παράστασιν ἔχει).

7. Hadot 1968, 2:99 n. 2—Hadot refers to Porphyry, *In cat.* 58.32–33 (ὅτι ἐνθάδε μὲν περὶ τῆς προηγουμένης θέσεως τῶν λέξεων τῆς κατὰ τῶν πραγμάτων ποιεῖται τὸν λόγον); 61.12–13 (περὶ τῶν ὁμωνύμων ποιεῖται τὸν λόγον and διὰ τί οὖν οὐ περὶ ὁμωνυμίας πρότερον ποιεῖται τὸν λόγον); 88,4 (διὰ τί περὶ τῆς οὐσίας πρώτων τῶν ἄλλων ποιεῖται τὸν λόγον); 90,29 (ὅτι περὶ Σωκράτους μόνον πεποιῆσαι τὸν λόγον).

8. Hadot 1968, 2:99 n. 4—Hadot refers to (Porphyry in) Simplicius, *In cat.* 30,14–15 (ὑπογραφή ὡς τὴν ιδιότητα τὴν περὶ τὴν οὐσίαν σημαίνουσα καὶ τὴν ὑπαρξίν κοινήν οὐσαν τῆς τε κυρίως οὐσίας καὶ τῆς ἄλλης ὑποστάσεως) and to (Porphyry? Iamblichus? in) Simplicius, *In cat.* 55,4–5 (ὄσα συνδρομῆ συμβεβηκῶτων τὴν ιδιότητα τῆς οικείας ὑποστάσεως ἀφορίσατο). Cf. Porphyry, *In cat.* 129,9–10: ιδιότητι συνδρομῆς ποιότητων; and *Isag.* 7,21–23: ἄτομα οὖν λέγεται τὰ τοιαῦτα, ὅτι ἐξ ιδιοτήτων συνέστηκεν ἕκαστον, ὧν τὸ ἄθροισμα οὐκ ἂν ἐπ’ ἄλλου ποτὲ τὸ αὐτὸ γένοιτο; and especially Dexippus, *In cat.* 30.23–27: οἱ μὲν οὖν λύοντες τὴν ἀπορίαν ταύτην κατὰ τὸ ἰδίως ποῖόν, τοῦτ’ ἔστιν ὅτι ὁ μὲν φέρε γρυπότητι ἢ ξανθότητι ἢ ἄλλῃ συνδρομῇ ποιότητων ἀφορίζεται, . . . οὐ καλῶς μοι δοκοῦσι λυεῖν· οὐ γὰρ ἡ συνδρομῆ τῶν ποιότητων ἀριθμῶ ποιεῖ διαφέρειν, ἀλλ’ εἴπερ ἄρα ποιότης.

9. Hadot 1968, 2:101 n. 2 and 3—Hadot refers to Porphyry, *In cat.* 63,7–8 (δεῖ δὲ τὸν ὀριστικὸν λόγον σύζυγον εἶναι τῷ ὀνόματι καὶ ἐξηγητικὸν τοῦ πράγματος); 72.34 (τοὺς ἐξηγητικούς αὐτῶν λόγους); 73.20 (λόγους ἐξηγητικούς); 76.14 (τῶν γὰρ καθόλου ἢ ἐξηγητικὸς λόγος). Hadot also refers to Porphyry’s *Isag.* 8,20–21 (αἱ μὲν οὖν ποιοῦσαι ἄλλο εἶδοποιοὶ κέκληνται, αἱ δὲ ἄλλοιον ἀπλῶς διαφοραὶ) and to his *In cat.* 95,21–22 (‘E.’ ἐπίδειξον οὖν, πῶς ποιότης οὐσιώδης ἐστὶν ἢ διαφορά. {A.} οὐσιώδεις εἰσὶν ποιότητες αἱ συμπληρωτικαὶ τῶν οὐσιῶν).

10. Hadot 1968, 2:101 n. 5—Hadot refers to Porphyry’s *Isag.* 12,24–25 (συμβεβηκὸς δὲ ἐστὶν ὃ γίνεται καὶ ἀπογίνεται χωρὶς τῆς τοῦ ὑποκειμένου φθορᾶς) and *In cat.* 94.31–33 (ὅτι τὸ

κειμένους συμβεβηκόσι θεωρούμενον¹¹

12,6. 9: οὐσιώσθαι
οὐσιωμένον¹²

12,35: λευκὸν εἶναι¹³

Despite its inconsistencies, it is Hadot's argument's great merit to spotlight an important aspect of the *Parmenides Commentary*, namely the relation existing between the extant fragments of this text and the exegetical tradition regarding the *Categories*, and therefore eventually also that between Plato's *Parmenides* and Aristotle's *Categories*. Quite independently from Hadot, we must ask ourselves the following questions: first, at which point exactly in the *Categories*-related exegetical tradition can the surviving bits of the *Parmenides Commentary* be situated? Second, can any consequences, in particular chronological ones, be drawn from the *Parmenides Commentary*'s position within this exegetical tradition, on which our sources are much richer than on the *Parmenides*-related tradition? To answer these two questions is a task I cannot even start to tackle in this context. Above all, a full analysis of each of the relevant passages from the *Parmenides Commentary* would be needed, together with a close examination of all the parallels—not only the Porphyrian ones adduced by Hadot—and their context.

Instead I wish to concentrate on something more feasible, i.e., on an important preliminary to these questions. For I merely wish to show that the combination and even intertwinement of the two exegetical traditions, i.e., the ones related to the *Categories* and the *Parmenides*, is well established by the end of the second century C.E. In other words, reading the Aristotelian treatise into the *Parmenides*, adducing the *Categories* and its related tradition when dealing

δίπουν καὶ τὸ πεζόν, ἅπερ εἰσὶν διαφοραί, ἐν τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ οὐκ εἰσὶν ὡς συμβεβηκότα· εἰ γὰρ ἦν ὡς τὰ συμβεβηκότα, οὐκ ἂν κατηγορεῖτο τοῦ ἀνθρώπου καὶ κατὰ τοῦνομα καὶ κατὰ τὸν λόγον).

11. Hadot 1968, 2:103 n. 1 and 2—Hadot refers to Porphyry's *In cat.* 64,7–8 (καὶ ὅτι τοῦτο ἐπὶ παντὸς ὄρου δεῖ θεωρεῖσθαι); 71.12–13 (ἐν πόσοις γένεσι θεωρεῖται); 103.30 (ἐν διαστήματι θεωρεῖται); 125.2–5 (καθὸ λόγος ἐπ' αὐτῶν θεωρεῖται... ὁ δὲ λόγος ἐπὶ δυοῖν σχέσιν ἔχοντων πρὸς ἄλλα θεωρεῖται) and *Isag.* 18,19 (ἐπὶ πλείονων πολλακίς εἰδῶν θεωρεῖται); 21.22 (ἐφ' ὧν θεωρεῖται). Hadot also refers to Porphyry, *In cat.* 71,27–29 ({E.} διὰ τί οὖν εἰς τέσσαρα ἢ ἐλαχίστη γέγονε διαίρεσις; {A.} ὅτι ἡ μὲν ἀνωτάτω καὶ πρώτη γένοιτ' ἂν εἰς δύο, εἰς οὐσίαν καὶ συμβεβηκός).

12. Hadot 1968, 2:103 n. 5—Hadot refers to Porphyry, *In cat.* 99.6–8 (πρὸς δὴ ταῦτα φησεῖν ἂν ὁ Ἀριστοτέλης τὴν οὐσίαν εἶναι δεκτικὴν φάναι ἀλλ' οὐχὶ οὐσιώσθαι δύνασθαι ἐν τοῖς ἐναντίοις) and to Simplicius, *In cat.* 369,9–11 (ἐὰν γὰρ μεταλαβῶν εἴπῃς, τί ἐστὶν τὸ ἔχειν πόδας καὶ χεῖρας, ἐρεῖς κατὰ τὸν ἀκριβῆ λόγον, κἂν ἀσύνηθες ἦ, τὸ πεποδῶσθαι καὶ κεχειριδῶσθαι καὶ κοινῶς τὸ οὐσιώσθαι, ἀηθές ὄν καὶ τοῦτο).

13. Hadot 1968, 2:107 n. 4—Hadot refers to Plotinus, *Enn.* 6.3 [44].10–33 (ἦ ὅτι τὸ μὲν ἀπλῶς εἶναι λέγει καὶ ἀπλῶς ὄν, τὸ δὲ λευκὸν εἶναι κτλ.).

with the *Parmenides*, is so standard, even before Plotinus, that one can find it mentioned almost casually in, among other texts, Alcinous' *Handbook*. This, one may argue, is due precisely to the fact that more detailed exegeses of the *Parmenides* such as our *Parmenides Commentary* have traditionally exploited the connection between Plato's dialogue and this important Aristotelian treatise. We may be astonished that the ancients found Aristotle's categories in Plato's dialogue *Parmenides*. But there are, I hope, some real and not only perceived points of contact between the two texts. In what follows I will first mention these points of contact between Plato and Aristotle, and then comment cursorily on texts that testify to the relatively early existence of a joint *Parmenides/Categories* tradition.

But before doing so, I wish to draw attention to a most important question that lurks in the background of the discussion on the mingling of the *Parmenides* and the *Categories* traditions, that is, the question of the metaphysicising of the exegetical traditions. Only one aspect of this question is relevant in this context. There is the *communis opinio* that there is not—indeed, cannot be—a metaphysical interpretation of the *Parmenides* in the period commonly called Middle Platonic. I do not think that the metaphysical or theological interpretation of Plato's *Parmenides* only starts sometime in the third century. But an early metaphysical interpretation does not mean that the *Parmenides*' predominantly logical character becomes automatically unimportant—on the contrary, as Proclus's *Parmenides Commentary* shows. But what about the *Categories*? Is there evidence of its metaphysical relevance before Plotinus? For, on the hypothesis that both texts can be read and interpreted jointly, one would assume that in addition to their logical character they both take on a metaphysical trait, too.

Luckily, the claim that there is no metaphysical *Categories* interpretation in the earlier period—at least in the sense that the concept of intelligible Aristotelian categories was eagerly discussed and sometimes even adopted—is much less controversial, mainly thanks to the evidence provided by Simplicius. In his *Categories* commentary, at *In cat.* 73,15–28, for example, Simplicius tells us about kinds of problems raised by Plotinus and (the followers of) Lucius and Nicostratus (οἱ περὶ τὸν Λούκιον καὶ Νικόστρατον).¹⁴ These problems concern, for example, the ontological status of Aristotle's categories, the difference and/or identity (related to homonymy/synonymy) of sensible and intelligible categories, and difficulties arising from the intelligibility of some of the categories. Plotinus, *Enn.* 6.1 [42].1.19–30 gives us a clearer and more focused idea of the exact nature of these problems than the Simplician passage (probably because Simplicius

14. Insofar as I think that not only Nicostratus's but also Eudorus's sometimes groundbreaking work on the *Categories* has contributed to shape later commentary on Aristotle and can, despite its negative and aporetic character, be addressed as "commentary," Porphyry's *Categories* commentaries are—as commentaries—indebted to Eudorus and Nicostratus, as they are to Plotinus.

makes an attempt at conveying summarily various interconnected philosophical problems from a somewhat doxographical perspective, whereas Plotinus makes a straightforward philosophical argument and proposes a clear solution, namely that they—that is, Aristotle/Peripatetics—do not refer to intelligibles when discussing categories):

μᾶλλον δὲ ἐκεῖνο πρῶτον ἐρωτητέον, πότερα ὁμοίως ἔν τε τοῖς νοητοῖς ἔν τε τοῖς αἰσθητοῖς τὰ δέκα, ἢ ἐν μὲν τοῖς αἰσθητοῖς ἅπαντα, ἐν δὲ τοῖς νοητοῖς τὰ μὲν εἶναι, τὰ δὲ μὴ εἶναι· οὐ γὰρ δὴ ἀνάπαλιν. Οὐδὲ ἔξεταστέον, τίνα κάκει τῶν δέκα, καὶ εἰ τὰ ἐκεῖ ὄντα ὑφ' ἑν γένος ὑπακτέον τοῖς ἐνταῦθα, ἢ ὁμωνύμως ἢ τε ἐκεῖ οὐσία ἢ τε ἐνταῦθα· ἀλλ' εἰ τοῦτο, πλείω τὰ γένη. Εἰ δὲ συνωνύμως, ἄτοπον τὸ αὐτὸ σημαίνει τὴν οὐσίαν ἐπὶ τε τῶν πρῶτως ὄντων καὶ τῶν ὑστέρων οὐκ ὄντος γένους κοινῶς, ἐν οἷς τὸ πρότερον καὶ ὕστερον. Ἀλλὰ περὶ τῶν νοητῶν κατὰ τὴν διαίρεσιν οὐ λέγουσιν· οὐ πάντα ἄρα τὰ ὄντα διαιρεῖσθαι ἐβουλήθησαν, ἀλλὰ τὰ μάλιστα ὄντα παραλελοίπασιν.

Let us consider first whether the ten (categories) are found both in the intelligible and in the sensible realms, or whether they are all found in the sensible and only some in the intelligible. All in the intelligible and some in the sensible is clearly impossible. At this point it would be natural to investigate which of the ten belong to both spheres, and whether the intelligible entities are to be ranged under one and the same genus with sensible entities, or whether the term “substance” is equivocal as applied to both realms. If the equivocation exists, the number of genera will be increased; if not, it is strange to find the same essence applying to the primary and secondary entities when there is no common genus embracing both primary and secondary. These thinkers are however not speaking of the division of intelligibles, intending not to distinguish all entities, but omitting the supreme ones. (trans. Armstrong 1966–1988)

This passage from Plotinus thus directly confirms that he, in the wake of Lucius and Nicostratus, reflects on issues related to the sensibility/intelligibility of the ten categories and is fully aware of the inherent problems. That these sensibility/intelligibility issues already loom large in the earlier discussion is also—indirectly—confirmed by Porphyry whom we usually view as establishing what one could call the orthodox account, that is, that the ten categories are confined to the world of sensibles. But in doing so Porphyry only adopts a conclusion already reached by Plotinus, who in turn probably follows Lucius and Nicostratus; the difference is that Plotinus (and perhaps Lucius and Nicostratus) reached that conclusion only after an unfruitful effort to have the categories bear upon both the sensible and intelligible realms—a failure that can be read as a critique of Aristotle, whereas Porphyry just makes the best out of this situation.

Later in 6.1, Plotinus refers to those who actually do postulate intelligible categories, at least qualities, as οἱ τιθέμενοι (*sc.* ποιότητας) κάκει (*sc.* in the intelligible realm). They are cited by Plotinus at *Enn.* 6.1 [42].12.44–45: ζητητέον δὲ καὶ ἐνταῦθα καὶ εἰ αἱ τῆδε ποιότητες καὶ αἱ ἐκεῖ ὑφ' ἑν· τοῦτο δὲ πρὸς τοὺς

τιθεμένους κάκει ... these thinkers are probably the same as those criticised by Porphyry—cf. Porphyry, *In cat.* 138,24–29: {A.} ἦν γάρ τις (sc. δόξα) ἢ τὰς μὲν αὐλοῦς καὶ καθ' αὐτὰς ποιότητος μὴ ἐπιδέχεσθαι τὸ μᾶλλον καὶ τὸ ἥττον ἔλεγεν, τὰς δὲ ἐνύλους πάσας καὶ τοὺς καθ' αὐτὰς ποιούς ἐπιδέχεσθαι. {E.} καὶ ὀρθῶς γέ σοι ἐδόκουν οὗτοι λέγειν; {A.} οὐδαμῶς. {E.} διὰ τί; Porphyry answers this question at 138.30–32 thus: {A.} ὅτι αἱ ἄυλοι ποιότητες καὶ καθ' αὐτὰς ὑφεστηκυῖαι οὐκ εἰσὶ ποιότητες ἀλλ' οὐσίαι, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο ἐπίτασιν οὐκ ἐπιδέχονται, διότι οὐδὲ αἱ ἄλλαι οὐσίαι. This answer implies that according to the holders of the opinion with which Porphyry disagrees (and which is the same as Simplicius's fourth doctrine reported at *In cat.* 285,1–3 and 290,1–3) immaterial and καθ' αὐτὰς qualities really are *qualities*, which Porphyry denies.

I return to my main argument. Where, then, are the categories in the *Parmenides* (in its second part)? *Substance/being* (οὐσία) can be found at *Parm.* 141e7–142a1, 142b5–143a2, 143a4–144e7, 155e4–156b5, 161e3–162b7, 163b7–164a1; *quantity* (ποσόν) at *Parm.* 140b6–d7, 149d8–151e2, 156b7–8, 157a8–b3, 161c3–e2, 164a1–2, 164c8–d4, 164e3–165a5; *quality* (ποιόν) at *Parm.* 142b3–5;¹⁵ *relative* (πρός τι) at *Parm.* 154d7–e2¹⁶ (and context); (*any*)*where* (ποῦ or ποῦ) at *Parm.* 138a2–b6, 139a3–8, 145b6–e5; *anytime/moment* (ποτέ) at *Parm.* 140e1–141d5, 151e3–155c7; *position* (κεῖσθαι) at *Parm.* 148e4–149a6; *having-on* (ἔχειν) seems, somewhat paradoxically, quite close to the *Parmenides*' ubiquitous μετέχειν and πεπονθέναι (πάθος γὰρ καλεῖ τὴν μέθεξιν ἄλλου τινός¹⁷); *doing* (ποιεῖν) forms a pair with *being-affected* (πάσχειν) which can for example be found at *Parm.* 139e7–140b5 (for the standard sense “to have the character [of] x or y” Plato prefers the perfect forms of the verb¹⁸), 156c4–5 (πάσχειν), 157b6 (πάσχειν). It should be noted that the five greatest genera of the *Sophist*, sometimes called the “Platonic categories,” are even more readily apparent in the *Parmenides*, and one can hold that the basic “categories” of Absolute (καθ' ἑαυτό)

15. οὐκοῦν ἐν εἰ ἔστιν, φαμέν, τὰ συμβαίνοντα περὶ αὐτοῦ, ποῖά ποτε τυγχάνει ὄντα, διομολογητέα ταῦτα· οὐχ οὕτω; “We say, then, that if the one exists, we must come to an agreement about the consequences, whatever they may be, do we not?” (trans. Fowler).

16. οὐκοῦν τὸ γε ἕλαττον διαφέρειν ἡλικία πρὸς τι ἢ πρότερον νεώτερον γίγνεται ἂν ἢ ἐν τῷ πρόσθεν πρὸς ἐκεῖνα πρὸς ἃ ἦν πρεσβύτερον πρότερον; “And that which differs less in age from something than before becomes younger than before in relation to those things than which it formerly was older?” (trans. Fowler).

17. See Proclus, *In Parm.* 1196,24–29 Cousin: ὅρα δὲ πῶς ἀσφαλῶς οὐκ εἶπε τὸ ἐν πεπονθέναι τὸ ἐν, ἀλλὰ μηδὲν ἄλλο πεπονθέναι, πλὴν τὸ εἶναι· τοῦτο (sc. τὸ ἐν) γὰρ ἐστὶ (sc. τὸ ἐν) καὶ οὐ πέπονθε· πᾶν γὰρ τὸ ὁτιοῦν πεπονθὸς πολλὰ ἐστὶ· πάθος γὰρ καλεῖ τὴν μέθεξιν ἄλλου τινός. “But observe how carefully he has not said that the One has the character of one, but that it has no other character except ‘being one’; for it is this, and does not have it as a character; for everything that has a character is many; for by characteristic he means participation on some other being” (trans. Morrow-Dillon).

18. πεπονθέναι, πεπονθός, etc., are so frequent in the second part of the *Parmenides* that they need not be listed exhaustively.

and Relative (πρός τι) account for the whole structure of the dialogue.

In what follows I will briefly discuss some of the texts that testify to the relatively early existence of a joint *Parmenides/Categories* tradition. Passages in Clement, Alcinous, Atticus, and Proclus either represent or allude to what one may call “Reading the *Categories* into the *Parmenides*.”

1. CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA

Clement of Alexandria makes no explicit reference to the *Parmenides*. But his testimony is nevertheless relevant in this context. In his 2005 contribution to the SBL seminar “Rethinking Plato’s *Parmenides* and Its Platonic, Gnostic and Patristic Reception,” D. Runia shows that the *Parmenides* influences Clement’s thought, a fact obvious at *Strom.* 4.25.156.1–2¹⁹ and 5.12.81.4–6.²⁰ In the latter passage, as Runia says,

19. God, then, since He is not the object of demonstration, is not the object of knowledge. But the Son is wisdom and knowledge and truth and all that is related to this. Indeed of him both demonstration and explication can be given. All the powers of the spirit, taken together and forming one single reality, contribute to the same being, the Son, but He is not describable in terms of the conception of each of his powers. Indeed He is not simply unity (ἕν) as unity, nor multiplicity (πόλλα) involving parts, but as unity involving totality (ὡς πάντα ἕν). From this He is also the totality. For He Himself is the circle of all the powers gathered together and unified into unity. (ὁ μὲν οὖν θεὸς ἀναπόδεικτος ὦν οὐκ ἔστιν ἐπιστημονικός, ὁ δὲ υἱὸς σοφία τέ ἐστι καὶ ἐπιστήμη καὶ ἀλήθεια καὶ ὅσα ἄλλα τούτῳ συγγενῆ, καὶ δὴ καὶ ἀπόδειξιν ἔχει καὶ διέξοδον. πᾶσαι δὲ αἱ δυνάμεις τοῦ πνεύματος συλλήβδην μὲν ἕν τι πράγμα γενόμεναι συντελοῦσιν εἰς τὸ αὐτό, τὸν υἱόν, ἀπαρέμφατος δὲ ἐστὶ τῆς περὶ ἐκάστης αὐτοῦ τῶν δυνάμεων ἐννοίας. καὶ δὴ οὐ γίνεται ἀτεχνῶς ἕν ὡς ἕν, οὐδὲ πολλὰ ὡς μέρη ὁ υἱός, ἀλλ’ ὡς πάντα ἕν. ἔνθεν καὶ πάντα κύκλος γάρ ὁ αὐτὸς πασῶν τῶν δυνάμεων εἰς ἕν εἰλουμένων καὶ ἐνουμένων.)

20. Indeed this question concerning God is the most difficult to treat. For since the first principle of every matter is difficult to find, the first and oldest principle is all the more difficult to demonstrate, that principle which is the cause of all things coming into being and remaining in existence. For how could that be spoken of which is neither genus nor difference nor species nor individual nor number, but on the other hand is neither accident nor that to which an accident pertains? Nor can anyone describe him correctly as ‘whole’, for wholeness is ranked with magnitude and He is the Father of the whole world. Nor are any parts to be ascribed to Him. For the One is indivisible. For this reason It is also infinite, not in the sense of non-traversibility, but in the sense of being without dimension or limit, and therefore also without shape and without name. (ναὶ μὴν ὁ δυσμεταχειριστότατος περὶ θεοῦ λόγος οὗτός ἐστιν. ἐπεὶ γὰρ ἀρχὴ παντός πράγματος δυσεύρετος, πάντως που ἡ πρώτη καὶ πρεσβυτάτη ἀρχὴ δύσδεικτος, ἥτις καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις ἅπασιν αἰτία τοῦ γενέσθαι καὶ γενομένους εἶναι. πῶς γὰρ ἂν εἴη ῥητόν ὁ μῆτε γένος ἐστὶ μῆτε διαφορὰ μῆτε εἶδος μῆτε ἄτομον μῆτε ἀριθμός, ἀλλὰ μὴδὲ συμβεβηκός τι μὴδὲ ᾧ συμβεβηκέν τι. οὐκ ἂν δὲ ὅλον εἶποι τις αὐτὸν ὀρθῶς· ἐπὶ μεγέθει γὰρ τάττεται τὸ ὅλον καὶ ἔστι τῶν ὅλων πατήρ. οὐδὲ μὴν μέρη τινὰ αὐτοῦ λεκτέον· ἀδιαίρετον γὰρ τὸ ἕν, διὰ τοῦτο δὲ καὶ ἄπειρον, οὐ κατὰ τὸ ἀδιεξίτητον νοούμενον, ἀλλὰ κατὰ τὸ ἀδιάστατον καὶ μὴ ἔχον πέρασ, καὶ τοῖνυν ἀσχημάτιστον καὶ ἀνωνόμαστον.)

Clement uses the dialectical argumentation of the first hypothesis of the *Parmenides* to develop a negative theology of absolute transcendence. There is nothing in what Clement writes that Philo would have disagreed with. But contrary to what we found in Philo's case, we may be certain that by the second half of the second century the *Parmenides* was being used for purposes of negative theology. There is nothing surprising in this, for, as was pointed out by Lilla, there is an excellent parallel for the Clementine passage in the Middle Platonist handbook of Alcinous (cf. §10, 165.5–7, 12–16 Whittaker). Since, however, this work cannot be dated with any accuracy, Clement's evidence is of value for the historian.

When discussing Proclus's opinion under item 4, we will understand in more detail in which way the Aristotelian categories contribute to the context of a negative theology of absolute transcendence that is derived from the first hypothesis of the *Parmenides*. For the moment, it may suffice to give special emphasis to the very fact that Aristotelian categories or rather categorial language²¹ are present in a Clementine passage whose negative approach to God is strongly reminiscent of the first hypothesis of the *Parmenides* (cf. also the ease of the transition from God/Father to One in ... καὶ ἔστι τῶν ὄλων πατήρ. οὐδὲ μὴν μέρη τινὰ αὐτοῦ λεκτέον· ἀδιαίρετον γὰρ τὸ ἓν ...). For, as Runia has already noted, Clement, at *Strom.* 5.12.81.5 in particular, makes the point that *various Aristotelian categories cannot be applied to him* (i.e., God). More precisely, Clement states that God's not being (in Aristotelian categories) γένος, διαφορά, εἶδος, etc. is related to his

21. One may argue that terms like γένος, διαφορά, εἶδος, συμβεβηκός can be linked to the *Categories* treatise and hence count as categorial only by taking into account Porphyry's use of this terminology in the *Isagoge* (the *Isagoge* being conceived as an introduction to the *Categories*). But this terminology is above all the terminology of the Aristotelian *Topics*. And not only is the *Topics* traditionally closely associated with and parallel to the *Categories* treatise, but the latter even presupposes the former (just as it presupposed the *Isagoge* once Porphyry had written it). Cf. Aristotle, *Top.* 101b17–25 and the distinction of the predicables: πᾶσα δὲ πρότασις καὶ πᾶν πρόβλημα ἢ ἴδιον ἢ γένος ἢ συμβεβηκός δηλοῖ· καὶ γὰρ τὴν διαφορὰν ὡς οὖσαν γενικὴν ὁμοῦ τῷ γένει τακτέον. ἐπεὶ δὲ τοῦ ἴδιου τὸ μὲν τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι σημαίνει, τὸ δ' οὐ σημαίνει, δηρήσθω τὸ ἴδιον εἰς ἄμφω τὰ προειρημένα μέρη, καὶ καλείσθω τὸ μὲν τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι σημαίνον ὄρος, τὸ δὲ λοιπὸν κατὰ τὴν κοινὴν περὶ αὐτῶν ἀποδοθεῖσαν ὀνομασίαν προσαγορευέσθω ἴδιον. δηλον οὖν ἐκ τῶν εἰρημένων ὅτι κατὰ τὴν νῦν διαίρεσιν τέτταρα τὰ πάντα συμβαίνει γίνεσθαι, ἢ ὄρον ἢ ἴδιον ἢ γένος ἢ συμβεβηκός. “Now every proposition and every problem indicates either a genus or a peculiarity or an accident—for the differentia too, applying as it does to a class (or genus), should be ranked together with the genus. Since, however, of what is peculiar to anything part signifies its essence, while part does not, let us divide the ‘peculiar’ into both the aforesaid parts, and call that part which indicates the essence a ‘definition’, while of the remainder let us adopt the terminology which is generally current about these things, and speak of it as a ‘property.’ What we have said, then, makes it clear that according to our present division, the elements turn out to be four, all told, namely either property or definition or genus or accident” (trans. Pickard-Cambridge).

(*Parmenides*-influenced) apophatic character. Thus Clement can be counted as an early witness to the existence of a contemporary or probably earlier independent Platonist tradition, by which he is influenced, and which combines exegetically Aristotelian categorial language and Platonic *Parmenides*.

2. ALCINOUS

Alcinous writes in the second century C.E. (*Didask.* 6:159,43–44 Whittaker-Louis): καὶ μὴν τὰς δέκα κατηγορίας ἐν τε τῷ Παρμενίδῃ καὶ ἐν ἄλλοις ὑπέδειξεν (i.e., Plato) . . . , that is, “furthermore Plato indicates (or merely: hints at) the ten categories both in the *Parmenides* and in other dialogues. . . .” This short note rather bafflingly puts Plato’s *Parmenides* and Aristotle’s *Categories* in the most direct relation to one another and proves that there was a discussion about the anticipation of the ten Aristotelian categories in some of Plato’s dialogues, and especially in the *Parmenides*. These ten Aristotelian—Platonic, to Alcinous’s mind—categories are subordinated to the Old Academic basic double category of Absolute and Relative, but Alcinous does not use the *Sophist* to find any more (purely) Platonic “categories. This probably means that to him the ten (Aristotelian) categories are by themselves sufficient (and sufficiently Platonic). Thus Alcinous does not merely read Aristotelian treatises (like the *Categories*) “back into” Platonic dialogues (like the *Timaeus*, the *Theaetetus*, and the *Parmenides*); rather he actually assumes that Plato already had at his disposal a full-blown Aristotelian theory of categories. This amounts to nothing less than to say that the Aristotelian theory of categories is really Platonic. But the assumption that Plato in one of his dialogues anticipates Aristotle’s conception of categories—which makes of Aristotle a faithful and even orthodox Platonist, who only further elucidates and confirms the master’s doctrines—this assumption is, although it may have been acceptable to many Platonists, still strong enough to be a subject of dispute already in Antiquity.

3. ATTICUS

Alcinous’s somewhat younger contemporary Atticus writes (frg. 2,136–138 des Places): καὶν τὰς δέκα δὲ κατηγορίας παρὰ σοῦ μάθη τις δεκαχῆ διανέμειν τάγαθόν, τί ταῦτα πρὸς τὴν Πλάτωνος γνώμην τὰ διδάγματα; that is, “and if someone learns from you that the ten categories display the Good tenfold, what will these teachings contribute to Plato’s tenets?” It is very likely that this does imply a criticism of Platonists like Alcinous, and perhaps even of Alcinous himself, who try to explain/profess Plato through Aristotle (the title of Atticus’s work is, significantly enough, Πρὸς τοὺς διὰ τῶν Ἀριστοτέλους τὰ Πλάτωνος ὑπισχνουμένου), and that it is another sign of the author’s radical anti-Peripateticism. This criticism is more likely than not the exception—even though other staunch Platonists such as Eudorus (around the turn of our era) and Nicostratus (ca.

second half of the second century C.E.) do not seem to find many positive points in Aristotle either—and Alcinous's stance seems to be more standard. If this is the case, then Porphyry's positive attitude in his Aristotle commentaries—reflecting his well-known harmonisation of the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle—is not at all unprecedented (just as his integration of the [sensible] categories into the Platonist system is prepared and anticipated, as we have seen, by Plotinus and Nicostratus, even though they are much more critical of Aristotle).²² This is confirmed by other pre-Porphyrian and pre-Plotinian philosophical writers. They trace back Aristotle's *Categories* not only to the *Parmenides*, but also to the *Timaeus*²³ (a physical dialogue, second to the *Parmenides*, according to the later Iamblichean canon of Plato's works) or to the *Theaetetus*.²⁴ It probably helped the reception of Aristotle's treatise that the number of categories was ten, a traditionally perfect and therefore attractive number, recognized by the Pythagoreans and by Plato.

4. PROCLUS

Not really astonishingly, Proclus, however, sides with Atticus's criticism of philosophers like Alcinous in his discussion of whether the *Parmenides* already contains

22. Porphyry's positive appreciation of Aristotle is at least partly due to the fact that he, unlike many of his predecessors, is quite happy with sensible categories and no longer seeks to refer them somehow to the intelligible realm.

23. Plutarch, *An procr.* 1023E–F finds the *Categories* in the *Timaeus* (37a–b): ἐν τούτοις ἅμα καὶ τῶν δέκα κατηγοριῶν ποιούμενος ὑπογραφὴν ἔτι μᾶλλον τοῖς ἐφεξῆς διασαφεῖ. “λόγος” γὰρ φησιν “ἀληθής, ὅταν μὲν περὶ τὸ αἰσθητὸν γίνηται καὶ ὁ τοῦ θατέρου κύκλος ὀρθὸς ἰὼν εἰς πᾶσαν αὐτοῦ τὴν ψυχὴν διαγγείλη, δόξαι καὶ πίστεϊς γίνονται βέβαιοι καὶ ἀληθεῖς· ὅταν δ' αὖ περὶ τὸ λογιστικὸν ἢ καὶ ὁ τοῦ ταύτου κύκλος εὐτροχος ὦν αὐτὰ μηνύσῃ, ἐπιστήμη ἐξ ἀνάγκης ἀποτελεῖται· τούτω δ' ἐν ᾧ τῶν ὄντων ἐγγίγνεσθον, ἐάν ποτέ τις αὐτὸ ἄλλο πλὴν ψυχὴν προσείπῃ, πᾶν μᾶλλον ἢ τὸ ἀληθὲς ἐρεῖ.” “And in these (words) he is simultaneously giving an outline of the ten categories too, in those that follow he states the case more clearly still, for he says: ‘Whenever true discourse is concerning itself about the perceptible and the circle of difference running aright conveys the message throughout all its soul, there arise opinions and beliefs steadfast and true; but, whenever on the other hand it is concerned about the rational and the circle of sameness running smoothly gives the information, knowledge is of necessity produced; and, if anyone ever calls by another name than soul that one of existing things in which these two things come to be, he will be speaking anything but the truth!’” (trans. Cherniss 1976). Hoffmann (1980, 307–23) proves that reading the categories into the *Timaeus* was a fruitful strategy in Iamblichean time, too. Karfik (2004, 48–51) hints at the relevance of the *Phaedo* in the *Timaeus* context of time.

24. The anonymous *In Theaet.* 68.7–22 finds the categories in the *Theaetetus*: οὕτως καὶ τᾶλλα πάντα ἐπιδέχεται τὰς ἐναντίας κατηγορίας διὰ τὸ μηδὲν εἶναι ἕν, τοῦτ' ἔστιν μὴ ἔχειν ὀρισμένην ποσότητα.

the *Categories*. The relevant passage, in which he does not agree with those who find the ten categories in the *Parmenides* is *In Parm.* 1083:28–1084:10.²⁵

Καὶ τοῖς μὲν ἄλλοις παραλείπω πάντα,

ὅσοι τὰ δύο εἶδη τοῦ ποσοῦ, τὸ τε διωρισμένον καὶ τὸ συνεχές, ἀποφάσκεσθαι τοῦ ἐνὸς εἰρήκασιν· οὔτε γὰρ δύο μόνα εἶδη τοῦ ποσοῦ κατὰ τε τοὺς Πυθαγορείους καὶ Πλάτωνα, πανταχοῦ καὶ αὐτὸν βοῶντα τρεῖς εἶναι τὰς περὶ τὸ ποσὸν ἐπιστήμας, ἀριθμητικὴν, μετρητικὴν, στατικὴν, οὔτε πάντα ὅσα παρείληπται τῆς τοῦ ποσοῦ φύσεώς ἐστιν, οἷον τὸ σχῆμα, τὸ κινεῖσθαι, τὸ ἐστάναι·

ἢ ὅσοι τὰς δέκα κατηγορίας ἐν τούτοις ἀνελίττουσιν· οὐ γὰρ ταῦτα μόνον ὑπὸ τὰς δέκα κατηγορίας, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἄλλα πολλὰ ἂν εἴποι τις ὧν οὐδεμίαν ὁ Παρμενίδης πεποίηται μνήμην·

ἢ εἴ τινες τὰ πέντε γένη θρυλλοῦσι τοῦ ὄντος· καὶ ταῦτα μὲν ἀπέφησε τοῦ ἐνὸς, τὴν οὐσίαν, τὸ ταῦτόν, τὸ ἕτερον, τὴν κίνησιν, τὴν στάσιν, οὐ μέντοι ταῦτα μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ σχῆμα καὶ τὸ ὅλον καὶ τὸν χρόνον καὶ τὸν ἀριθμὸν καὶ τὸ ὅμοιον καὶ τὸ ἀνόμοιον, ἃ μὴ ἐστι γένη τοῦ ὄντος.

I do not bother to refute those,

first, who have said that what is being denied of the One are the two classes of quantity, the discrete and the continuous; for one thing, according the Pythagoreans and Plato there are not just two classes of quantity, since he makes it quite clear in various places (*Philebus* 55e) that the classes of knowledge concerning quantity are three—arithmetic, mensuration, and statics; nor are all the things quoted of the nature of quantity, as for instance, shape, motion, or rest.

Nor do I have much regard for those who seek to ferret out the ten categories in this passage; for not only the propositions here can be brought under the ten categories, but there are many other things also that one could mention of which Parmenides has made no use.

Or again, if some people want to allege that it is the five genera of being that are being made use of here; certainly he had denied these of the One, namely Being, Sameness, Otherness, Motion and Rest, but he is not denying these alone, but also shape and wholeness and time and number and likeness and unlikeness, which are not genera of Being. (trans. Morrow-Dillon)

Three distinct opinions are reported in this text (with reference to Proclus's treatment of the first hypothesis). The holders of the first opinion, taken by John Dillon in the footnotes to his translation to be "unidentifiable, but presumably Middle

25. This passage was already briefly discussed by Kevin Corrigan in his 2005 contribution to the SBL seminar "Rethinking Plato's *Parmenides* and Its Platonic, Gnostic and Patristic Reception."

Platonic" (Morrow and Dillon 1987, 433 n. 57) answer the question of whether all that exists is denied of the One, or not all, by stating that what is being denied of the One are the two species of the quantum (ποσόν): the discrete and the continuous. In the seventh chapter of his *De communi mathematica scientia*, Iamblichus gives us a very detailed account of the discrete and the continuous. The larger context is the determination of the scientific object appropriate to each mathematical science (note how Proclus mentions arithmetic, mensuration, and statics!). It becomes clear that the discrete (juxtaposed) is πλήθος, and the continuous (unified) is μέγεθος. And limited μέγεθος, that is, line, surface, solid, is measurable, whereas limited πλήθος, that is, number, is countable. It becomes very clear in Iamblichus that these "species of the quantum" (in Proclus's words) are two (the third, statics, is indeed left aside) different modes of conceiving the whole cosmos, the order, structure and harmony of the all. And if one can conceive the whole cosmos according to these species of the quantum, we can much better understand the reason of why someone should claim that what is being denied of the One are the two species of the quantum (ποσόν), the discrete and the continuous. But who is this someone? Certainly not Iamblichus himself. We know enough of his *Parmenides* interpretation to assert that what he quotes here is not relevant to it. Then it must be his source. It must suffice here to say that in the notes to my future edition of Iamblichus's *De communi mathematica scientia* I have determined that this source is Nicomachus of Gerasa, who elaborates on none other than Aristotle himself. If I am right, this would mean that Proclus alludes to "Nicomachean" *Parmenides* interpreters. This hypothesis is backed by the fact that the next *Parmenides* exegetes Proclus takes on are people like Alcinous.

This leads us to the holders of the second opinion, who do not refer to only one category, that is, the ποσόν, but to all of them indistinctly. John Dillon says: "That it is the categories that are being denied of the One in the First Hypothesis (and asserted in the Second) is presented by Proclus (*In Parm.* col. 1083:37ff.) as being the view of some earlier (probably Middle-Platonic) commentators, a view which he rejects himself" (Dillon 1993, 85). In the footnotes to his translation he identifies these commentators as follows: "Albinus could be included here, on the basis of *Didaskalikos* ch. 6, p. 159, 34f. Hermann."²⁶ Kevin Corrigan agrees, and I agree, too.

I do not wish to discuss the holders of the third opinion who "allege that it is the five genera of being which are being made use of here," because this would take us away from the intersections of the Aristotelian *Categories* and the Platonic *Parmenides* we are seeking and towards the intersection of the "Platonic categories" and the *Parmenides*.

26. Morrow and Dillon 1987, 433 n. 58 (the passage is 159,43–44, not 159,34–35).

NEGATIVE THEOLOGY AND RADICAL CONCEPTUAL
PURIFICATION IN THE ANONYMOUS COMMENTARY ON
PLATO'S *PARMENIDES*

Alain Lernould

One of the most striking dogmatic assertions in the *Anonymous Commentary on the Parmenides*¹ is that God (or “the One”) cannot be denied knowledge (cf. folios 4.32–35; 5.7–35).² As demonstrated by P. Hadot, the *Anonymous Commentary* (which Hadot attributes to Porphyry) here diverges from Plotinus, according to whom the One does not think. On the other hand, the comparison between the knowledge specific to God and absolute light (5.3–6.12) signals that the author concurs with Plotinus on this point (see Hadot 1968, 1:123–24). In the same way, it is stated in the *Commentary* that the One is above being (προούσιος; 10.25) and is simultaneously “pure activity” (12.25–26), “idea of being” (12.32–33), and

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1. There remain of this *Commentary* fourteen folios (35 lines each), which constitute six fragments, according to the following grouping which has been adopted in modern editions since Kroll 1892: fragment 1 (folios 1–2); fragment 2 (folios 3–4); fragment 3 (folios 7–8); fragment 4 (folios 9–10); fragment 5 (folios 11–12); fragment 6 (folios 13–14). The first critical edition is Kroll's (1892, 599–627). The following editions and translations are used in this paper: Hadot 1968, 2:61–113; Saffrey 1988, 3–20; repr. 1990, 11–30; Linguisti 1995, 63–202; Bechtle 1999a; see also Baltes 2005, 101–10). In addition to Bechtle 1999a, the following texts, which defend (*pace* Hadot) the thesis that this commentary is pre-Plotinian (Middle Platonic), may be consulted: Bechtle 2000, 393–414; Corrigan 2000, 141–77.

2. See in particular 4.34–35: God “is never unknowing” (ὁ μηδέποτε ἐν ἀγνοίᾳ γενόμενος); 5.8–9: “and who then knows as He does?” (καὶ τίς οὕτως γιγνώσκει ὡς ἐκεῖνος;).

an entity that thinks itself (5.34; 14.10). The *Commentary* thus seems to comprise a tension between two demands, that is, the desire to safeguard the radical transcendence of the First One, notably by emphasizing the incommensurable nature (τὸ ἀσύμβλητον) of its very hypostasis (6.20), and at the same time to avoid turning it into nothing. It can be noted here that the question of whether God has knowledge is tackled in 5.7–6.12, immediately after the section on the idea that God is not related to anything (4.1–5.7). “God cannot be compared to these things (sc. those that exist through Him), has no relation to them in any way, and does not turn away from His own solitariness to experience relation and multiplicity” (4.28–32). Hence the subsequent question, which is dealt with in the immediately following section: does not God know everything? (5.5–6), to which the answer is: God is absolute knowledge. Transcendence, far from excluding knowledge, raises it to a degree of absolute superiority (simplicity). Negative theology does not lead to the idea that there is no thought (or knowledge) in God, and, more generally, does not lead to the conclusion that God is nothing.

The tension between these two apparently contradictory issues, that is, “God is above everything”³ on the one hand, and God has thought (or knowledge) on the other hand, illustrates well the *aporia* induced in the discourse by the notion of absolute principle. The *raison d'être* for these *aporiae* usually lies in the wish to jointly respect three demands: (i) the refusal to put the First Principle or God (and, more generally, the divine) in the same category as our concepts, by attributing to God predicates that can apply only to things that stem from it; (ii) the attempt to purify our concepts, either by the negation of predicates that cannot be attributed to the One because they correspond to secondary entities, and in particular to perceptible entities, or by the reinterpretation of these predicates so that they become appropriate to the principle; (iii) the concern to avoid turning the principle into nothingness (i.e., to nullify the principle), which can result from conceptual purification through negations, either because no predicate, or any property (including being) is to be attributed to God, or because such predicates as are applied to God are void of any conceptual content.⁴ These three demands—the refusal to assimilate the first principle to our concepts, (conceptual) purification, and the rejection of the nullification of the Primary Cause—are major themes in Middle and Neoplatonic philosophical literature.⁵ The *Anony-*

3. On this phrase, to be found in the anonymous *Commentary*, see Cazelaïs 2005, 199–214.

4. These three notions (“assimilation,” “purification,” and “nullification”) are also a recurrent pattern in the Arab theological tradition, which differentiates clearly between “Tashbih,” “Tanzih” and “Tā’til” (I owe the reference to this tripartition to Stephen Menn).

5. On the “assimilation” of the (intelligible) divine to our concepts, or to perceptible entities, which Platonists have often been related to the faculty of imagination, see, e.g., Alcinoos, *Didask.* 164.13–17 = Louis and Whittaker 1990, 22: “Given that men are full of sensory impressions—to such an extent that, even when they attempt to conceive the intelligible, they imagine

mous Commentary on the Parmenides is no exception. In order to highlight this point, I will refer to fragments one, two, and four in particular.

FRAGMENT 1

The first fragment (folios I–II Kroll 1892) is a commentary on *Parmenides* 137b3–4, where the first hypothesis about the One is stated: *περὶ τοῦ ἑνὸς αὐτοῦ ὑποθέμενος, εἴτε ἑν ἔστιν εἴτε μὴ ἑν, τί χρὴ συμβαίνειν*; - “(don’t you agree that I should start with myself and my own hypothesis and) ... that, stating about the One itself,⁶ either that it is one or that it isn’t one,⁷ I examine what should follow?” This platonic lemma provides the following topic of the commentary: God and the notion of “one” (ἡ τοῦ ἑνὸς ἔννοια). The line of the argument can be brought to light through an analysis of the fragment, which contains five parts:

it under a perceptible guise, such as the ideas of height, of figure, or of colour (cf. *Phaedrus* 247c), which they often combine with it—it is impossible for them to conceive of the intelligible purely.”; Porphyry, *Sent.* 33 = 37,6–13 Lamberz = Brisson 2005, 1:347, 2:652. The “conceptual” purification proceeds in particular from an exegetic practice guided by the demand to develop explanations in conformity with things, but also in conformity with the “sublime character” of the spirit of the master who is being commented upon, cf., e.g., Simplicius, *In cat.* 7,23–24 Kalbfleisch: “A worthy exegete of Aristotle’s treatises should not be completely outdone by the intellectual eminence of this philosopher”; on this see Hoffmann’s translation (1990, 14). Such a requirement is marked by the care to go further than the usual meaning of words; on this point see Hoffman, 1987, 186–87; Lernould in press. Finally, a good example of the radical aporia elicited by the notion of absolute principle (separate from everything) appears in the beginning of Damascius’s *Princ.*, and on the idea that the principle cannot be nothing, and hence the cause of everything has to be the One, see Damascius, *Princ.* 1:5,24–26 Westerink–Combès: “It is necessary that only the one be the cause of several; indeed, it is not nothingness (τὸ οὐδὲν) either - since nothingness is not the cause of anything, just as plurality is not the cause of itself.”

6. “A propos de l’Un en soi” (trans. Hadot 1968, 1:113).

7. On the debate on the question whether *ἔστι* should be given an existential meaning or should be interpreted as a copula (that is to say: whether we must read *ἔστι* or *ἔστί*), such a question being raised in *Parmenides* 137b4 and 137c4 (where *Parmenides*’ first hypothesis is stated), see O’Brien 2005, 229–45. In this paper, O’Brien rejects the copula interpretation put forward by Séguy-Duclot (1998); see also Séguy-Duclot 2007, 265–80. The existential interpretation has been adopted by Cornford (“if there is a One”; 1939, 116). On the copula interpretation, see Burnet 1900; Diès 1932; Moreschini 1966; Brisson 1994. For Proclus, it can be noted that in Saffrey and Westerink 2:66,7, the Greek text reads: *Τὸ ἑν ... εἰ ἑν ἔστί*, “the One ... if it is one” (copula interpretation), but that in his *Commentary on the Parmenides*, the text printed in the edition of Cousin, *In Parm.* 1032.12 and 1039.1 reads: *εἰ ἑν ἔστί*, “if there is a one,” see the translation by Morrow and Dillon (1987, 400). In the same way, in Steel’s edition (2007), the text in 1032.10 reads: *εἴτε ἑν ἔστί*. In the anonymous *Commentary* the explanation that is developed on the first hypothesis seems to suggest that the commentator chose the copula interpretation. From Bechtle’s (1999a, 119) description of frg. 1 in Plato’s text, and in the very text quoted by the commentator, one reads *ἔστί* (but neither Bechtle nor Hadot raises the issue of the presence of an accent).

- 1 – The notion of “one” is appropriate to God: 1.1–17.
- 2 – The notion of “one” applied to God does not mean that God is a minimum, but that he is beyond the notion of “one”: 1.17–2.14.
- 3 – The pre-notion (προέννοια)⁸ of God: 2.14–27.
- 4 – The final prayer: 2.27–31.⁹
- 5 – The transition to what follows: 2.32–35.¹⁰

The notion of “one” is said to be appropriate (ικανῶς, I, 6)¹¹ to God insofar as it leads one to believe (ἐννοεῖν δίδωσι) that God is (positively) simple, primary, and the principle of everything (although God, who is above everything, is ineffable):

For in an adequate manner < this notion > removes from Him (sc. God, θεός cf. 1.5) all multiplicity, all composition and all variety, it leads one to believe that, somehow (πως), the One is simple, that nothing is before him, and that He is the principle (ἀρχή) of the other things. (1.6–10)¹²

In the Greek text, the adverb πως is in the final position of the sentence. According to Hadot, the adverb therefore has scope over the last property only; he therefore translates: “L’Un est simple ... et de quelque manière il est le principe des autres choses. According to Bechtle (1999a, 39, note 11), πως can have scope over the three properties: simplicity, priority,¹³ and principle, and I think that he is right. In any case, it can be noted that the subtlety introduced by this adverb lessens the positivity of the predicates (or at least one of them) applied to the first principle. At the same time, the ascription of these predicates is made in opposition to a “weak” interpretation of the notion of “one,” such a reaction being

8. The Greek text of the palimpsest reads in 2.20 προσέννοιαν, which is a hapax. Hadot reads προέννοιαν (1968, 2:71 and note 2), as Linguisti 1995, 98. Bechtle keeps the reading προσέννοιαν (see Bechtle 1999a, 42 and note 27). Since the idea conveyed is that of a transcending of conceptual thought generating silence (2.21), προέννοιαν seems more appropriate.

9. What is characteristic of the prayer is that it is asked of gods that they be “favorable” (ἰλεω) to those who strive to rise to them, see *Theol. Plat.* 1:8,8 Saffrey and Westerink = Proclus, *In Parm.* 618,14–15 Cousin. There is a little particularity in our anonymous *Commentary* since what is asked is that “we be benevolent”—ἰλεω (“miséricordieux” Hadot) to ourselves through Him—sc., “the One” (see folio 1.27–28).

10. The transition from one part to another is signaled in the text; see 1.17; 2.14; 2.32: οὖν (in accordance with a classical practice, see, e.g., Aristotle, *Metaph.* A.3.984a27; Proclus, *In Tim.* 1.278.25); 2.14 : καὶ οὕτως; 2.32 : Ὁ δέ.

11. Cf. I, 19–20: σύμφυλος.

12. Hadot’s translation (1968, vol. 2) is generally adopted here, though slightly modified at points.

13. Naturally, what is at stake here is the ontological priority according to which if the first is eliminated, then the second is also eliminated.

already discernible in the first section, where it is stated that it is not “because of a defect in its nature (1.5)” that the first principle is said to be “one”; this idea is also fully developed in the second section. This reversal, from a weakly positive conception of the One (the One as a minimum) to a strongly positive conception leads to a transcending of positivity itself: the One is beyond simplicity, beyond the very notion of “one. But at the same time the determination of “one” as the cause of everything is maintained with the notion of infinite power:

We attribute to Him the notion ([τὴν ἐ]π[iv]o[ι]av) of one, by which is meant (διανοητέ[ντες]) his infinite power, < his being > the cause of all beings, the principle of all those that exist after Him, because this power ... leaves the notion of one behind, not because of any smallness < that this notion might imply > ..., but because of the very wide separation of this inconceivable hypostasis, which is without¹⁴ multiplicity, without act,¹⁵ without thought, without simplicity, without any other of the supervening notions (μήτε μετ’ ἄλλης τῶν ἐπιγγυομένων ἐννοιῶν), because it (sc. this hypostasis) is and is conceived as superior to all these things. (1.24–2.2)

The exercise of one’s conceptualizing thought (cf. ἐπίνοια, διανοηθέντες) consists in relying upon the notion of “one” and the positive determinations that this notion involves (simplicity, infinite power, causality, and principle of all beings) to reach the absolute negation of all determination (the One is without multiplicity, without action, without thought, without simplicity). The aim is fundamentally to purify the notion of “one” in such a radical way that the notion itself ends up being denied from the first principle. In this way the separation of the principle from other things is strongly and positively settled. A strong statement of this negative theology is given with the following directive: “it is therefore necessary to eliminate everything and not to add anything” (2.5–6). But to negate of the One the very notion of “one” does not amount to conceiving the first principle as an absolute non-being:

But to remove everything is not to fall into absolute nothingness; it is on the one hand to cling by thought to everything that derives from Him and through Him, and on the other hand to hold the opinion that He himself is the very cause of the multiplicity as well as of the being of these things,¹⁶ though He is nei-

14. In a word-for-word translation, “not with” (μήτε μετά). On this wording (used instead of ἄνευ, “without”), see Bechtle 1999a, 40, note 19.

15. See Plotinus, *Enn.* 6.7 [38].17.10 : the One is ἐπέκεινα ἐνεργείας; see also Proclus, *In Parm.* 1154,6–16; 1167,34–1169,4 Cousin (on this topic, see Beierwaltes 1979, 356). Hadot (1968, 2:69, note 2) refers back to Porphyry, *Hist. phil.* frg. 15.

16. 2.7–9 : ἐν δὲ τῷ ἔχεισθαι μὲν καὶ νοεῖν πάντα τὰ παρ’ αὐτοῦ καὶ δι’ αὐτόν, ἡγεῖσθαι <δὲ> ὅτι αἴτιος μὲν αὐτὸς καὶ τοῦ πλήθους καὶ τοῦ εἶναι, αὐτὸς δὲ οὔτε ὄν (ἐν: *Taurinensis*, Hadot 1968, Linguisti 1995; ὄν : Kroll 1892, Baltes 2005) οὔτε πλήθος- “ma togliere tutto non

ther being nor multiplicity, but has an essence that is transcending all the things which are due to Him. (2.5–12)

It is interesting to note how positivity is reintroduced here in two ways. The positivity of the Real can be examined first: denying everything of the first principle does not amount to eliminating all things, but rather to emphasize the fact that all things depend on the first principle. Now this dependency confirms the existence of things, because the idea of dependency here leads back to the (independent and hence eternal) cause that all things depend on. But what depends on God cannot, on account of this, be separated from God, since its being is always sustained by God:

Certainly, if the latter (sc. the One), whose function is to be a kind of limit, would separate from them (sc. the things other than Him), they would be unlimited and would be undetermined, not being in any way. But if that were the case, there would be no beings. (1.14–17)¹⁷

nel senso di cadere in cio che non è in nessun modo né sotto alcun rapporto, bensì di restare attaccati e porre mente a tutte le cose che vengono da lui et tramite lui, di considerare che esso è, sì, causa della loro pluralità ... di per sé pero non è né uno (ἓν) né pluralità...” (“but to remove everything, not in the sense of falling into what is not in any way or under any relationship, but rather by mind to remain attached to all the things that come from him and through him, to consider that he is indeed the cause of their plurality ... while he himself is neither one (ἓν) nor plurality ...”; Linguisti 1995). The phrase ἐν δὲ τῷ ἔχθῃ μὲν καὶ νοεῖν πάντα τὰ παρ’ αὐτοῦ καὶ δι’ αὐτόν is not easy to construe. The readings that have been put forward by Hadot and Linguisti assume that one has to give importance to what comes after the First, for in this way one does not eliminate all things (cf. also Bechtle 1999a, 41 “but [rather] by maintaining in thought every thing that is from him”). Even though in this context it may make sense to advocate somehow that one has to give importance to derived things (such an interest being criticized in other sections of the *Commentary*; see 6.24; 10.35), what is at stake in our excerpt is the wish to avoid “nullifying” God, and not to avoid nullifying the beings. Besides, μὲν on line 7 (ἔχθῃ μὲν) is balanced by δὲ on line 10 (αὐτὸς δὲ οὔτε ὄν), even if one adopts Kroll’s revision of δὲ on line 9 (ἡγεῖσθαι <δὲ>). This excerpt is thus structured as follows: (i) God is the cause of multiplicity and of the being of things that come from him, (ii) but God himself is neither being nor multiplicity. Thus can be identified a chiasmus: αἴτιος ... καὶ τοῦ πλήθους καὶ τοῦ εἶναι, αὐτὸς δὲ οὔτε ὄν οὔτε πλήθος (Kroll’s revision, ὄν being adopted here). The idea that the negations (“eliminating everything”) indicate both that the One is separate from all things and that all things come from Him is, as is well-known, a leitmotiv in Proclus’ *Platonic Theology*.

17. In the same way Proclus states that “the divine is not separate from anything, it is equally present to all that exists”: οὐδενὸς γὰρ ἀφέστηκε τὸ θεῖον, ἀλλὰ πᾶσιν ἐξ ἴσου πάρεστι (*In Tim.* 1.209.19–20) It is in this sense that the question of the causality of One is pervasive through all reality and that all things, as they are, i.e., as they are each one thing, have the One as their cause; see *In Tim.* 1.209.21–24: “The One is everywhere insofar as the existence of every being stems from the gods and insofar as all things have proceeded from the gods, they do not ‘come out’ from them, but are rooted in them. Where indeed would they come from, when gods have previously embraced and enclosed everything, and that they hold everything in them-

The existence of things is thus all the more guaranteed, given that the dependency of the being of things on the first principle is emphasized. Hence, the positive determinations applied to the first principle (as the cause of multiplicity, the cause of the being of all things) are also maintained, even though the separation of the One from the things that stem from Him is strongly claimed, both here and in the third section, where the question of the “pre-conception” or “pre-notion” of God is tackled, and which begins with a new statement of the necessity to keep together both of the following imperatives: not to “nullify God,” and not to predicate anything of Him:

And thus one will not fall into emptiness, nor dare to attribute anything to Him, but <one may> remain in a non-comprehensive comprehension (ἐν ἀκαταλήπτῳ καταλήψει) and in a conception which conceives nothing. From this exercise, it will someday happen to you, when you turn away also (καί) from the thought (τῆς νοήσεως) of the things which exist because of Him, that you have come to rest at the inexpressible pre-notion (προέννοιαν)¹⁸ of Him,¹⁹ which represents Him (ἐνεκονιζομένην) through silence,²⁰ not even knowing that it is silent, nor being aware that it represents Him, nor indeed knowing anything at all, being merely an image of the inexpressible, being the inexpressible in an inexpressible manner, and not as though it were aware of that (ὡς γινώσκουσιν), if you can imaginatively follow the way I manage to express this. (2.14–27)²¹

The “pre-notion” at stake here does not refer to the intellectual intuition beyond conceptual and discursive comprehension, but to the ultimate form of knowledge which transcends the simple and unified intellection and leads the soul to a silent union with the Principle.²² Therefore it seems that we ascend directly from the conceptual understanding of the One (insofar as it is possible to conceive of understanding the One conceptually) to union with the One, the intermediary

selves? For what is beyond the gods does not exist in any way, but as for the beings, they are surrounded by the gods, they are in the gods. See also *Theol. Plat.* 2.3–30 (if there is not the One, there is not any multiplicity either).

18. Similarly, Proclus says that the One is “not only the cause of all beings, but also *pre-cause*”: προαίτιος, *Theol. Plat.* 2:59,24 Saffrey-Westerink (on the fact that the text of the palimpsest προέννοιαν was corrected as προέννοιαν, see note 8). The opposition between the thought (νόησις) about things that exist through Him and the inexpressible prenotation (προέννοιαν) of Him can also be noted.

19. “à la prénotation indicible *que nous pouvons avoir de Lui*,” Hadot 1968, 2:70,20 (emphasis mine).

20. On silence, the normal outcome of negative theology,” see Proclus, *Theol. Plat.* 2:58,23 Saffrey-Westerink and 2:115–16 note 4.

21. Cf. frg. 4, folio 10.23–29.

22. On the knowledge (vision) of the One by the one that is in us, by which the partial (human) thought becomes properly divine, cf. Proclus, *Theol. Plat.* 1:15,15–16,1 Saffrey-Westerink; *Prov.* 31–32. See also Guérard 1987, 335–49.

step of intellectual intuition being overlooked. This omission of intellectual intuition can be explained by the fact that the very object of intellectual knowledge is the intelligible, as the sensible is the very object of sensible perception or of opinion, and as mathematical forms, which are intermediate between the sensible and the intelligible, are the very object of discursive thought (διάνοια), that is, of science. By virtue of the axiom according to which “like is known is known by like,” the One—which is beyond intelligibility—can only be “known” by the one of the soul.²³ In any case, the introduction of this idea of the “pre-notion” of God is the outcome of the exercise of purification of the notion of “one.” This exercise began, in the first section, with an explanation of the notion of “one,” where it was shown that this notion meant—positively—two things: (i) the One is simple, and the cause of all things, (ii) without the One, nothing would be.²⁴ In the second section, in a more negative perspective, the notion of “one” (and *a fortiori* any other determination) is itself negated of the first principle, while the separation between the first principle and all things and the dependency of all things on this first principle are emphasized. The dialectal unity of assertions and negations on the level of understanding (or judgment) and of the concept then leads to the “pre-notion” of the One and to union with the One, where the dichotomy object (as known) / subject (as knowing) is abolished. It can thus be understood that, in the prospect of a systematic elevation in the degrees of knowledge, prayer crowns the explanation (what follows is simply a transition to the following lemma). This integration of prayer in the dialectical ascent to God, of prayer as “philosophical prayer,” as an ἀνάβασις νοῦ πρὸς θεόν conditioning the possibility of (scientific) discourse about God is a specific feature of Platonism after Plotinus.²⁵

23. See, e.g., Proclus, *Prov.* 31.

24. In the same way, according to Proclus, the first five of the nine hypotheses of the *Parmenides* (137c4–142a8) reveals the absolute transcendence of the One, while the last four hypotheses (from 160d3 to 166c5) show that if the One does not exist, then nothing does; see *Theol. Plat.* 1:56,17–22 and 58,8–22 Saffrey-Westerink.

25. On this point, see, e.g., Proclus, *In Tim.* 1:206,26–214,12; 1:223,14–30 Diehl (and Ler-nould in press). See also Beierwaltes 1979, 394, where the medieval tradition is referred to; more specifically the author refers to Jean of Damascus, *Fide orthodox.* 3.24: *oratio est accensus intellectus ad deum*, as well as to Albert the Great, to Thomas Aquinas, or to Meister Eckhart. It can be noted that it is in this final “prayer,” concluding the explanation, that the idea that the first principle is “desirable” (ἐρᾶνός; 2.30), i.e., is the Good, is introduced (cf. Proclus, *In Parm.* 7,58 Klibansky-Labowsky).

FRAGMENT 2

The second fragment (folios 3–4)²⁶ deals with the topics of God and the Intellect²⁷ (while the first fragment deals with God and the notion of One, and the third deals with God and time). The commentary, which revolves around three themes, is characterized by a highly structured progression:

1. God is without relationship to the things after Him: 3.1–5.7
 - a. God does not experience either identity or otherness: 3.1–13.
 - b. Analogies with sunset and with a ship in motion: 3.13–4.12.
 - c. We are nothing in relation to God: 4.12–5.7.
2. God's special form of knowledge: 5.7–6.12.
3. How to grasp the notion of God: 6.1–35.²⁸

The main idea of this argument is that God is incommensurable, without relation to the things subsequent to Him, that he is completely separated from everything that is after Him.²⁹ From the fact that God is radically incomparable follows the closely associated idea that we, and all things, are nothing in relation to God. The latter idea is first introduced as a rhetorical question:

Or must we say that the One does not experience either similarity or dissimilarity because, whether the things that owe their existence to Him and exist through Him do exist or not, He <is> always the same, maintaining an incommensurable pre-eminence (ἀσύμβλητον ὑπεροχήν) in regard to any thing, whatever it is, and thus the whole is nothing in a way, being part of the things that are after Him? (3.3–9).

The comparison with the sunset and with the boat in motion allows the transition from interrogation to the assertion of the thesis that it is we (and not God) that are nothing. At the same time, these comparisons clarify the mechanism that produces the metaphysical illusion that God is nothingness because he is “beyond understanding.” The sun does not go down; for, if the “sunset” corresponds to a darkening of daylight—the coming of night—the sun never darkens. The sunset is just “an affection (πάθη<μα>) of those who are on earth” (3.19–20). The same

26. This is still part of the explanation of the first hypothesis of Plato's *Parmenides*: “if the one is one” (137c–142a), with the reading ἔστι (copula, see note 7).

27. See the beginning of fragment 2: folio 3.1–2: “Isn't God dissimilar and different from the Intellect?”

28. Here again the transitions are clearly indicated: οὖν (5.7); ‘Ἄλλ’ (6.12).

29. God is without relation (ἄσχετος) to what follows Him; see, e.g., 3.35; 4.11 and 31; 4.14. God is separate (ἐξηρημένος), 4.28. God is incomparable (ἀσύμβλητος), 3.7; 6.20 (see also 3.11: ἀσύγκριτον).

applies to those who sail along coasts. They are in motion, “but they imagine that it is the latter (i.e., the earth) which is moving” (3.30–32). Hence the important idea that, when we think of God as nothingness, we in fact project on him our own nothingness:

For the phrase “the things that are after Him” should not be understood to mean that, on the one hand, they would exist in a relation of identity (to him), either by location, or by an identical substantial existence, while, on the other hand, He would have the part of reality that fills everything,³⁰ when other things would have secondary being.³¹ ‘The things that follow Him’ should be conceived as ‘things that are rejected out of Him’ and are nothing in relation to Him. Because it is not He who is non-being and who cannot be grasped by those who want to know Him, but it is [we] and all beings that are nothing in relation to Him.³² That is why it was not possible to know Him: this is because all other things are nothing in relation to Him. Now acts of knowledge³³ grasp like things through like. Hence we are nothing in relation to Him, while He himself is the only true being (if you understand in the way I mean)³⁴ in relation to all the things that <are> after Him, who cannot be compared to these things, has no relation to them and does not turn away from his own solitariness³⁵ to experience relation and multiplicity. – Except that he does not remain unknowing of things that will exist some day, that he has known past things, He who is never in ignorance.³⁶ – But it is we who transfer onto Him our affections (τὰ ἡμέτερα πάθη),³⁷ because of our being really nothing. (4.12–5.2)³⁸

30. That is to say : He is the intelligible, essential, eternal reality. On this passage cf. Hadot, 1968, 2:77 note 3. To the references given by Hadot (Porphyry, *Isag.* 10,9; 14,20 Busse and *In cat.* 95,22; 99,16; 125,25 Busse) add Porphyry, *Sent.* 2 Lamberz (= Brisson 2005, 1:308 and the notes *ad locum* in 2:384).

31. That is to say, the other things are secondary (nonessential, dependent, contingent, temporal) beings.

32. 4.19–22: <οὐ> γὰρ αὐτὸς τὸ μὴ ὄν καὶ ἀκατάληπτον τοῖς τ[οῦ]το γινώσκειν βουλομένοις, ἀλλ’ [ἡμεῖς] καὶ πάντα τὰ ὄντα τὸ μὴ[δέ]ν ἔσμεν πρὸς αὐτόν. The word καὶ (in καὶ ἀκατάληπτον) could be given an exegetical value. This view is thus the exact opposite of the Kantian thesis that what is real is only what can be imagined or construed by the understanding.

33. That is to say, the different kinds of knowledge: sensation or sensible perception, opinion, science, intellection.

34. This qualification is important. God is not to be established, in an onto-theological perspective, as the first of beings.

35. Cf. frg. 2, folio 4.10.

36. This comment announces what will be developed later, in 5.7–6.12.

37. See Plotinus, *Enn.* 6.9 [9].3.51–54. On this plotinian text see O’Meara 1990, 145–56; 2000, 247–51; Meijer 1992. See also Damascius, *Princ.* 1:4,6–8; 5, 4–6 Westerink-Combès; see also 133–34 note 1.

38. See also 6.18–20: “One has to know that the things that exist through Him are nothing in relation to Him because of the incomparable nature of his own hypostasis” (διὰ τὸ

In the context of an explanation of the phrase “after Him” (μετ’ αὐτόν), referring to the things that are “after God,” the author of the *Commentary* insists on the fact that the preposition “after” (μετά + acc.) should not lead one to think of a relation of precedence vs. subsequence between God and beings. The preposition “after” signifies rather that things are driven out of him, and are nothing with regard to him. In other words, “after” refers to a radical exteriority.

FRAGMENT 4

This explanation of the preposition “after” in the phrase “the things that are after Him” is part of the exercise by which our concepts are purified. The latter, and its purpose, that is, to rebut any form of assimilation between the One and our concepts, is also very distinctly noticeable in the fourth fragment (folios 9 and 10) of our *Commentary*. Two parts can clearly be distinguished: 1. the criticism of the idea that the allegorical interpretation of the *Chaldean Oracles* can lead us to know God (9.1–10.11); 2. the rejection of the application to God of the Stoic thesis that we can know the true nature of things thanks to discourse (10.11–35). These two parts are similar insofar as they both reject the idea that our concepts allow us to know God. Our concepts should rather be conceived as obstacles to the knowledge of God. As Bechtle (1999a, 161) very justly maintains in a rewording of the excerpt in 9.20–26: “instead of entering into our νοῦς, the One necessarily remains in our ignorance of him” (Bechtle 1999a, 161). Indeed, ignorance, as opposed to conceptual understanding, is the only way to avoid the assimilation between God and our concepts, and hence, our separation from him. When we put God in the same category as our concepts we indeed separate ourselves from Him just as we separated ourselves from ourselves,³⁹ whether these concepts result from the revelation in the *Oracles*, that is, through explanation, or from scientific (dialectical) argumentation. It is the first possibility that I will now try to examine in more detail.

Folio 9 opens with a mention of the doctrine that exegetes—to whom only the phrase “others” alludes in the *Commentary* (11.1)—draw from the *Chaldean Oracles*, a doctrine which posits that the First principle, that is, God, snatched himself away from all that belongs to Him.⁴⁰ According to these exegetes (sc. the predecessors of the anonymous author of the *Commentary*), one should think that “[God’s] Power and his Intellect are co-united in his simplicity.”⁴¹ Moreover, the author of the *Commentary* adds that “even though they (sc. the exegetes of

ἀσύμβλητον <τῆς αὐτοῦ ὑποστάσεως).

39. Cf. 6.17; also Damascius, *Princ.* 1:4,6–8 Westerink-Combès.

40. See *Orac. chald.* frg. 3 : “The Father snatched himself away and did not enclose his own fire in his intellectual Power” (trans. Majercik).

41. Cf. frg. 4 : “For Power is with him, but Intellect is from him” (trans. Majercik).

the *Oracles*) do not differentiate God from the Triad (sc. Father, Power, Intellect), they believe that he (sc. God) does away with number, so that they utterly refuse to say that he is the One" (9.1–8).⁴² The anonymous author's commentary on this interpretation of the *Oracles* follows. According to him, the above-mentioned theses drawn from the *Oracles* may be "stated in a certain way (πως) accurately and truly." Nevertheless, the anonymous author proceeds to point out that such a doctrine is incomprehensible to us. This statement is followed by a comparison with blind people who would be given the right definitions of colors. As they are sightless, they are to remain unknowing of what colors are, even of the definition they would be given were true.⁴³

Now here is the excerpt upon which I would like to dwell, i.e. 9.26 – 10.11:

Εἰ δὴ ταῦθ' οὕτως ἔχει,
 ἀμείνους οἱ τὸ τί οὐκ ἔστι πρεσβεύσαντες
 ἐν τῇ γνώσει αὐτοῦ τῶν τί ἔστι, κἂν λέγη-
 ται ἀληθῶς, μὴ οἶων τε ὄντων ἀκούειν
 ὡς λέγεται· ἐπεὶ κἂν ἀκούωμέν τι περὶ αὐ- (30)
 τοῦ τῶν ὡς φασὶ προσόντων καὶ διὰ πα-
 ραδειγμάτων ὧν ἐντεῦθεν λαμβάνου-
 σιν εἰς τιν' ἔννοιαν αὐτοῦ μεταλαβόντες
 καὶ ἄλλως ἐκδεξάμενοι ἀνίωμεν, ἀλλὰ
 καὶ αὐτοὶ οὗτοι πάλιν ἀναστρέψαντες ἀ- (35)

folio 10

ζιοῦσιν μὴ προσέχειν τοῖς εἰρημένους
 ἐξ εὐθείας, ἀφίστασθαι δὲ καὶ τούτων καὶ
 τῆς κατὰ τὴν τούτων νόησιν συνέσε-
 ως τοῦ θεοῦ· ὥστε τελευτᾷ καὶ τούτων
 ἢ διδασκαλία τῶν τε αὐτῶ ⁴⁴ προσεῖναι (5)
 παραδιδόμενον. Ἔχου δ' ἂν οἶμαι περιττόν
 τι εἰς τὴν κάθαρσιν τῆς ἐννοίας ἢ μετὰ τὴν
 ἀκρόασιν τῶν ὡς προσόντων αὐτῶ ἀπό-
 στασις καὶ τούτων τῶ ⁴⁵ ἐκ τῶν μεγίστων
 τὴν ἀπόστασιν γίνεσθαι καὶ τῶν προσ- (10)
 εχῶς ἂν μετ' αὐτὸν νοηθέντων.

I suggest the following translation:

42. According to Bechtle, the beginning of fragment two (folio 11.1–8) corresponds to a quotation, in indirect speech, of the *Chaldean Oracles*; see Bechtle 2006a, 563–81.

43. On this topos, see Aristotle, *Phys.* 2.1.193a4–9 (Simplicius, *In phys.* 272.13–273.1 Diels); Plotinus, *Enn.* 1.6 [1].4.4–9.

44. τῶν τε αὐτῶ : Saffrey (1988); τε ως των : cod.; <γν>οστῶν : Usener.

45. τῶ, Baeumker; το, *codex commentarii*; τὸ, Saffrey 1988.

If this is so, those who give priority to what He is not have a superior knowledge of God than those who give priority to what He is—even if they speak the truth—for we⁴⁶ are not able to understand the meaning of what is said. Even if we understand any predicate they attribute to God, that is to say⁴⁷ if we ascend to⁴⁸ a certain notion of Him by means of images they choose from this world, giving another meaning to these images and interpreting them differently,⁴⁹ they, bringing us back once more,⁵⁰ say that we should not attach importance to what is said directly (sc. conceptually), but that we should abandon (ἀφίστασθαι) the direct speech and the knowledge of God we may gain by understanding this discourse. Thus the teaching of the attributes that are traditionally used to characterize Him becomes useless as well. And, after having heard the presentation of his supposed attributes, it will be to no avail (περιττόν) - it seems to me - for us to abandon also these attributes in order to purify our conception of God, because this abandonment (ἀπόστασις) will get done from (ἐκ) the greatest <conceivable> attributes,⁵¹ in other words,⁵² from the attributes of the things that are conceived immediately after Him.

The end of this text (from 10.4 onwards) is particularly difficult to interpret, as reflected by important differences between available reference translations, namely those by Hadot (1968), Saffrey (1988), Linguiti (1995), Bechtle (1999a), and Baltes (2005). These differences result from editorial choices in some parts of the text where the interpretation of the manuscript *Taurinensis* is difficult, and have been the subject of conjectures and corrections, since these choices determine the overall interpretation of the excerpt. The word περιττός (10.6) is particularly important here. As is well-known this word first means “which is beyond measure,” and can have two derived meanings, depending on the positive or negative connotation that can be associated with the first meaning. This word can thus either be assigned a (positive) reading, and thus be synonymous with “outstanding” or “exceptional,” or it can be assigned a (negative) reading, thus being equivalent to “superfluous,” “useless,” “vain,” or “exaggerated. The translations mentioned above fluctuate between these two ways of understanding the word in the excerpt under study.

46. That is to say: the human beings.

47. The word καί is given an exegetic value here.

48. Here the word ἀνίωμεν in 9.34 is understood as a form of ἄνεμι (to come near, to go up), just as Saffrey 1988, 8 (“si nous entendons... et que nous nous élevons...,” or as Bechtle 1999a, 55 (“if we ascend to him”) and Linguiti 1995, 121 (“se riusciamo ad accostarci.”). It is thus not understood as a form of ἀνίμη, just as Hadot does (1968, 2: 95; “si nous cessions”).

49. See Bechtle 1999a, 56, note 83: “ἄλλως seems to have the same meaning here as (the non-technical) ἀλληγορικῶς.

50. The phrase “once more” is used because those who recount the doctrine of the *Oracles* do not only dismiss a literal reading, but also an allegorical (conceptual) reading of the *Oracles*.

51. 10.9: ἐκ τῶν μεγίστων, that is to say “from the highest <conceivable> attributes.”

52. Following Bechtle 1999a, 56, note 87, I give καί (10.10) an exegetic reading.

Let us introduce Hadot's translation first:

Ainsi cesse d'être utile aussi l'enseignement de ces formules intelligibles qui nous ont été révélées. Car il y aurait quelque chose de superflu, me semble-t-il, pour purifier notre notion de Dieu, à abandonner sitôt après les avoir entendus les prédicats qui le caractérisent et précisément ceux-là, parce qu'il faut renoncer surtout aux prédicats les plus élevés et aux choses qui sont pensées immédiatement après Lui.

Hadot embraces Usener's conjecture when he reads $\gamma\nu\omega\sigma\tau\acute{\omega}\nu$ in X, 5, and like Baemuker he reads $\tau\acute{\omega}$ in 10.9. I will not discuss these choices. I will simply point out the problems that this translation may pose. First of all, the words that would correspond to "necessary to abandon" cannot be identified in the Greek text. Secondly, Hadot translates $\acute{\epsilon}\kappa\ \tau\acute{\omega}\nu\ \mu\epsilon\gamma\acute{\iota}\sigma\tau\omega\nu\ \tau\acute{\eta}\nu\ \acute{\alpha}\pi\acute{o}\sigma\tau\alpha\sigma\iota\nu$ as if there were $\tau\acute{\omega}\nu\ \mu\epsilon\gamma\acute{\iota}\sigma\tau\omega\nu\ \tau\acute{\eta}\nu\ \acute{\alpha}\pi\acute{o}\sigma\tau\alpha\sigma\iota\nu$, which is debatable. And above all, the rationale of the argumentation is not clear here: it would be superfluous to purify our notion of God, to abandon the predicates that characterize Him ... because it is necessary to abandon the highest predicates. Should it be understood that the divine attributes—which are presented as being taught (only) to be later abandoned—are not the greatest, but are "lower" attributes (concepts), so that the following negation of *these* attributes does not concern the higher attributes? In this case the criticism would concern the fact that the task of purification is not fully accomplished (and in this sense useless) since it applies only to "lower" concepts. But then a problem arises. When the anonymous author of the *Commentary* states that "there would be something superfluous, to purify our notion of God, if we abandoned the predicates that characterize Him immediately after having heard them," it seems that the "predicates" at stake are those that were presented at the very beginning of our sixth fragment in the short summary of positive theology excerpted from the *Chaldean Oracles*, that is to say: (i) God is separate from ("s'est dérobé," according to Hadot) all the things that belong to Him; (ii) his Power and his Intellect are united in him, in his simplicity. It cannot be said that these predicates are not the greatest or highest. It is these predicates indeed that lead to the following negative thesis: (iii) even if God has to be identified with the first term of the Chaldean triad of the Father, Power, and Intellect, it is impossible to count here these three terms and to say: *one, two, three*; in other words, it is impossible to say that the Father is "the first," or the "one" in the triad. But if the predicates that were taught before being abandoned are the "greatest," the criticism of the predecessors seems meaningless, since the abandonment of these very predicates is advocated precisely by the predecessors.

Now let us concentrate on Saffrey's (1988) translation:

Le résultat, c'est que prend fin l'enseignement aussi de ces choses, aussi bien

de celles transmises pour lui être attribuées⁵³ (ce qui aurait, je pense, un effet extraordinaire pour la purification de l'idée [de Dieu], c'est le renoncement aux prétendus attributs de Dieu, sitôt qu'on les a entendus, et le fait⁵⁴ que ce renoncement se produise à partir des plus grands parmi eux), que de celles qui peuvent être pensées immédiatement après lui.⁵⁵

This interpretation thus leads one to analyze Ἐχοι δ' ἄν οἶμαι περιττόν τι ... ἐκ τῶν μεγίστων τὴν ἀπόστασιν γίνεσθαι as an interpolated clause, and to adopt a very positive reading of περιττός; the positive theology of the attributes of the One is the only element presented as useless.⁵⁶ But then how is the optative mood, which suggests that such an abandonment of the greatest attributes of God is not to be found in the exegetic tradition of the *Oracles* here criticized, to be interpreted? It has just been stated though that these very interpreters of the *Oracles* wish for (ἀξιοῦσιν: 9.35–10.1) a renunciation of all that is said “directly” (not in a figurative style) of God, and that they should be abandoned. Here again, should it be understood that the criticism does not concern the abandonment itself, but rather the fact that the abandonment does not apply first to God's greatest predicates?

The third translation to be examined is Gerald Bechtle's:

There would be something odd, from the point of view of the purification of the concept (of God), after hearing his supposed attributes, in abandoning these also, because⁵⁷ the abandonment would be of⁵⁸ the greatest things and (= that is to say)⁵⁹ of those which would have been conceived immediately after himself.

“Odd” here means “unnecessary. Bechtle's interpretation is indeed the following: it would be unreasonable to reject the positive theology of God's attributes as a whole because of a (justified) conviction that these attributes cannot be predicated of what exists after God. The anonymous author here reacts against any inclination to “turn God into nothingness” (cf. Bechtle 1999a, 243: “one always

53. 10.5 : τῶν τε αὐτῷ προσεῖναι παραδιδόμενων.

54. 10.9–10: καὶ τούτων τῷ ἐκ τῶν μεγίστων τὴν ἀπόστασιν γίνεσθαι.

55. Linguisti (1995) adopts Saffrey's reading and translation: “Cosi finisce anche l'insignamento di queste (formule), sia di quelle tramadante per essergli attribuite – un effetto straordinario per la purificazione della (nostra) nozione (di Dio) lo avrebbe, credo, la rinuncia ai suoi presunti attributi dopo averli ascoltati e il fatto che la rinuncia avvenisse a partire dai piu importanti tra loro – sia di quelle che potrebbero essere pensate immediatamente dopo di lui.”

56. By “prend fin” Saffrey, like Hadot, means “becomes useless”; Saffrey 1988, 9: “Logically, they (*i.e.* those who conceive a positive theology out of the *Chaldean Oracles*) should therefore give up teaching these supposed divine attributes.”

57. Reading τῷ (10.9).

58. Bechtle, like Hadot, does not translate ἐκ (10.9).

59. See Bechtle 1999a, 56, note 87.

has to say something about the One in order to avoid theological nothingness").⁶⁰ Positive theology should thus be maintained (even though negative theology has more value), primarily because it allows us to rise very high in the hierarchy of the divine, almost to the One himself. The abandonment of divine attributes is thus not necessary "for a purified concept of God" (Bechtle 1999a, 244–45). Moreover, even with regard to the One, positive theology should not be totally excluded for two reasons: (i) it may not be entirely false, and (ii) it leads (because of its inadequacy) to negative theology (Bechtle 1999a, 244–45).

It should be emphasized that Bechtle insists on the fact that negative theology is superior to positive theology according to the anonymous author. Nevertheless, Bechtle states that this very author insists that the positive theology of the One should be saved because of its partial usefulness. However, the idea that is constantly maintained in the anonymous *Commentary* is rather that positive theology should be abandoned as far as God is concerned. As Saffrey argues in commenting on our excerpt, "according to him (i.e. the anonymous author), positive theology should not apply, and negative theology only should be used by a philosopher" (1988, 9) and Saffrey draws on the directly following text to show how the author illustrates his point of view, to the point where this radical stance in favour of negative theology is most strongly expressed, that is, in the phrase "the soul has to resolve to know God by means of 'the representation that is constituted by its lack of knowledge of God' (10.25–29)."⁶¹

Finally, let us examine Baltes's translation (2005, 107):

Und damit endet auch deren Lehrer von den Eigenschaften, die Ihm bislang traditionell zugeschrieben werden.⁶² Möglicherweise aber übt, so glaube ich, nachdem man von seinen angeblichen Eigenschaften gehört hat, die Trennung gerade von diesen eine ungewöhnliche Reinigung des Vorstellung aus, weil (τῷ) die Trennung gerade von den bedeutendsten Eigenschaften erfolgt sowie von denen, die die Vernunft etwa unmittelbar nach Ihm erfasst.

The word περιττός here has a positive value, and the anonymous author of the *Commentary* does not criticize only the abandonment of God's attributes as advocated by the interpreters of the *Chaldean Oracles*. On the contrary, he grants this abandonment the capacity to cause an exceptional purification of the positive

60. See also, Bechtle 1999a, 244, where he stages as it were the anonymous author, who supposedly says: "I don't really believe in positive theology but why should we therefore give up all the great things (conceived on the level of being, directly after the One) that we associate with God?"

61. 1988, 11. Saffrey mentions Plotinus, *Enn.* 5.3 [49].14.1–3 ("Sur les hypostases douées de connaissances et l'Au-delà"), and *Enn.* 6.8 [39].1.33–37 ("Sur la liberté et la volonté de l'Un"), as analogous to the anonymous *Commentary* X, 20.

62. In 10.5–6, Baltes (2005, 106) reads: τῶν τέως πως (oder αὐτῷ) προσεῖναι παραδιδόμενων.

attributes (or concepts) predicated of God. After having exposed the “total *volte-face*” maintained by the interpreters of the *Oracles* (who first derive a theory of the attributes of God from the *Oracles*, but then maintain that these attributes should be abandoned), the anonymous author has back-pedalled (note the “aber”) by shifting from criticism to praise (hence also the use of parentheses by Saffrey and Linguisti of the following sentence: Ἐχοι δ’ ἄν οἶμαι περιττόν τι ... ἐκ τῶν μεγίστων τὴν ἀπόστασιν γίγνεσθαι. Such a use of parentheses is a formal clue to a kind of breach in the line of thought in the anonymous author’s critical discourse).

After this recapitulation of the different readings of this excerpt that have been defended and the problems they raise, I would like to put forward an interpretation that lends περιττός a negative reading (as does Hadot), in the context of a rather harsh criticism of a traditional exegetical approach to the *Chaldean Oracles*, while ascribing to this excerpt a meaning that differs from that given by Hadot, as can be seen in my translation, repeated below:

And, after having heard the presentation of his supposed attributes, it will be to no avail—it seems to me—for us to abandon these attributes in order to purify our conception of God, because this abandonment (ἀπόστασις) will get done *from the greatest <conceivable> attributes, in other words, from the attributes of the things that are conceived immediately after Him.* (emphasis mine)⁶³

I actually understand that the author discards the negative theology of the *Oracles* because this negative theology still attaches importance to things that surround God; to continue to attach importance to the things that are after the One is to condemn oneself to miss one’s goal. Such an idea is precisely stated at the end of folio 9:

So one can know neither Him nor the mode of the procession of the things which are second from Him and due to Him or by Him. But they—all of those who dared reveal how the things that relate to Him are—strive to show this mode too: they strive to do so by clinging to the things that surround Him. (X, 29–35 based on Hadot’s translation)

What the author seems to suggest here, as he did above in the criticism of some of his predecessors’ reading of the *Chaldean Oracles* (see folio 9.8), is not that our concepts should be abandoned in the sense that one should rely upon our con-

63. D. O’Meara, after reading my paper, proposes to read in 10.9–10 καὶ τούτων τὸ ... γίγνεσθαι and, taking καὶ in a concessive sense (see LSJ, s.v. καὶ), to translate: “it will be to no avail ... to abandon these attributes ... even if this abandonment will get done from the greatest attributes, in other words, from the attributes of the things that are conceived immediately after Him.” I thank him very much for this very interesting suggestion.

cepts before transcending (negating) them and thus drawing nearer to the One, as Proclus says that Plato in the *Parmenides* relies on the Second One (the One of the historical Parmenides) and from there goes back up to his own One, that is, the First One.⁶⁴ What he suggests is rather that we should not at all rely on our own concepts, however high they are. For these elevated concepts, supposedly attributed to the One, in fact necessarily relate to what is immediately after the One, that is, the Chaldean triad of Father, Power, and Intellect. The abandonment of the concepts that relate to this triad, and more particularly to its “first” term, could well be a form of conceptual purification. The fact remains that it is only secondary predicates—those that relate to the intelligible—that are thus purified.

If this reading can be accepted, then our author is closer to Damascius than to an author like Proclus. It is indeed Damascius's work that, for the purpose of a “radical purification” of our concepts, clearly expresses the idea that the only way of getting close to the One is “to keep quiet, remaining in the secret sanctuary (ἄδύτω) of the soul and not leaving it.”⁶⁵

64. See Proclus, *In Parm.* 1093.19–1094.16 Cousin. This going back up from the Second One (the One-Being) to the First One is carried out, according to Proclus, in the first hypothesis of *Parmenides*, where Plato, relying on the notion of “one” alone, finds the cause that is before the One-Being. In the second hypothesis of *Parmenides*, Plato relies on the two notions of “one” and of “being,” considered together as a unit, to reveal how the One-Being constitutes a triad of intelligible gods, and finally he relies on the notion of “being” alone, viewing the “being” as separate from the “one,” to reveal all the divine classes that are after the One-Being; see also *Theol. Plat.* 1.11 = 54,12–22 Saffrey-Westerink (on this point, see Lernould 1987, 528–36).

65. Damascius, *Princ.* 1:22,14–15 Westerink-Combès. On this point, see Rappe 2000, 225–27 (read also in our anonymous *Commentary*, frg. 1, folio 2.21–22). The opposition between Proclus and Damascius put forward here should be qualified. Proclus also acknowledges a silent supra-intellective knowledge; see *Prov.* 31: “I would like you to agree to conceive, after all these modes of knowledge (i.e., opinion, mathematical science, dialectic, intellection), a fifth one. You who believe Aristotle when, rising to intellective activity, he wants to persuade us that beyond it nothing can be found, I would like you to follow Plato and the theologians that preceded him, who are in the habit of praising a supra-intellective knowledge, and who usually present it as an authentically divine madness; they say it is the one of the soul, that it no longer stimulates the intellective faculty and relates directly the soul to the One. For anything is known by its like, the sensible is known by sensation, the object of knowledge by science, the intelligible by the intelligence, the one by the unitive. The soul, as it is still at the level of intellection, knows itself and knows by contact all that it intelligizes, as already mentioned, but when it reaches supra-intellection, it ignores itself and ignores all that it used to know, it enjoys the peace given by its proximity to the One, *closed to knowledge, struck dumb, silent with an inner silence.* And how indeed could it unite with the most ineffable of all beings other than by silencing in itself any useless speech? That it be one in order to see the One, or better still, in order not to see the One, because if it saw the one, it would see an intelligible and not what transcends intelligence; it would see some one and not the One itself” (translation based on Isaac 1977, emphasis mine; on this text see now Steel 2007–2009). See also the quotation from folio 2.14–27 above and notes 22, 23, 25.

A CRITICISM OF NUMENIUS IN THE LAST COLUMNS
(XI–XIV) OF THE ANONYMOUS COMMENTARY
ON THE PARMENIDES

Luc Brisson

The fifth fragment (col. XI–XII) comments on the beginning of the second hypothesis of Plato’s *Parmenides*: “If the one is, can it be although it does not participate in reality?” (142b5–6). At first sight, this formula seems strange (ἀτοπον) to a Neoplatonist. Indeed, the reasoning of Parmenides (*Parm.* 142b5–6) allows us to suppose that reality (οὐσία) exists prior to the second one, the one-that-is, which participates in it; yet for a Neoplatonist, reality (ἡ οὐσία), considered as being (τὸ ὄν), is on the same level as the second one, which corresponds to the domain of the intellect and the intelligible. To escape this deadlock, the commentator will investigate the meaning of “to participate.”

XI If, then, having posited the one, he had said that it participated in reality, the reasoning would be strange. However, since, having considered the one as a subject,¹ he (= Plato) says that it participates in reality, we must understand that this is because it is no longer the one in its purity, and that the property of being is altered when it is added to the one, of which Plato affirms that it [10] participates in reality. It is as if, in the definition that explains what man is, one took “animal” to be the subject and said that it [sc. “animal”] participates in “rational,” although man, insofar as he forms a unity, is a “rational animal,” “animal” being altered by being added [15] to “rational,” and “rational” being altered by being added to “animal.” The same holds true in the case of the one. The one is altered when it is in reality, and reality is altered when it is in the one. This is the same as to say that there is no juxtaposition (παράθεσις) between “one” and “being,” otherwise the one would be the subject and being would be like an accident.

[20] In fact, one finds [in it] the property of a hypostasis that imitates the simplicity of the one, but does not remain within the purity of the one, and

1. Such is the translation of ὑποθεῖς and ὑπερβαλῶν.

which, at the same time, leads the one towards being to unite with it.² It therefore follows that the second one is not the first one, [25] that it does not depend on anything other than the first one, that it is certainly not identical to the first one, since in that case it would not be different from the first one, and would not derive from it; that it is not separate from it, although it comes from it, and that it does not receive the cause of its procession from anything else. In fact, because it comes from it, it is certainly one as well [30]. And because it (= the second one) is not this one (= the first), this whole that it constitutes is “one-that-is,”³ whereas the first remains “one.”

For how could “one” change that “one,” if the first was not the pure one, while the second is not the pure one? This is why the second one is the first and, at the same time, is not the first: what is after something else and derives from that thing [35] is, in a certain sense, that from which it comes and after which it is situated. And it is [XII] also something else, which not only is not that from which it comes, but is also understood by using opposite predicates.⁴ For instance, the first is one only, whereas the second is one-everything; [5] the first is one deprived of reality, whereas the second is endowed with reality.⁵ Being endowed with reality and being a reality is what Plato has designated by saying “to participate in reality,”⁶ not that he first posited being⁷ and then said being participates in reality, but having first posited the one – that is, the one that is a reality⁸ – he said [10] that it participates in reality.⁹

Yet we must not say that the second one comes from the first, for this reason, by participation in the first, that the second is said to be one, since this whole, “being one,” is engendered from the one. And since “being one” was not [15] first engendered in order to be able subsequently to participate in the one, but was engendered from the one that had lowered itself, it was said not that being participated in the one, but that the one participated in being, not because the first element in the couple was being, but because the difference of the second one with regard to the first leads it towards [20] that one that constitutes that sort of whole. For because it is engendered from the first one at a secondary rank, so to speak, this one takes on in addition the fact of being-one.

See whether Plato does not seem to speak a language with a veiled meaning.¹⁰ For the one that is beyond reality and being is neither being nor reality, [25] nor activity; we must rather say that it acts, and that it is pure activity

2. See Porphyry, *Gaur.* 43.30.

3. In Greek, ἓν.

4. Opposite predicates are attributed to the One in the second hypothesis of the *Parmenides*.

5. κάκεινο μὲν ἔν ἀνούσιον, τοῦτο δὲ ἔν ἐνούσιον.

6. I.e., οὐσιῶσθαι / μετέχειν οὐσίας.

7. That is, the second one.

8. οὐσιωμένον ἔν.

9. μετέχειν οὐσίας.

10. On αἰνίσσασθαι, see Brisson 2004, 58–60.

itself,¹¹ so that it is being itself before being. It is by participating in it that the other one receives from it pure being that derives from the first. Pure being is therefore double: [30] the first is an hypostasis prior to being, while the second is that which emerges from the one that is beyond being, and, because it is the transcendent one,¹² that is the idea of being, so to speak. Another one has been engendered by participating in this one, with which the being that is transmitted from the first one is conjugate ...

These two columns deal with participations, but from two different points of view: horizontal and vertical.

As we can see in Plato's *Parmenides*, "to participate" means "to be considered as a part with (σύν)," or "to form a whole (ὅλον) with." The expression "the one (that is, the second one) participates in reality" must be interpreted in the sense that "one (ἓν)" and "being (ὄν)" constitute a whole (ὅλον). This refers us to the Stoic theory of total mixture, which, on an ontological as well as on a logical level, implies an opposition between fusion (σύγχυσις) and juxtaposition (παράθεσις). Whereas the term παράθεσις is found in XI, 18, the term σύγχυσις does not appear in the columns studied here, but we should note the frequency of composites with συν- as the first term in these columns. In juxtaposition (παράθεσις), the components are associated without modifying one another reciprocally; they can therefore be separated without being destroyed; a pile of wheat is a good example of this type of mixture. On an ontological level, accidents juxtaposed to the subject can disappear without entailing the disappearance of the subject in which they are situated. In fusion (σύγχυσις), on the other hand, the components are reciprocally modified and form a new unity, which is indissoluble; they cannot therefore be separated without being destroyed; for instance, a mixture of water and wine, or a medicine obtained by mixing two kinds of liquids. On a logical level, the parts of a definition are so closely connected that the disappearance of one of the elements entails the disappearance of the unity they constitute. Following the example set forth by the commentator, there is a fusion between genus (animal) and species (rational) in the definition of man. In short, animality and rationality are fused in a total mixture to constitute the unity known as man. The same holds true for "the one-that-is." To say that the one participates in reality means that the one forms a whole that results from the fusion of two elements, "one" and "being," where each of the two elements is altered by the other and constitutes a unity in which one of the components cannot disappear without the other disappearing as well.

Participation in Plato can be horizontal, as in the *Sophist*, where the great kinds, which are Ideas and must therefore all be on the same level, participate among themselves: motion and rest participate in being insofar as they have being

11. Aubry 2006, 211–58.

12. My paraphrase for ἀπόλυτον.

as a predicate, where they commune with it and where being is mixed with them; and this is also the case here with “the-one-that-is.” But participation can also be vertical, following a specific interpretation of the famous formula of the *Republic* concerning the Good (6.509a9–c10). In this case, participation involves elements that are situated at different levels, or hypostases, as is the case in Plotinus. The second one imitates the first one, although it does not exhibit its purity. However, this fusion can only be explained if one allows for two hypostases, where the second one participates in the first, that is, imitates the simplicity of the first without maintaining itself in its purity.

If the second one is modified by being, this means that it cannot be the one that nothing can alter. In fact, the formula from the *Parmenides* reveals a distinction of level between the first and the second one. The second one is therefore not identical to the first one, although it depends on it; it participates in it, since it imitates it, albeit imperfectly. In this context, we must admit that “one” and “being” form a new unity that is a new hypostasis, “the one-that-is,” which imitates the first hypostasis—that is, the one in the proper sense of the word—while making it real by adding reality to it. The one that is linked to reality is no longer the first one that remains in itself in its simplicity. However, this second one is “one,” according to the principle that what comes from something else is, in some way, that other thing from which it comes. It still remains to be explained why the second one differs from the first. Although it comes from the pure one, “the one-that-is” must receive its reality from its source. The phrase “the one participates in reality” thus signifies in fact that the second one participates in the first, not in the sense that the first is a reality or being, but because the second becomes “the one-that-is” by participating in the first one, which for its part transcends being.

We must therefore understand that this phrase “the one participates in reality,” exhibits a twofold meaning, according to the perspective adopted. The second-ranking one participates in the first-ranking one, which is pure being, prior to being, because it is the idea of being. Here we find ourselves in a context reminiscent of Numenius,¹³ for whom the second intellect, the demiurge, is good because he participates in the first intellect, who is the Idea of the Good. In proposing this interpretation, the commentator understands participation as the reception of a form communicated by something higher. But this definition of participation cannot be applied as such to the relation of the first to the second one, because the second one does not play the role of matter that receives a form. We must not think that the second one exists because of a form of being it receives from the first one, for the first is nothing but one; and the second participates in the first one only insofar as it is engendered by it. If the second one becomes the “one-that-is” by receiving the idea of being from the first, how comes it that the second one is not as such “not-being”? Whence does being, or

13. Frg. 20 = Eusebius, *Praep. ev.* 11.22.10.

reality, accrue to it? It can only obtain it from the first one. This amounts to associating the first one with the idea of being, with being, and with pure activity, and consequently, as we shall see, with intelligizing and living in the context of the triad of being, life, and thought. We have here an argumentation akin to the one that turned god into absolute knowledge in fragment II (V, 34–VI, 4). Just as the relation linking intellect and intelligible presupposes, prior to it, an intellection that is nothing but intellection, so the relation that links the second one to being presupposes a state in which “to be” is neither predicate nor subject, but pure activity. Here we encounter an idea that Proclus attributes to Numenius,¹⁴ for whom the first intellect contents itself with thinking, whereas the second, which is the demiurge, works according to the contents of the thought of the first. More generally, since the second is produced by the first, and receives everything from it, its characteristics must be found in an eminent way, as pure activity, in the first one. For this is true not only of being, but also of intelligizing and living, as the commentator explains in what follows.

This interpretation is rejected by Plotinus, for it is in the first One that the second one participates, and not in being,¹⁵ as P. Hadot rightly observes. From this point, however, Hadot tries to show that this departure from Plotinus is an additional indication of the fact that the author of the commentary is Porphyry, who, on the question of the relation between the Intellect and the Intelligible, was still influenced by Middle Platonism,¹⁶ particularly on the level of vocabulary.¹⁷ I do not believe it is necessary to make this hypothesis. 1) The argument stops brutally and we cannot reasonably think that this interpretation of the relation of the Intellect to the One was criticized in what followed. 2) Such an interpreta-

14. In *Tim.* 3:103,28–32 Diehl = frg. 22.

15. See *Enn.* 5.5 [32].4, 15.

16. See *Vit. Plot.* 18.

17. The position being criticized seems to present things as follows on the level of vocabulary. The second One is presented as a being that participates in reality (τὸ ὄν μετέχειν οὐσίας, XII, 7, 8). This is why it is said to be endowed with reality (ἐνούσιον, XII, 5, 6 or οὐσιωμένον, XII, 9), that is, to be a reality (οὐσιῶσθαι, XII, 6); elsewhere, it is qualified several times as a reality (οὐσία: XI, 5, 6, 10, 16, 17; XII, 7, 10, 23, 24). For its part, the first One is described as follows: “For the one that is beyond reality and being (ἐπέκεινα οὐσίας καὶ ὄντος) is neither being (ὄν) nor reality (οὐσία), nor activity (ἐνέργεια); we must rather say that it acts (ἐνεργεῖ), and that it is pure activity itself (τὸ ἐνεργεῖν καθαρὸν), so that it is being itself (αὐτὸ τὸ εἶναι) before being (πρὸ τοῦ ὄντος). It is by participating in it that the other one receives from it pure being (τὸ εἶναι) deriving from the first. Pure being (τὸ εἶναι) is therefore double: the first is an hypostasis prior to being (προϋπάρχει τοῦ ὄντος), while the second is that which emerges from the one that is beyond being (ἐπέκεινα τοῦ εἶναι), and, because it is the transcendent one (τὸ ἀπόλυτον), that is the idea of being (ιδέα τοῦ ὄντος), so to speak” (XII, 23–33). It is pure being (εἶναι: XI, 9, 23; XII, 12, 13, 21, 26, 28, 29–30, 31–33, 35) and therefore deprived of reality (ἀνούσιον; XII, 5). Yet this is the position being criticized by the commentator who, for his part, seems to place ὄν and οὐσία on the same level.

tion implies that there is a certain reciprocity between the One and the Intellect that derives from it, and therefore everything found in the Intellect should also be found in a higher form in the One. But no trace of this reciprocity will be found either in Plotinus or in any later Neoplatonist. Moreover, this reciprocity is denied at the end of column XIII: "This activity, in contrast, is not the activity of anything else, and that is why it has no form nor name nor even reality. For it is not dominated by anything else; in fact, it does not receive its form from anything else, since it is truly impassible, and truly inseparable from itself, being neither intellection nor intelligible nor reality, but beyond them all, and the unconditioned cause of them all" (XII, 16–23). 3) The commentator introduces the next lines with these words: "See whether Plato does not seem to speak a language with a double meaning" (XII, 22–23). He thereby implies that he cannot accept an interpretation that finds in the text of Plato's *Parmenides* the same type of language as that used by the poets. Yet this kind of interpretation had already been rejected by the commentator: "For even if we heard said of him one of the 'attributes that belong to him,' as they say, and even if we were to reascend by means of examples borrowed from the things down here below, transposing them and understanding them in another way to obtain some concept of him, it nevertheless remains true that these interpreters themselves, going back once again on what they have just said, consider that not only must we not pay attention to what is said directly ..." (X, 2–XI, 2) In other words, the commentator refuses to make the text say what it does not say, by hypothesizing that Plato is using a language with a double meaning.

After an interruption of indeterminate length, the commentator, who has just discussed the end of the first hypothesis (142b5–6) and hence the One, moves on to the beginning of the second hypothesis, that is, the "one that is."

XIII ...unable to enter into itself. For by what does it see itself, this intellect¹⁸ that cannot enter into itself, unless by means of the one?¹⁹ And by what does it see itself, as being that into which it cannot enter? What is this intellect [5] which, remaining the same, is in contact with both of them apart? What is this intellect which says that what intelligizes and what is intelligized are different? What is this intellect that sees when it is possible that what is carrying out an act of intelligence is united with what is intelligized, and when it is not possible? It is quite obvious that [10] this activity is different from these other activities, that it is at a higher level than all the others, that it uses them as instruments, and that it is in contact with all of them, while remaining the same and not being in any of them.

Indeed, each of these other activities is [15] attached to something and is assigned to this thing completely, both according to its form and according to

18. The second hypostasis.

19. The element "one" corresponding to the One itself.

its name. This activity, in contrast, is not the activity of anything else, and that is why it has no form nor name nor even reality. For it is not dominated²⁰ by anything else; in fact, it does not receive its form from anything else, since it is [20] truly impassible, and truly inseparable from itself, being neither intellection nor intelligible nor reality, but beyond them all, and the unconditioned cause of them all.

Therefore, just as vision does not come into contact with something audible, nor hearing with something visible, and [25] neither of them with something tasty, just as each of these powers is unaware of the fact that it is different from any other – that the audible is different from the visible, for example –, and just as there is another power that is completely superior to them, makes distinctions between their objects, knows with what they are identical [30] and from what they are different, and sees what their reality is and by what they are affected, just as this power can be in contact with all of the others and can use them as instruments, because it is better and superior to them, in the same way one could say that the power [35] by virtue of which the intellect, unable [XIV] to return within itself,²¹ has the capacity to see, is different from intellection and intelligible perception, and “is situated beyond these in majesty and in power.”²²

And thus, [5], although it is one and simple, this “itself” is nevertheless different from itself by its activity and its existence. From one viewpoint, it is one and simple, and from another, it differs from itself, for what differs from the one is no longer one, and what is [10] other than the simple is no longer simple. This power is therefore one and simple, when considered according to its initial element, that is, according to the element of²³ the one “itself” taken in itself; and this remains true whatever the name may be that must be used to indicate that it is something ineffable²⁴ and inconceivable. [15] But it is neither one nor simple, when considered according to existence, life, and thought. According to existence, what intelligizes is also what is intelligized, but when the intellect has emerged from existence to become what intelligizes, in order to return [20] towards the intelligible and to see itself, it is life. This is why, considered according to life, the intellect is undetermined. And since existence, life, and thought are all acts, one could say that considered according to existence, this activity is immobile; considered according to intellection, it is an activity turned towards itself, [25], and finally, considered according to life, it is an activity that has emerged from existence (XIII, 1–XIV, 26).

The sixth fragment (col. XIII–XIV) seeks to interpret the following phrase from the second hypothesis: “Well then! In itself, this one, of which we were saying that

20. In Porphyry, *Sentences*, κρατεῖν is often used with this meaning.

21. See above.

22. πρεσβεία καὶ δυνάμει (*Resp.* 6.509b–g). See Brisson 2005, 1–17.

23. In ancient Greek, ἰδέα.

24. See Plotinus, *Enn.* 5.5 [31].6.24–25.

it has a share in reality, when we grasp it exclusively and by itself through reflection, apart from that in which we say it participates, will it, at least in this case, appear to be one exclusively?—One, at least in my view” (143a5–9). The question, for Plato, is whether, within the formula “one-that-is,” we can isolate the element “one.”

For the commentator, however, the question is different: is this One, the second One, one or many? It is one insofar as it can be taken by itself, and many insofar as it is associated with being. In an initial moment, Intellect and Intelligible are blended in an identity that is pure being; in a second moment, the Intellect externalizes itself in order to see itself. At this moment, it becomes life and absence of limitation; and in a third moment, the Intellect returns to itself, and this is the moment of intellection. In its first state, the Intellect cannot return within itself, because it is perfectly simple and is an original state of indivisibility and unity. It thus coincides, in a sense, with the first One. In its second state, however, the Intellect unfolds in a movement of emergence, in the form of life, and of return, in the form of thought.

The activity in which the Intellect that cannot return into itself consists, exhibits an absolute preeminence. In order to make this situation understandable, the commentator has recourse to the example of the common sense, a recourse to sensation which recalls the allusion to the perception of colors in column IX. Each particular sense perceives only the sensible object that is proper to it, and cannot perceive the agreement between the different senses and their objects. A power is therefore necessary that can perceive their agreements and their differences: this is the common sense, which founds the possibility of sense perception. Likewise, the Intellect that cannot return within itself founds the possibility of movement by which the Intellect grasps itself as both Intellect and Intelligible.

The commentator thus distinguishes two moments in the Intellect: the first, in which the Intellect is in a state of absolute simplicity and seems to be blended with the One itself (corresponding to the element “one,” whereas the second (corresponding to the element “being”) emerges from itself in order to return to itself. This doctrine recalls that of Numenius, as has been noted above. Plotinus, who had once accepted it (*Enn.* 3.9 [13].1.15–18), rejects it in his treatise *Against the Gnostics* (*Enn.* 2.9 [33].1.26 and 33; and 6.19). By this doctrine, it seems that the commentator wished to account for the procession of the intellect, by making the first moment coincide with the intellect “that cannot return within itself.” This intellect sees or enunciates the agreement between subject and object. In its primitive state, the intellect is blended with this transcendent activity. Consequently, in its state of realization, the intellect that has become subject or object corresponds to a second moment. Once again, the commentary breaks off brutally, but we may suppose that the commentator criticized this way of envisaging the Intellect, and aligned himself with the Plotinian theses.

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SUBJECT-NAME INDEX

- Abramowski, L. 7, 19, 155n77, 197n4, 197n6, 204, 206n14, 207, 209, 209n17, 209n18, 209n19, 210, 210n20, 211n22, 211n24
- absolute/relative 12, 29, 34, 40n6, 56, 57, 58, 101, 139, 251, 253
- Adamas 173
- Autogenes 132, 142, 142n30, 142n32, 143, 143n35, 143n36, 144n37, 144n38, 146, 173, 177, 178, 190, 190n37, 224, 228
- Alcinous 9, 14, 19, 72, 140n25, 148, 148n48, 149, 149n56, 235n18, 235n19, 248, 251, 252, 253, 254, 256
- allegorical interpretation 235n16, 238, 238n37, 267, 269n50
- Allen, J. P. 126n7
- Allen, R. E. 32, 57n33, 57n34
- Alpigiano, C. 148n49
- Amelius 3, 11, 12, 18, 30, 32, 65, 77n31, 133, 133n4, 137n13, 140n25, 142, 142n31, 155n77, 228n40, 238n36, 240
- 3 kings or demiurges 137n18
- 8-level interpretation of hypotheses 140n25
- Ammonius of Alexandria
- historical personality of 93-94, 113
- and Plutarch 93-95
- Ammonius of Alexandria, speech of in *The E at Delphi*
- against the absolute clarity of sense perceptions 97
- alleged Eudorean background of 94, 104-106
- compared with Plutarch's *Against Colotes* 94, 100-101, 108-10
- critique of solar theology 101-2
- echoes of Plato's *Parmenides* 94, 103, 110-12
- form and argument of 94-102
- Heraclitean features 95, 97, 105n17, 110, 112-13
- indebtedness to the historical Parmenides 94, 99, 103, 108-10, 112-13
- "Pythagorean" features of 104-7
- reliance on Platonic ontology and epistemology 94, 96-98, 100-104, 110-14
- role in the dialogue 94-95, 112
- structured as *epicheireme* 95-96, 103
- time and eternity in 98-99, 103
- analogy 17, 101n14, 103, 202, 237, 238, 240
- Anonymous *Parmenides* Commentary 146, 229-41, and the Chaldaean Oracles 233-39, and Aristotle's *Categorias* 233-56
- apocalypse 132, 133, 133n4, 179
- Anaxagoras 23
- Arcesilaus 5, 108, 113
- Aristides 148, 148n49

- Aristotle 1, 4, 9, 13, 14, 35, 36, 37, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44n12, 45, 45n12, 46, 46n13, 47, 47n15, 47, n16, 48n18, 49, 49n19, 49n22, 50n24, 51, 51n25, 52, 53n27, 58, 63, 64, 67, 67n2, 68, 68n6, 79, 79n1, 80, 81, 81n11, 84, 88, 88n18, 89, 89n19, 89n20, 89n21, 90, 95, 98n7, 105, 116, 116n2, 117, 118, 121, 127n13, 134n8, 135n13, 143, 143nn36, 156, 156n78, 156n79, 243, 245n2, 247, 248, 248n14, 249, 252n21, 253, 254, 254n22, 256, 259n5, 260n10, 268n43, 274n65
categories 243–56
- Armstrong, A. H. 5n27, 71, 133n4, 164, 249
- Athanasius 16, 224n37, 243
- Atticus 9, 19, 149, 251, 253–54
- attributes 5, 100, 140n25, 149, 197, 202, 204, 206, 207, 228, 228n40, 235, 235n23, 240, 241, 269, 269n51, 270, 271, 271n56, 272, 273, 273n63, 280
- Attridge, H. W. 179n10
- Aubry, G. 65n34, 277n11
- Augustine 7, 160, 210n20, 222
- autarchy 184
- Autogenes 132, 142, 142n30, 142n32, 143, 143n35, 143n36, 143n37, 143n38, 162, 173, 177, 178, 190, 190n37, 224, 228
- Babut, D. 98n6
- Baltes, M. 261n16, 269, 272, 272n12
- Barbelo, Aeon of 132, 142–43, 143n37, 150, 169–71, 176–78, 182–85, 190–91, 224–29
and Hecate 228
- Barry, C., W.-P. Funk, P.-H. Poirier, and J. D. Turner 133n5, 149n54, 179n11, 181n18, 182n21, 183n23, 184n30, 184n31, 185n34, 188, 195, 203n8, 203n15, 203n16
- Basilides 141, 148
- Basil of Ancyra 243
- Basil of Caesarea 14, 16, 35
- Baeumker, A. 268n45, 270
- Bechtle, G. 2, 3, 7, 9, 10, 12, 14, 18, 19, 26, 27, 29, 30, 43n11, 57n33, 59n1, 142n30, 146, 146n43, 155n77, 215n8, 229n43, 233n1, 257n1, 259n7, 260, 260n8, 261n14, 262n16, 267, 268n42, 269, 269n48, 269n49, 269n52, 271, 271n58, 271n59, 272, 272n60
- Beierwaltes, W. 261n15, 264n25
- being, unity of 34, 70, 71, 87, 104n17, 135, 139, 144n37, 148, 152n66, 282
absolute 163, 165, 166, 230
absolute existence of the One 230, 231
idea of 163, 230, 257
in Ammonius's speech 99–100, 102–3, 110–12
in the historical Parmenides 99, 108–10
infinitival vs participial 146, 163, 227, 231
in Plato's *Parmenides* 111–12
and non-being, modes of 156nn79–80
and plurality in the *Sophist* 108–9
- Being-Life-Mind triad 6, 8, 15, 18, 146, 151–53, 158, 159, 163, 213, 228
- Bertier, J. 73n21
- Blumenthal, H. J. 116n2, 143n36
- Boedecker, D. 220n28
- Boethius 14
- Bonazzi, M. 94n2
- Brandwood, L. 25
- Brankaer, J. 7, 176n8, 181n15, 194
- Brenk, F. E. 93n1, 108n23, 111n24
- Brisson, L. 27, 28, 31, 32

- Brittain, C. 93
 Broek, R. Van den 148n48
 Buck, A. de, and A. H. Gardiner 126n7
 Burnet, J. 259n7

 Cappadocians 9, 14, 15, 16, 35
 Cazalais, S. 258n3
 Chaldean Father-Power-Intellect triad
 152, 154, 158, 221–29, 268, 270,
 274
 Chaldaean Oracles 213–23
 Charrue, J. M. 10
 Cherniss, H. 25
 Clement of Alexandria 2, 9, 15, 19,
 140n25, 148, 148n50, 149, 224n37,
 230n45, 251–53
 Cornford, F. M. 27, 29, 32, 33
 Corrigan, K. 2, 7, 9–12, 16, 17, 18, 30,
 155, 155nn76 & 77, 195, 196n3,
 255, 256, 257n1
 Corrigan, K./Glazov-Corrigan, E.
 35n2
 Cousin, V. 122, 140n25, 151n63,
 259n7, 260n9, 261n15, 274n64
 criterion (of truth) 9, 48, 108, 236n29,
 239
 Cronius 9, 149, 155, 155n77, 238
 Crum, W. E. 203

 Damascius 2, 3, 10, 13, 14, 35, 43n9,
 44, 45, 46, 48, 51n25, 55n28, 59n2,
 61, 122, 123n6, 214n5, 215n9,
 217n11, 222n31, 259n5, 266n37,
 267n39, 274, 274n65
 Dancy, R. M. 68n3
 de Falco, V. 230n45
 demonstration 27, 94, 236, 251n19
 dialectic 13, 15, 24–35, 68, 90, 95,
 101n13, 194, 252, 264, 267, 274
 elenctic dialogue 72
 and gymnastic 28
 and ideas 33
 logical exercise 72
 by negation in *Parmenides* 26
 syllogistic 72
 in *Republic* 27, 31
 Diehl, E. 155n77, 264n25, 279n14
 Diels, H. 40, 72, 81, 105, 115, 117, 118,
 121, 134n7, 135n11, 136, 136n14,
 136n15, 215n7, 268n43
 Diels-Kranz 99, 105, 109, 127, 127n11,
 132n3
 Diès, A. 32
 Dillon, J. M. 3, 10, 13, 14, 15, 30, 59n4,
 67n1, 68, 77n30, 77n31, 93n1,
 108n23, 115n1, 135nn9 & 13,
 151n63, 218, 219, 219n18, 220,
 220n27, 223n35, 236n33, 250n17,
 255, 256, 256n26, 259n7
 Diotima 13, 35
 direct grasp 235n17
 Dodds, E. R. 5, 10, 63n29, 70n13, 72,
 115, 115n1, 116, 119, 123, 128,
 140n25, 148, 152n68, 153n69, 161,
 162
 Donini, P. 93n1, 99n9, 105n17,
 108n23, 113n26
 Dositheus 174
 dyad, indefinite 4, 33, 39, 52, 56, 57,
 62, 63, 64, 69, 70–75, 79–92, 162,
 220, 224
 in Eudorus 105–6
 great and small 57
 intelligible matter 70
 material principle 56, 73, 89
 Old Academy 106
 and the One 39, 64, 69, 71, 75,
 81–92, 94, 105, 124
 and otherness 100, 106, 107
 Plato's metaphysics 89–92
 in Plutarch 94, 100–101
 and principles of being 33, 39, 62,
 70, 82–92, 105, 124, 135
 in the “Pythagoras” of Sextus
 Empiricus 107
 in the *Pythagorean Notebooks* 106
 self-deprivation 136n14, 137

- Edmunds, L. 40n4
 Edwards, M. J. 13, 15, 16, 18, 155n77
 emanation 5, 8, 115n28, 136n15, 158,
 159, 176, 204, 216n10, 223n35,
 228, 232
 Empedocles 23, 108, 118
 Eudorus of Alexandria 2, 5, 6, 18,
 30, 84, 94, 94n2, 104, 104n17,
 105, 106, 106n18, 107, 113, 134,
 135n11, 136n15, 248n14, 254
 metaphysics of 94, 104–6
 Existence. *See* ὑπαρξις
- Ferrari, F. 93n1, 100n10
 Festa, N. 42n9, 23, 77, 135n11
 Festugière, A. J. 115n1, 122n5, 135n9,
 143n34, 215n7
 Finamore, J. F. 13, 128n14, 181n17,
 193
 Firmus, Castricius 11
 Forms, theory of 3, 4, 23, 27, 28, 29,
 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 63, 67, 71, 72,
 75, 75n24, 76, 80, 81, 82, 88, 90,
 100n10, 106, 110, 120, 121, 123,
 124, 125, 126, 127, 134, 135, 136,
 136n4, 136n15, 137, 138, 139n25,
 140, 143, 161, 166, 213n4, 214,
 215n7, 217n12, 219, 219n21, 221,
 228, 229
 immanent 104n17, 122, 125
 mathematical 264
 Freud, S. 24
- Gaiser, K. 80, 80n5, 81, 81n9, 81n10,
 81n11, 81n12, 82, 82n13, 82n14
 Garrett, A. 116
 Glucker, J. 93n1
 Gnostics 233–41
 Good (see also One) 11, 49, 50n24,
 50n25, 51n25, 89, 134, 148,
 159n84, 162, 164, 218, 219n22,
 253, 264n25, 278, 281n22
 One prior to 53n27
- Plato's lecture on 4, 80, 82
 in the *Republic* 31, 89, 101n14,
 134, 148, 278
 goodness 49, 50, 74, 101, 105, 161,
 162, 169, 185, 186, 226, 236n33,
 278
 principle of non-goodness 49, 50,
 50n25, 6, 74
 Graeser, A. 3, 38n3
 Gregory of Nyssa 14, 16, 35
 Guérard, C. 263n22
 Guthrie, W. K. C. 25, 27, 28, 29, 31
- Hecate 8, 213, 213n2, 214, 218,
 218n14, 218n15, 219, 219n18,
 219n19, 219n20, 220, 220n25,
 220n28, 221, 222, 226, 227, 228,
 229, 234n5, 238
 Hadot, P. 2, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 18, 30,
 65, 140n25, 146, 146n43, 149,
 149n54, 153n71, 154, 155n77,
 156n78, 156n79, 159n85, 163,
 176n7, 195, 195n2, 197n6, 202,
 205, 206, 206n13, 207, 209,
 215n6, 222, 222n32, 227, 230n44,
 231, 231n47, 240, 240n38, 243,
 244, 245ns1–5, 246ns6–10,
 247, 247ns11–13, 257, 257n1,
 258ns6–7, 260, 260ns8–9, 260n12,
 261ns15–16, 262n16, 263n19,
 266n30, 269, 269n48, 270, 271,
 271n56, 271n58, 273, 279
 Halfwassen, J. 30, 68n3, 70n14
 Harder, R. 75n24
 Hayduck, M. 80, 81, 122, 123
 Hegel, G. W. F. 28, 34
 Heiberg, J. L. 118, 121
 Heinze R. 79, 81n9
 Heitsch, E. 40n4
 henad 52, 150n58, 168, 169, 171, 183,
 184, 185, 189. *See also* monad
 henology 173–94
 Henry, P. and P. Hadot 231n47

- Heraclitus 23, 95, 99, 103, 105n17,
110, 112, 113
- Hoffmann, P. 128, 137n16, 254n23,
259n5
- hymn 173–78
- hypostasis 60, 76, 135, 138, 143n36,
146, 150, 151, 166, 169, 170, 177,
192, 226, 230, 258, 261, 266n38,
275, 277, 278, 279n17, 280n18
- hypotheses (of the second part of the
Parmenides) 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 11, 12,
13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 28, 30, 31–32,
33, 38n3, 40n5, 53, 54, 55n28, 56,
58, 62, 68n7, 69, 69n11, 70, 71, 72,
74, 75, 77, 77n31, 78, 85, 85n17,
86, 88, 111, 111n25, 135, 135n12,
135n13, 137, 138, 139, 139n25,
140n25, 141, 144n38, 146, 146n42,
147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 154n71,
160, 162, 178, 181, 195, 208,
208n16, 212, 214, 217, 229, 230,
233n1, 237, 238, 240, 252, 255,
256, 259, 259n7, 264n24, 265n26,
274n64, 275, 276n4, 279, 280, 281
- affirmative/negative 31–32, 77
- and hypostases 3, 11, 135
- ontological value 4–6, 13–14, 67,
77
- Intellect 9, 18, 27, 146–60, 161–90,
213–33, 234–42, 243–74, 275–82
- Being-life-Intellect 6, 18, 146,
151, 152, 153, 158, 159, 163,
213, 228
- Chaldean Father-Power-Intellect
152, 154, 158, 221–29, 268, 270,
274
- contemplating-contemplated 228
- demiurgic 139, 215, 217, 218, 220,
221, 222
- divine 6, 100, 132, 146, 224, 225,
231
- and Hecate 214, 218, 220, 238
- human 97, 235
- intellection 65, 72, 103, 110, 112,
157, 158, 163, 169, 235, 236,
259, 263, 266, 274, 279, 281
- monadic/triadic 154n72
- paternal 216n10, 221–24, 226
- and Plotinus 28, 70, 76
- as second hypothesis 135
- supra-intellective knowledge
274n68
- three intellects 238
- universal 228
- intelligible world 13
- Irenaeus 31, 133, 224n37
- Inwood, B. 105n17
- Isaac, D. 274n65
- Isnardi Parente, M. 60n11, 61n19,
62n26
- Jacoby, F. 64n33
- Iamblichus 3, 6, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 30,
42n9, 43n10, 48n18, 51n26, 61, 63,
68, 68n5, 73n20, 77n31, 135n13,
137n17, 215n9, 230n45, 230n46,
241, 246n8, 256
- Johnson, S. I. 220n27
- Jones, C. P. 93n1
- Jufresa, M. 148n48
- Kalbfleisch, K. 259n5
- Kalligas, P. 94n2
- Kalyptos 132, 142, 142n30, 142n32,
143, 143n33, 143n35, 148n38, 156,
158, 162, 185, 190, 190n37, 224,
228
- Karfik, F. 254n23
- Kern, O. 61n18
- King, K. L. 191n41
- Klibansky, R., and Ch. Labowsky
42n9, 43n10, 47n15, 48n18,
50n23, 62n24, 62n27, 69
- Krämer, H.-J. 73n21, 80, 135n9
- Kroll, W. 125, 135n11, 136n14, 146,

- Kroll, W. *cont'd*
 146n43, 155n27, 248, 257n1, 259,
 261n16, 262n16
- Lambert, W. G. 127n9
- Lamberz, E. 123n6, 259n5, 266n30
- Layton, B., and J. S. Sieber 179n11,
 180n13, 181n19, 182n21, 184n31,
 184n32, 185n33, 185n34, 195, 197
- Lernould, A. 10, 37, 259n5, 264n25,
 274n64
- Linguisti, A. 146, 146n43, 257n1,
 260n8, 261n16, 262n16, 269,
 269n48, 271n55, 273
- Longinus 11, 155n77
- Lucius 9
- Lydus, John 8, 214n4, 218n17, 222,
 227
- MacDermot, V. and C. Schmidt
 156n80
- Majercik, R. 154n73, 155n77, 208n15,
 211n22, 214n4, 216, 216n10,
 217n11, 218n16, 219n19, 222n31,
 223, 223n34, 267n40, 267n41
- matter 11, 28, 60n13, 72n17, 98, 101,
 101n11, 105, 106, 109, 116, 119,
 120, 122, 123, 125, 133, 134, 136,
 137, 138, 139, 139n24, 140n25,
 149, 149n56, 156n80, 161, 162,
 172, 208, 213n2, 215n7, 219, 220,
 221, 222, 278. *See also* indefinite
 dyad, non-being
 archetypal 139n25
 of bodies 120, 125, 127, 139n25,
 140n25
 cosmic hollows 222
 disordered 135
 dyad 137n19, 162
 as evil 120, 138n21, 161
 indefinite quantity 119, 139n25
 intelligible 70, 88, 156n80, 161,
 220
- kinds of 139n25
 as monad 125
 other than the One 88
 prime 121, 125, 220
 receptacle 134
 shadow 120, 121, 122, 137,
 139n25
 variegated 220, 221
- Mazzarelli, C. 94n2, 105
- Meinwald, C. 26, 27, 30, 33
- Merlan, P. 42n9, 46n14, 115n1
- Metry, A. 40n4, 40n6, 47n15, 56n29
- Middle Platonism 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 18,
 30, 70, 72, 104n17, 105n17, 132,
 134, 135, 137, 140n25, 141n27,
 142, 146, 147, 148, 148n53, 149,
 155, 155n77, 160, 192, 209, 213n2,
 214, 228n40, 233n1, 234n3, 238,
 239, 240, 248, 252, 256, 257n1,
 279.
- Miller, B. 116
- Miller, M. H. 30, 33
- mind. *See* intellect
- Moderatus 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 18, 30, 36,
 70, 72, 73, 73n19, 73n20, 82,
 84, 84n15, 90, 115–28, 136–40,
 154n73, 155n77, 161, 215, 215n7,
 220n27, 223n35, 224n37
- monad 4, 45, 45n12, 46, 51, 73n19,
 83, 84, 105, 106, 107, 107n22, 123,
 125, 135, 136n14, 136n15, 137,
 147, 154n72, 159n84, 166, 177,
 214, 214n4, 215, 216, 216n10, 217,
 218, 221, 223n35, 224n37, 225,
 225n37, 230, 230n44, 230n46
- Moreschini, C. 93n1, 108n23, 259n7
- Morrow, G. R. 30, 151n63, 236n33,
 250n17, 255, 256, 256n26, 259n7
- Mortley, R. 148n48
- Nag Hammadi 6, 15, 131–34, 153, 160,
 179, 194, 195, 223, 224, 240
- Narbonne, J.-M. 173n1

- negative theology 18, 147–48, 164–67, 233–41, 257–74
- Neoplatonism 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18, 19, 24, 27, 28, 30, 32, 33, 34, 45, 50, 55, 63, 64, 65, 70n13, 77, 82, 90, 115n1, 116, 119, 121, 122, 123, 124, 126, 127, 128, 134, 139, 140n25, 144n38, 149, 160, 173, 181, 185, 194, 212, 214, 216, 217n10, 219n19, 223, 234, 237, 238, 241, 244, 258, 275, 280
- Neopythagorean 2–6, 12, 69n10, 73, 82–83, 94, 115–16, 134–40, 223
metaphysical doctrines of 105–7
- Nichomachus of Gerasa 9, 19, 30, 220n27, 223n35, 230n46, 256
- Nicostratus 9
- non-being 3, 15, 44n12, 45, 48, 49, 50, 50n25, 52, 98, 99, 100, 101, 102, 103, 107, 110, 111, 161, 266, 278
absolute 137, 261
and being 156
beyond being 3, 156
quantitative 137
and the One 48n18, 148
Parmenidean 110
and Platonism 50n25
potentiality 49n19
and otherness 103, 111
relative 136, 161
types 59n4
- Nous* see Intellect
- Numenius 1, 6, 9, 10, 12, 73n20, 75n24, 107n22, 114n27, 123, 124, 133n5, 134n5, 137–49, 152, 153, 153n69, 155n77, 162, 195, 195n2, 201, 206, 213, 214, 217, 220n27, 228n40, 275–82
- O'Brien, D. 259n7
- Old Academy 1, 2, 5, 31, 38n3, 58, 70, 77, 79, 81, 105, 113
- O'Meara, D. J. 143n36, 257, 266n37, 273n63
- One, the *passim*. See also unity
All-perfect ones 143n37, 168
beyond being 5, 7, 9, 12, 18, 68, 120, 126, 197, 214, 217, 257
difference, principle of 88
first and second 6–8, 18, 136–37, 208, 212, 230
hidden ones 191n39, 191n41
and hypotheses 9, 14, 69, 70, 71, 75, 77–78, 240, 256
Invisible Spirit 225, 227
Moderatus 161–62, 223n35
Neoplatonic 10, 27, 70, 126
neutral conception (Speusippus) 37–58
non-existent ones 156n80
as number 3, 71–72, 234n12
Numenius 137–39, 162
one/dyad as elements 105, 106
one-being 70, 71, 72, 72n16, 75, 88, 93–114, 117, 135n13, 136n15, 230–31
one-in-being 62
oneness 7, 65, 69–70, 71, 83–84, 88
one vs other ones 181, 193
others 3, 32, 77, 85–86
other (s) than the one 4, 85–88
participates in being 64, 69
plurality of other ones 57, 58
as point 65
as principle 105, 106
principle higher than 241
second One, generation of 150–51, 279n17
Sethians 140–46, 162–72
solitary 216
third (psychic) one 120, 121, 126, 128
three-in-one 214n4, 216, 223n35
three ones 2, 5, 6, 18, 19, 72, 115, 121, 122

- One, the, *cont'd.*
 triple-powered 8, 156, 208n16,
 213, 223, 224, 225–27, 231n48
 as unit 62, 65, 234n12
 unknowable 6, 18, 224
 Victorinus 131–72, 195–212
 without the one 86–87
- Origen 10, 11, 12, 15, 16, 17, 30, 35
 Origen the Platonist 112n25, 151n63,
 173
- otherness (*heterotês*) 5, 17, 83, 99, 100,
 101, 102, 103, 104, 107, 111, 112,
 135, 147n45, 157, 159n84, 163,
 166, 231, 255, 265
 difference 83, 111
 different senses in Plato 107
 dyadic character 100, 103, 106,
 107
 and the duality of One and Being
 in the *Parmenides* 107, 111–12
 idea in the *Sophist* 100
 and life 159n84, 231
 and monad 107
 in Plutarch's works 100–101
 the principle of becoming (“non-
 being”) in Ammonius's speech
 100, 106–7, 110–11
 in the “Pythagoras” of Sextus
 Empiricus 106–7
 and sameness 157n84, 255
- Owen, G. E. L. 25, 27
- Parmenides of Elea
 in Ammonius's speech 99, 103,
 110, 112–13
 as character in Plato's *Parmenides*
 110, 112
 criticized and praised in the *Soph-
 ist* 108–9
 on the light-dark dichotomy 109–
 10
 Plutarch's interpretation of
 108–10
 on the unity and timelessness of
 Being 99 103, 108–10
- Parmenides* of Plato *passim*
 place in the dialogues 23–36
 in Ammonius's speech 103, 110–12
 and indefinite dyad 70, 85–92
 ontological interpretation of 67–78
 references in Plutarch 110–12,
 111n24
- participation 16, 17, 33, 47n17, 57,
 97n5, 101, 111n24, 121, 135,
 155n77, 163, 178, 192, 219,
 250n17, 275–82
 day analogy 17
 horizontal/vertical 277–78
 idea of being 163
 as rejection of form 278
- Pickard-Cambridge, W. A. 252n21
- Philo 2, 10, 15, 16, 35, 200, 205n11,
 252
- Philolaus 135n11
- Plato *passim*
 influence on Eudorus 105–6
 on non-being and not-being in
 the *Sophist* 100
 Otherness in the *Sophist* and *Par-
 menides* 100, 103, 107, 111–12
 and the sun-analogy in the
Republic 101–3
 two orders of reality in the
Timaeus 96, 100, 103, 112
 on the world-soul in the
Timaeus 100
- pleroma 177, 178, 179, 194
- Pleše, Z. 5, 94
- Plotinus 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11,
 12, 13, 17, 19, 28, 30, 36, 59n4,
 60n10, 60n12, 60n15, 61, 63,
 63n29, 63n30, 64, 65, 67, 70, 72,
 73, 73n20, 74, 74n22, 75, 75n24,
 76n25, 76n26, 77, 77n31, 115,

- 115n1, 122, 123, 133 133n4,
133n5, 134, 134n5, 137, 137n18,
139, 140n25, 141, 142, 142n31,
143, 143n36, 144n38, 146, 146n45,
148n53, 149, 153, 155, 155n77,
160, 164, 172, 173n1, 175, 177,
193, 198, 199, 200, 201, 202, 203,
210, 211, 212, 216, 217n10, 220,
223, 223n36, 225n37, 235n18,
235n19, 236n26, 238n36, 239, 240,
241, 247n13, 248, 248n14, 249,
254, 257, 261n15, 264, 266n37,
266n38, 268n43, 272n61, 278, 279,
280, 281n24
- plurality 3, 7, 11, 15, 31–32, 64, 67, 68,
73, 74, 86, 99, 102, 110, 113, 123,
125, 135, 136, 138, 139, 148, 161,
179, 193, 225, 259, 262n16
- Plutarch of Athens 11, 30
- Plutarch of Chaeronea 5, 93–113,
220n27, 254n23
- against the Stoic concept of time
 98–99
- anti-Epicurean polemic 108–10
- and his teacher Ammonius
 93–95, 113
- on the unity of Platonism 113–14
- Porphyry 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12,
13, 15, 17, 18, 30, 59n3, 59n4, 61,
64, 65, 72n17, 73, 73n20, 77n31,
115, 119, 120, 121, 123, 123n6,
124, 125, 126, 127, 128, 133n4,
133n5, 136, 137n16, 137n18,
139n25, 140n25, 146, 153, 153n69,
153n71, 154, 154n71, 155, 155n77,
156, 160, 161, 179, 180n14, 210,
211, 215n7, 215n9, 217, 217n11,
218n17, 222, 222n31, 223, 227,
230n44, 231, 235n20, 236n26, 240,
243, 244, 245n3, 245n4, 246ns6–
10, 247ns11–12, 248n14, 249, 250,
252n21, 254, 254n22, 257, 259n5,
261n15, 266n30, 276n2, 279,
280n20
- preconception 59n4, 236n29, 263
- principle 59n5
- non-goodness 49, 50, 50n25,
 68n6, 74
- procession 9, 10, 16, 17, 145, 157, 163,
217n10, 223, 225, 231, 231n48,
235n30, 236, 237, 239, 240, 273,
276, 282
- Proclus 1, 2, 3, 6, 9, 10, 11, 13, 17,
19, 25, 28, 29, 29n1, 30, 35, 36,
42n9, 43n9, 43n10, 47n15, 48n18,
50n23, 61, 62, 63, 63n29, 64, 68n6,
68n7, 69n10, 69n11, 70, 72, 75,
77, 96n4, 112n25, 121, 122, 123,
135n10, 135n13, 137n17, 137n18,
138, 140n25, 142n31, 148n53,
152n68, 153, 153n69, 155n77,
156n79, 158n83, 169, 173n1,
214n4, 215n9, 216n9, 216n10,
217n11, 218n17, 221n29, 222n31,
248, 250n17, 251, 252, 254–56,
259n7, 260n9, 260n10, 261n14,
262n16, 262n17, 263n18, 263n20,
263n22, 264n23, 264n24, 264n25,
274, 274n64, 274n65, 279
- Protophanes 132, 142, 142n30,
142n32, 143, 143n36, 143n37,
144n38, 162, 190, 190n37, 224,
228
- Pseudo-Archytas 135n11
- Pseudo-Dionysius 2, 15, 17, 19, 35
- Pythagorean Notebooks* of Alexander
Polyhistor
- metaphysics of 105–7
- “Pythagoras” of Sextus Empiricus
 doctrine of 107
- Rappe, S. 14, 274n65
- Reale, G. 33
- Rist, J. M. 27, 94n2
- Roberge, M. 232n49
- Robinson, J. M. 131n1, 174n2

- Romano, F. 62n28, 94n2
 Roscher, W. H. 220n28
 Ruelle, C. É. 123n6, 214n5, 215n9, 222n31, 230n44
 Runia, D. T. 15, 251, 252
 Runciman, W. G. 27
 Ryle, G. 27, 31
- Saffrey, H. D. 234, 234n2, 257, 268n44, 268n45, 269, 269n48, 270, 271n55, 271n56, 272, 272n61, 273
 Saffrey-Westerink 29, 137n18, 140n25, 148n53, 216n9, 258n17, 259n7, 260n9, 263n18, 263n20, 263n22, 264n24, 274
 Salvation 131n2, 174, 178, 183n23, 194, 214n2, 219n23
 Schenke, H.-M. 175n4, 179n11, 184n29, 184n30, 184n31, 185n33, 185n34
 Sayre, K. M. 25–26, 30, 33
 Scolnicov, S. 32
 seals 6, 193
 Sedley, D. 105n17
 Segonds, A.-P. 64n33
 Self-begotten: cf. *Autogenes* 173, 178, 229
 self-contraction 158
 Sethian Gnosticism 2, 6, 7, 8, 12, 13, 18, 19, 30, 126n7, 131–72, 173–96, 213–32
 Sextus Empiricus 18, 79–91, 107, 230n46, 235n15
 Séguy-Duclot, A. 31, 32
 shadow 120, 121, 122, 137, 139n25, 161, 176, 177
 Sieber, J. 179n11, 180n13, 181n19, 182n21, 184n30, 184n31, 184n32, 185n33, 185n34, 195, 197
 simplicity 10, 14, 55, 60, 61, 64, 65, 68, 119, 145n39, 153n71, 154 154n71, 154n72, 154n74, 167, 168, 171, 180, 181, 182, 182n22, 183, 184, 189, 193, 194, 216, 222, 234, 258, 260, 261, 220, 275, 278, 282
 Simplicius 2, 4, 5, 9, 14, 18, 20, 40, 40n4, 41, 72n17, 81, 81n10, 82, 84, 84n15, 96n4, 105, 115, 115n1, 116–19, 121, 122, 123, 123n6, 124–28, 135n11, 136, 136n14, 136n15, 137, 137n16, 139n25, 140n25, 161, 215n7, 243, 245n1, 245n2, 245n3, 245n5, 246n8, 247n12, 248, 249, 250, 259n5, 268n42
 singleness 183, 185n34, 189, 192,
 singularity 124, 182, 183, 184, 185, 189, 192, 193
 Smith, A. 64n33
 Socrates 17, 23, 25, 26, 27, 32, 34, 35, 36, 76, 80, 90, 108, 109, 112, 113, 175, 194
 Sophia 131n2, 133n5, 172
 Sorabji, R. 119n3, 119n4
 soul 9, 13, 14, 27, 28, 51, 65, 71, 77n29, 77n30, 77n31, 94, 100, 108, 116n2, 121, 126, 135, 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 143n34, 144n38, 156n80, 213–33, 234, 236, 236n33, 239, 254, 263, 272
 and *Autogenes* 143n36
 cosmic 100, 136, 142n32
 decline 133n5, 172
 demiurgic mixing 220
 enlightened 132
 the god over 171
 immortal 27, 113
 individual 14, 27, 143, 143n36, 214n2, 220
 intermediate-level 108
 irrational/rational 138n12, 139n25
 logos in 76n28
 the “one” of 264, 274n65
 passible 138n21
 Plotinian 143

- return of 219, 219n23
 sanctuary of 274
 third "one" 140n2
 transmigration 132
 undescended 6
 universal 14
 unknowing 237
 world soul 4, 75, 100, 135n13,
 138, 138n12, 142n30, 214n2,
 220, 220n25, 220n27, 221,
 221n29, 222
- Speusippus 1, 2, 3, 4, 18, 25, 35, 36,
 37–58, 59–66, 67–78, 134, 135n13,
 137n17, 220n27
 neutral conception 37–58
 ontological interpretation 52–56,
 67–78
 theory of principles 3, 38–58
- Spirit 8, 131n2, 132, 133n5, 141, 142,
 142n30, 142n32, 143n33, 144n33,
 145, 145n41, 147, 149, 150,
 150n60, 151, 152, 154n71, 154n73,
 157, 157n81, 158n84, 159n84, 162,
 166, 167, 168, 169, 170, 171, 173,
 174, 175, 176, 179, 180, 181, 182,
 183, 184, 185, 186, 188, 189, 192,
 193, 194, 197, 197n6, 201, 202,
 203, 205, 206, 207
 Invisible 225, 227
- Steel, C. 3, 42n9, 59, 62n23, 62n25,
 62n27, 63n29, 64, 68n7, 69n10,
 69n11, 218n17, 259n7, 274n27
- Stevens, A. 116
- Stoics 95, 97, 98, 101, 104n17, 228n40,
 236, 236n29, 237, 238–39, 277
 categories 12
 criterion of truth 9
 ἔννοια 59n4
 mixture 277
 physics 12, 127
 quasi-existents 104n17
 spirit 142, 176
 time 98
- substance 17, 71, 76, 98, 106, 121,
 145n39, 172, 249, 250
 beyond 163, 166
 divine 17
 movement 157n81
 negation of 186
 number 71
 sensible 143n34
- substantiality 144, 145n40, 152n64,
 162, 167, 169, 186, 186n36, 207,
 224
 and insubstantiality 177, 207
- Syrianus 11, 13, 14, 30, 77, 115, 125,
 135n11, 136n14, 153n69, 155n77,
 215n9
- Szlezák, T. A. 4, 5, 19, 40n4, 79–91
- Tarán, L. 40n4, 41n8, 42n9, 43n10,
 44, 46n13, 47n15, 48n18, 49n19,
 49n22, 50n23, 50n24, 60n11,
 61n19, 62n26, 64, 67n2, 68, 68n6,
 70n12, 76n26, 135n13
- Tardieu, M. 7, 133n5, 149, 149n54,
 153, 153n71, 155, 155n76, 160,
 185n35, 186n36, 188, 195, 195n2,
 197, 197n5, 197n6, 202, 205,
 205n11, 206n13, 206n14, 207,
 209, 216n10, 223n36, 232n49, 240,
 240n38
- Tarrant, H. 94n2, 139n24, 139n25,
 140n25
- Teodorsson, S.-T. 93n1
- Theiler, W. 75n24, 80, 104n17, 160
- Theodorus of Asine 11, 30
- Theon of Smyrna 95, 223n35, 230n44
- Theophrastus 43, 46n14, 47n15,
 47n16, 50n23
- Thomassen, E. 232n49
- Tommasi, C. O. 211n23
- Tournaire, R. 156n79
- triads
 Being-Life-Mind triad 6, 8, 15,
 18, 146, 151, 152, 153, 158, 159,
 163, 169, 213, 228

- triads, *cont'd.*
 Chaldean Father-Power-Intellect
 152, 154, 158, 221–29, 268, 270,
 274
 Existence, Vitality, and Mentality
 (or Blessedness) 144, 144n38,
 157–58, 169
 Father, Hecate, and the Demiurge
 213
 Triple Male (Child) 143n37
 Triple power(ed) 8, 133, 141n29, 144–
 45, 144n38, 145, nn39–41, 152,
 158, 162, 190, 224–27,
 Tübingen School 31, 33
 Turnbull, R. G. 30, 33
 Turner, J. D. 6, 7, 8, 10, 12, 18, 131,
 132n3, 149n54, 179, 179n11, 180,
 180n14, 182n22, 185, 186n36, 191,
 191n39, 192n43, 192n44, 193,
 195, 195n1, 196n3, 197n5, 197n6,
 199m 202n7, 203, 203n8, 204n9,
 205n11, 205n12, 206n13, 207,
 208n15, 208n16, 220n27, 239, 257

 understanding 50, 55, 85, 235n22, 263,
 264, 265, 266n32, 267
 uniqueness 175, 189
 unity 11, 16, 27, 28, 33, 56, 58, 60n10,
 87, 101, 105, 121, 173–94, 204–8,
 251, 275, 277, 278, 282. *See also*
 One
 absolute (of the One) 121, 123,
 124, 127, 131n2, 135, 136, 138,
 139, 148, 150, 161n64, 166,
 179, 206, 251
 and being 34, 70, 71, 87, 104n17,
 135, 139, 144n37, 148, 152n66,
 282
 concept of 207–8
 contradictions about 72
 degrees of 11
 dialectical 264
 and duality 144n38
 father 215n8
 formal 136n15
 of God 16, 137n19, 139
 and henad 150, 150n58, 168, 169,
 171, 184
 indiscernible 206
 individuation 56
 logos, unitary 136n15
 and plurality 27, 28, 33, 57, 58,
 70, 102, 137, 138, 177, 178, 182,
 185, 189, 251
 of point 65
 progression/regression 73, 73n19,
 136n14, 173
 purity 101, 177
 of spirit 204–6
 and triad 154n73, 154n75,
 157n82, 160, 167, 170, 175,
 176, 177, 189, 190, 215n8, 216
 and triple powers 152n66, 177,
 182, 190, 208
 units 57, 65, 73
 of universe 148
 and unlimited 217n12
 without unity 57–58, 60, 85, 86,
 136, 277
 ὑπαρξίς 146, 147n25, 163, 175, 179,
 179n11, 180, 180n14, 181, 181n15,
 182, 183, 193, 200, 214n5, 217n10,
 230, 230n44, 231
 Usener, H. 268n44, 270

 Valentinus 131, 134n5, 148, 209,
 209n18, 232n49
 Victorinus, Marius 7, 8, 9, 12, 13, 18,
 131–72, 176n7, 185, 186, 189,
 195–212, 234n8, 240, 243, 244
 Vitality 23, 144, 144n38, 145, 145n39,
 145n40, 147n45, 152, 152n64,
 152n65, 152n66, 152n67, 157,
 157n82, 158, 158n84, 159, 162,
 167, 168, 169, 186, 192, 217, 224–
 28, 231, 231n48

- Vlastos, G. 80
Vogel, C. J. de 103n16
Vona, C. 148n49
- Weingartner, R. H. 27
Westerink-Combès 44, 59n2, 62n21,
61n22, 215n9, 217n11, 222n31,
259n5, 266n37, 267n39, 274n65
Whittaker, J. 104n17, 105n17, 140n25,
148, 148n48, 149, 252, 253, 258n5
- Wilpert, P. 79, 80, 81n9, 82
Wolfson, H. A. 148n48
- Xenocrates 64, 67, 73, 79, 95
Xenophanes 23
- Zambo, M. 93n1
Zeno 23, 25, 26, 28, 29, 31, 32, 34, 36,
44n12, 45, 45n12, 72, 112

INDEX LOCORUM

AUCTORES GRAECI ET LATINI	AMELIUS
AETIUS	<i>apud Proclus In Timaeum</i>
	1:306,1-14 142n31
<i>De placitis reliquiae (Stobaei excerpta)</i>	1:309,14-20 142n31
288.1-6 (=1.10.16a5 Diels)	1:431,26-28 142n31
	134n7
ALCINOUS	ANAXIMENES
	<i>Fragmenta (Diels-Kranz)</i>
<i>Didaskalikos (Whittaker-Louis)</i>	A.5.91 127
3 30	ANONYMUS IN PLATONIS PARMENIDEM COMMENTARIUM (ED. HADOT)
6 30, 72	
6.159,34f. 256	frg. I-II 259-64
6.159,43-44 253	frg. II & IV 133n5
10.165.5-17 139n25	frg. III-IV 265-67
10.165.10-13 149n56	frg. IX-X 267-74
10.162,36 149n56	1.3-2.15 44
10.164,28-165,14 148n48	1.5 44
10.165,5-7, 12-16 252	1.6-10 260
ALEXANDER OF APHRODISIAS	1.17 260n10
	1.14-17 262
<i>In Aristotelis Metaphysica commentaria (Hayduk)</i>	1.17-24 44
55.20-56.5 81n11	1.19-20 260n11
56,13-21 80, 81n10	1.22 44
	1.24-2.2 261
	1.25-27 45
ALEXANDER POLYHISTOR (APUD	2.5-6 261
DIOGENES LAERTIUS VITAE)	2.5-12 261-62
	2.6-7 44
8.24.7-25.10) 135n11	2.7-9 261n16
8.25 84n15	2.15 45

<i>Anon. Parm., cont'd.</i>		12.6. 9	247
2.20	245	12.16–22	155n77
2.32	260n10	12.16–35	157n81, 146n44, 163
3.1	265n29	12.22–35	146n42, 180
3.1–2	265n27	12.25–26	257
3.3–9	265	12.32–33	257
3.7	265n29	12.35	247
3.11	265n29	14.4–16	190n38
3.19–20	265	14.10	258
3.30–32	266	14.10–26	230–31
3.35	265n29	14.33–35	155n77
4.1–4	245	14.14–26	159n85
4.9–10	245	14.15–26	153, 163
4.15–16	245	14.17–20	155n77
4.12–5.2	266	14.21	146n45
4.11, 14, 31	265n29		
4.19–22	266n32	<i>ANONYMI COMMENTARIUS IN PLATO-</i>	
4.28	265n29	<i>NIS THEAETETUM</i> (DIELS-SHUBART)	
4.28–32	258		
4.32–35	257	68.7–22	254n24
4.34–35	257n2		
5.3–6.12	257	ARISTIDES	
5.5–6	258		
5.7–35	257	<i>Apologia</i> (ed. Vona)	
5.8–9	257n2	I.3 (= I.4–5 p. 57	148n49
5.27	245	Alpigiano)	
5.34	258		
6.17	267n39	ARISTOTLE	
6.18–20	266n38		
6.20	258, 265n29	<i>Categoriae</i>	
9	181n16	6b28	245n2
9.1–4	154n72	6b36–37	245n2
9.1–8	267–68	<i>De caelo</i>	
9.3–4	206n13	282a4–b7	156n79
9.4	153n71, 200	<i>Metaphysica</i>	
9.1–8	267–89, 216; 216n10; 222	A5.985b23–986 b8	79n1
9.26–10.11	268–74	A.5.9.896a	127 n. 13
10.23–29	263n21	A5.987a13–28	79n1
10.25	257	A987b14–18	143n35
11.9	246	A6.987b17–22	88n18
11.10–11	246	A6.987b25–27	81
11.17–19	246	A6.988a7–14	88n18, 89n20.
12.2–3	247		89n21

A9.992a10-13	81n11	N 1092a35-b3	47n15
B 1001b7-10	45n12	N5.1092b1	89n19
Γ 1003b35-36	40	<i>Ethica Nicomachea</i>	
Γ 1004a1, 10	41	1096b5-8	50n24
Γ 1004a18-19, 21-22	40	<i>Ethica Eudemia</i>	
Z 1028b18-24	47n15	1248a27-28	47n16
I 1054a29-32	40	<i>Topica</i>	
I 1056b5	46n13	101b17-25	252n21
Λ 1070b5-8, 15-16	47n16		
Λ 1072b30-1073a3	49nn19 and 22, 68n6	ATTICUS	
Λ 1075a32-35	47n15, 89n20	<i>Fragmenta</i> (des Places)	
Λ 1075a36-37	49n22	2,136-138	253
M 1074b21-40	158n84		
M 1080b11-30	67n2	CALCIDIDIUS	
M 1080a11-b14	143n35	<i>In Timaeum commentarium</i> (Was- zink)	
M7.1082a14-15	84	295 (= Num. fr. 52	230n45
M7.1082a23-25	89n19	Des Places)	
M8.1083a13	84	<i>Corpus Hermeticum</i> (Nock-Fes- tugière)	
M 1083a21-24	47n15	I,8	199
M8.1083b36	84	I,31	199
M8.1084a35	89n20	frg. 21	143n34
M 1084b27-28	46n13		
M9.1085a7-14	81n11	DAMASCIUS	
M 1085b4-10	47n15	<i>De Principiis</i> (Ruelle/Westerink- Combès)	
N 1087b4-9, 26-33	47n15	1:3,9-11	44
N1.1087b9-12	89n19	1:4,6-8	266n37, 267n39
N1.1088a5	89n19	1:5,4-6	266n37
N 1087b32	46n13	1:5,24-26	259n5
N 1088b4-5	47n16	1:22,14-15	274n65
N 1088b9	46n13	1:86,3-10	215n9, 217n11
N 1090b19-20	135n13	(=2:1,11-13 W-C)	
N 1091a29-b3	49n22	1:131.17	214n5; 230n44
N 1091b2-3	47n15	1:285,5	222n31
N 1091b22-26 and 30-35	49n22	(=3:109.4-5 W-C)	
N 1091b23-25	47n15	<i>In Parm.</i> (Westerink-Combès)	
N 1091b30-32	47n15	88	123 n. 6
N4.1091b35	89n19		
N 1092a9	49n22		
N 1092a11-17	48n18, 49nn19 and 22		
N 1092a14-15	53n27		

Damascius, <i>In Parm., cont'd.</i>		(Festa)	
144	122	Ch. 4	42n9, 68, 72, 74n23,
303	123 n. 6		76, 77
		15,6–11	47n15
DEXIPPUS		15,6–17,29	42n9, 43n10, 135n13
		15,6–18,12	42n9
<i>In Aristotelis Categoriae</i>		15,7–10	48n18 (<i>bis</i>)
30,23–27	246n8	15,15–17	47n15
		15,23–24	49n23
DIOGENES LAERTIUS		15,26–27	49n23
		15,27–29	50n23
<i>Vitae philosophorum</i>		16,1–2	49n23
3.58	30	16,2–4	49n23
4.4–5	41n8	16,4–9	49n23
7.142	127 n. 12	16,10–11	48n18 (<i>bis</i>)
8.24.7–25.10	135n11	16,10–14	49n22
8.25	84n15, 106	18,1–3	48n18
		18,1–12	43n10
EUDORUS		18,13–23	43n10
		<i>De Mysteriis</i>	
<i>apud Simplicius in Aristotelis physicorum</i> (Diels)		8.2	198
9:181,10–30 Diels	135n11	Ps-IAMBlichus	
HERACLITUS		<i>Theologoumena arithmeticae</i> (de Falco)	
Fragmenta (Diels-Kranz)		5.4 (De Falco)	230n45, 46
B 49a	105n17	8.20–9,7	230n45, 46
		13.9–11	230n45, 46
HERMODORUS APUD SIMPLICIUS IN ARISTOTELIS PHYSICORUM (DIELS)		16.4–11	230n45, 46
		82.10–85.23 (= Speussipus	
247.30–248.15	81n10	Fr. 28 Tarán)	76n26
		LYDUS, JOANNES	
HESIOD		<i>De mensibus</i> (Wuensch)	
<i>Theogonia</i>		4.53.31–35	218n17
412–428	220n28	4.122.1–4	222n31
IAMBlichus		MODERATUS	
<i>De communi mathematica scientia</i>		<i>apud Simplicius in Physicorum</i>	

230.34–231.5	139n25, 161	3	154n73, 267 nn40 and 41,
<i>apud Stobaeus Anthologus</i> (Wachs-			215, 215n6, 216, 216n10, 215,
muth)			218, 225, 229
1:8,1–9,9 (= 21 W)	223n35	3.1	153n71
1:8,1–11 (= 21 W)	224n37	3–5	136n15
		4	154n73, 267nn40 and 41, 215,
			215n6, 216, 218, 229
NICOMACHUS		5	215, 217, 219, 219n19
<i>Introductio arithmetica</i> (Hoche)		6	214, 218, 219n19,220
88,9–10	223n35	7	214, 215n6, 216, 216n10, 229
113,2–10	230n46	8	217
		11	218
		12	218, 225
NUMENIUS		16	214
<i>Fragmenta</i> (des Places)		18	214
11	138n21, 139	22	216, 222n33
11	142n31	23	217, 217n12
11.11–20	162	26	177n9, 214n4
13	142n31	26–29	217
15	142n31	27	215, 216n10, 217
16	138	28	219n20, 221
16	138n21, 139	30	219n20, 220n25, 221
16	142n31	31	217, 217n12, 218n13, 217, 227
16.11	201, 206	32	220, 220n25, 221, 222, 226, 227
16.8–12	162	34	220, 220n26, 221, 227
20–22	138	35	217, 219n20, 220n26, 227
24	114n27	36	216
52	107n22, 137n19, 138n21	37	216, 216n10, 217, 219, 227
(= Calcidius, <i>In Tim.</i> c. 293)		39	216, 216n10, 217, 218
<i>apud Stobaeus Anthologium</i>		42	220
1.49.32.68–71	153n69	49	216, 217
		50	218, 219n19, 220, 226, 227
OLYMPIODORUS		50–55	220n25
		51	220, 228
<i>In Platonis Alcibiadem commentarii</i>		53	221
(Westerink)		54	221
212	122	55	221
		56	218n14, 220
ORACULA CHALDAICA (DES PLACES)		61d	220
		65	220
1	214, 217n12	66	220
2	218	68	220
		70	221

<i>Oracula Chaldaica, cont'd.</i>		B 8.19	109
77	219	B 8.22	109
77-78	217	B 8.29-30	109
82	219	B 8.50-51	109
90	220, 221	B 8.51-52	109
96	220nn25 and 26, 221	B 8.53-61	109
101	221	B 8.60	109
102	221	B 9	109
103	221	B 12.4	109
108	216, 217	B 19	109
109	216		
129	221	PLATO	
134	216		
136	220n25	<i>Charmides</i>	
137	220n25	163d	85n16
163	221	<i>Cratylus</i>	
169	214, 214n4, 217, 218, 218n16	440a-d	105n17
173	221	<i>Epistula</i>	
180	221	2.312e	135
216	221	2.312e	139n25
		<i>Meno</i>	
ORPHICORUM HYMNI (KERN)		87bc	85n16
		<i>Parmenides</i>	
52.5-6	142n32	126-137c7	26
		131b3-5	111n24
OVIDIUS		134b	259
		135b	27
<i>Metamorphoses</i>		135c8-137c3	26
15.176	104-5n17	135d3-7	89
		136c4-5	89, 259
PARMENIDES ELEATICUS		136d7-138a1	149n56
		137c3	31
<i>Fragmenta</i> (Diels-Kranz)		137c3-142a6	32, 139n25, 141,
B 1.29	109		147, 148, 149, 163, 214,
B 1.30	109		255n26, 264n24, 265n26
B 1.30-32	109	137c4-d3	54, 149n56
B 1-18	132n3	137c4-166c5	26
B 4	109	137c-d	148n52, 208
B 6.1	109	137d	148n52
B 8.3	109	137d-138a	148n52
B 8.4	109	137d4-8	54
B 8.5-6	99, 109, 110	135d3-7	89
		137d8-138a1	54

137d9	149n56	144e	138
137e-138a	208	145a2	144n38
138a	182, 198, 200, 208	145b6-e5	250
139a3-8	250	145c	144n38
138a-b	148n52	146a9-147b8	40
138a2-b6	54, 250	147c1-148d4	40
138b-139b	148n52, 208	148e4-149a6	250
139b-e	148n52, 149n56, 208	149d8-151e2	250
139b4-e6	40, 54	151e3-155c7	250
138b7-139b3	54	154d7-e2	250
139e-140b	148n52, 208	155c4	32
139e7-140b5	40, 54	155e	139
140b-c	89, 148n52, 250	155e2	87, 88
140b6-d8	89, 250	155e - 157e	77
140b-d	208	155e4	31, 139n24
140b6-d8	54, 89	155e4-156b5	250
140c	198	155e4-157b4	138, 139n25
140c3	149n56	155e5	135n12
140d4	149n56	156b5	139n24
140e-141d	148n52, 208	155e4-156b5	250
140e1-141d6	54, 250	156c4-5	250
141d-e	148n52	156e3-7	138n23, 162
141d7-142a8	54	157a8-b3	250
141e7-142a1	250	157b-159a9	32
142b	163	159b-160b	86
142b3-5	250	157b5	31
142b-d	71	157b6	87, 250
142b1-155e4	138, 139n25, 163	157b5-159a9	139n25
142b-e	136n15	157b6-159b1	56, 57n30
142b-157b4	32	157e4-5	87
142b3	31	158b-c	57
142b5-143a2	250	158b1-4	87
142d-144a	67	158b1-c7	57n31
142d1-9	88	158b5	87
142d2-3	88	158c1	87
142d3-4	111n24	158c2	87
142e	138	158c5-7	87, 88
142e4	88	158c7-d8	57n32
143a2	71, 88	158d3-5	88
143a-b	107, 111	158d6	87, 88
143a4-144e7	250	158e1-159a6	40
143a6-9	69n11, 135n13	158e2	87
143c-144a	71, 73, 135n13	159a6	40

Plato, <i>Parmenides</i> , cont'd.		165d8	86
159b1-160b3	32, 86, 139n25	165e1	86
159b2	31	165e1-166c6	139n25
159b6	86	166b3-4	40
159d1	86	166b4-5	40
159d3-4	86	<i>Phaedrus</i>	
159d4-7	86	245d	201
159d7-160b1	86	247c	198
159e2-160a3	40	247c6-7	149n56
159e4-5	87	<i>Philebus</i>	
160b-163b5	32	15a	139n25, 182
160b4-163b5	139n25	16c	81
160b5	85	26e-30e	106, 106n20
160d3	32	55e	255
160d3-166c5	264n24	<i>Politicus</i>	
161a6-c2	40	261e	85n16
161c3-e2	250	<i>Respublica</i>	
161e3-162b7	250	4.379c5-6	89
163b6-164b3	32, 139n25	5.478d-e	103n15
163b7	32	6.507b-509c	101n14
163b7-164a1	250	6.509-511	139n25
164a1-2	250	6.509b	101-2n14, 139n25, 148
164a2	86	6.511b2	89
164a5	86	7.514-517a	132n3
164a2-7	40 (<i>bis</i>)	7.523e	36
164b4	32	7.526b	31
164c8-d1	85, 86, 250	7.532b	122
164b4-165e1	32, 139n25	7.533e	85n16
164d1-2	86	8.563e-564a	34
164e3-165a5	250	<i>Sophista</i>	
165a2	86	217c	25
165a5	86	237a-b	108
165a7-8	86	240b3-12	156n79
165b5-6	86	244b	109
165c-166c6	32	244b-c	111n24
165c1-2	86	244b-235e	108
165c2	86	245a	149n56, 198
165c2-3	32	246b-c	109
165c5	86	248a	109
164c8-d1	85	248a-249d	109
165c6-d4	40	248e	144n38
165d1	86	248e-249a	110, 229n42
165d4-5	40	250c	199

254c5-d2	156n79	76b2	99n9
255d-e	107	90c1	99n9
255e	100	<i>Testimonium Platonicum</i> (Gaiser	
256d	100	1963)	
258b	25	22B	81n10, 11
258b-c	100	39B	81n12
266d	25	40B	81n12
284b	25	31	81n10
286b	25		
<i>Symposium</i>		PLOTINUS	
210a-212a	132n3		
<i>Theaetetus</i>		<i>Enneads</i>	
152c-153d	105n17	1.8 [51]	133n5
183c	25	1.8 [51].2	201
184c	85n16	1.8 [51].7	123
199a	85n16	2.4 [12].1-5	70
<i>Timaeus</i>		2.9 [33]	133
27c	139n25	2.9 [33].1	133n5
27d-28a	96, 109	2.9 [33].1	142n31
31a4	144n38	2.9 [33].6	133n5
32b8-c4	106n21	2.9 [33].10.19-33	133n5, 172
34b3-8	221	2.9 [33].11	133n5
35a1-b4	100	2.9 [33].11.14-30	133n5
37a-b	254n23	2.9 [33].4	133n5
37b-38c	98	3.7 [37].11.24	76n28
37c-38c	98, 103	3.8 [30]	133
38b-c	98	3.8 [30].8.34	76n28
39e	142, 144n38, 228n40	3.8 [30].11	122, 133n5
47e - 48a	68n7	3.8 [30].9-10	133n5
47e-53e	106, 106n19	3.9 [13].1	133n5, 142n31
48a-c	82	3.9 [13].1.26-37	143n36
48e-52d	219n21, 229	3.9 [13].3	133n5
50c-d	141, 141n26	3.9 [13].4	200
50d	198	4.1 [21].1.5-6	143n34
50d7	149n56	5.1 [10].5.3-9	71
50e4	149n56	5.1 [10].8	77n31, 139n25
51a7-8	219n21, 229	5.3 [49].3.5	76n28
51a8	149n56	5.3 [49].14.1-3	272n6
52a1-d1	103	5.4 [7].1	202
52b2	86	5.5 [32]	133
52c2-5	100	5.5 [32].4	177, 198
52d	139n25	5.8 [31]	133
53a2-d7	106, 106n19	5.8 [31].5	133n5

Plotinus, <i>Enneads</i> , cont'd.			<i>De defectu oraculorum</i>	
5.8 [31].7-9	133n5		34.428C	100
6.1 [42].1.19-30	248	<i>De E apud Delphos</i>		
6.1 [42].4-7	70		3.358D-386A	95
6.1 [42].12.44-45	249		4.386A-B	95
6.2 [43].21	28		5.386B-D	95
6.3 [44].6.10-32	247n13		6.386D-387D	95
6.3 [44].12.7-12	224n37		7.387F	95
6.4 [22].1	198		8.387F-16.391E	95
6.4 [22].14.1-4	143n36		17.391E-F	95
6.5 [23].9	201		17.391F-392A	96
6.6 [34]	67		17.392A	100
6.6 [34].1-2	73-74		18.392A	97
6.6 [34].3	139n25		18.392A-B	96, 97
6.6 [34].3-4	200		18.392A-E	100
6.6 [34].8.17-22	144n38		18.392A-20.393B	96
6.6 [34].9-10	74-76		18.392B-C	99
6.6 [34].15.24-29	76n27		18.392D	101n11
6.7 [38].17	133n5, 198, 220		18.392E	97
6.7 [38].17.6-43	144n38,		19.392E	97, 99
	146n45, 164		19.392E-393A	98
			20.393A	99, 110
6.8 [39].1.33-37	272n61		20.393A-B	99
6.9 [9].3	199, 203		20.393B	99, 107, 111
6.9 [9].3.51-54	266n37		20.393B-C	101
6.9 [9].5	200		20.393B-21.394B	96
			20.393B-21.394C	101
			21.393C-D	101
			21.393D-394A	102
			21.393E-F	106
PLUTARCHUS			<i>De fraterno amore</i>	
<i>Adversus Colotem</i>			12.484E-F	111n24, 112
13.1114B-F	109	<i>De Iside et Osiride</i>		
13.1114D	111n24		10.354F	101n12
13.1114E-F	108		75.381F	101n12
15.1115D-F	101	<i>Quaestiones platonicae</i>		
15.1116A-B	97n5		2.2.1002B	100n10
24.1120C-D	108		3.1002D	111n24
<i>De animae procreatione in Timaeo</i>			8.4.1007B	98
9.1016F-1017A	106n21	PORPHYRY		
23.1023E-F	254n23	<i>In Aristotelis categorias commen-</i>		
24.1024D-E	100	<i>tarium</i> (Busse)		
<i>De communibus notitiis adversus</i>			55,11	246n6
<i>Stoicos</i>				
41.1081C-1082A	98			
41.1081C-42.1082D	98			

58,32–33	246n7	PRISCIANUS	
61,12–13	246n7		
63,7–8	246n9	<i>Metaphrasis in Theophrastum.</i>	
64,7–8	247n11	(Bywater)	
71,12–13	247n11	27	123
71,27–29	247n11		
72,34	246n9	PROCLUS	
76,14	246n9		
88,4	246n7	<i>Theologia Platonica</i> (Saffrey-	
90,29	246n7	Westerink)	
94,31–33	246n10	1.7–8	135n10
95,21–22	246n9	1:15.15–16.1	263n22
95,22	245n4	1:54.12–22	274n64
99,6–8	247n12	2:59,24	263n18
99,15–16	245n4	365,3–4 Ruelle	216n10
103,30	247n11	<i>Institutio theologica</i> (Dodds)	
125,2–5	247n11	21	123
125,25–26	245n4	103	152n68, 152n68, 153,
129,9–10	246n8		153n69, 169
130,13	246n6	<i>In Alcibiadem</i>	
138,24–29	250	37	216n10
138,30–32	250	<i>In Parmenidem</i> (Cousin + Kliban-	
<i>Isagoge sive quinque voces</i> (Busse)		ski-Labowsky)	
7,21–23	246n8	1:630.15–645.8	29
8,20–21	246n9	1:630.37–635.27	72
10,9	245n4	1:630.37–640.17	151n63
12,24–25	246n10	1:631.15–19	29
14,19–20	245n4	1:633.12–635.27	30
18,19	247n11	1:635.21–638.10	112n25
21,22	247n11	1:638.2–640.16	30
<i>Sententiae ad intelligibilia ducentes</i>		1:638.19–20	30
10	153n69	1:638.21–36	138
11	123	1:638–40	139n25
25–26	133n5	4.839	121–122
<i>Vita Plotini</i>		6:1051	36
16	133, 153, 211	6:1052.31–1053.9	139n25
20.68–80	139n25	6:1051.34–1064.12	29n1
33	259n5	6:1052.31–1053.9	140n25
<i>Vita Pythagorae</i>		6:1052.31–1055.25	30
44.8–14	139n25	6:1053.38–1054.37	140n25
48–53	124	6:1055.25–1057.5	30
53	73	6:1057–58	139n25
		6:1057.5–1064.12	30

Proclus, <i>In Parm.</i> , cont'd.		<i>Summaria et brevis dogmatum chaldaicorum expositio</i> (PG 7)	
6:1057–1058	140n25	1152a (= p. 74,7–9 Kroll;	218
6:1064.21–1065.5	112n25	189 des Places; 146,17	
6:1070.15–1071.3	215n9, 217n11	O'Meara)	
6:1083.28–1084.10	255		
6:1083.37 ff.	256	SENECA, LUCIUS ANNAEUS (MIN.)	
6:1090.25–8	222n31		
6:1093.19–1094.16	274n64	<i>Epistulae morales</i>	
6:1106.1–1108.19	158n83	58.16–22a	104n17
7:38–40 Klibansky (=Speusippus frg. 48 Tarán)	135n13	58.22b–24	104n17
7:38,32–40,7 Klibansky (= Speu- sippus, frg. 48 Tarán)	69–70	SEXTUS EMPIRICUS	
7:38,32–40,7 Klibansky (=		<i>Adversus Mathematicos</i>	
2:501,61–67 Steel)	42n9,	10.248–283	79–91, 107
43n10, 47n15 (<i>bis</i>), 48n18,	50n23	10.248	80n7
		10.249–257	82
<i>In Timaeum</i> (Diehl)		10.250	80n7
1:206.26–214.12	264n25	10.254	83
1:209.19–24	262n17	10.255	80n7
1:223.14–30	264n2	10.258	80n4, 82
1:233.1–4	156n79	10.260	83
1:306.1–14	142n31	10.261	80n7, 83, 84, 230n46
1:309.14–20	142n31	10.262	80, 80n7
1:431.26–28	142n31	10.263–265	83
3:33.31–34.2	155n77	10.263–269	79
<i>De providentia</i>		10.263–275	81
31	274n65	10.265	80n4
31–32	263n22	10.268	80n4
<i>Eclogae de philosophia Chaldaica</i>		10.270	80n7, 83
(des Places)		10.271–273	80n4
4,38–42	215n9	10.273	83
		10.275	83
PSELLUS, MICHAEL		10.276	83, 84
		10.277	84
apud Pletho, <i>Expositio in Oracula</i>		10.281	80n4
<i>Chaldaica</i>		10.282	80n7, 84
33 (=PG 122:1144a =	153n71	10.283	84
pp. 4, 18, 147–50		<i>Pyrrhoniae hypotyposes</i>	
Tambrun-Krasker)		3.153	230n46
<i>De anima et mente</i> (O'Meara)			
68,21–22	143n36	SIMPLICIUS	

<i>In Aristotelis physicorum libros commentaria</i> (Diels)		43	48n18, 49 nn19 and 22
		44	49n22
9.181.10	84n15	44.9–10	47n15
9:181.10–30	105, 135n11, 136n15	45a	49n22
		45a.2–3	47n15
9:230.34–231.5	136, 139n25, 161	45a.4–6	47n15
9:230.34–251.5	72n17	46a.1–2	47n15
9:231.2–5	139–40n25	46a.5	49n22
9:231.5–231.34	139n25	47a	50n24
9.231.5–12	215n7	48	42n9 (twice), 43n10, 47n15
9.231.7–10	84n15		(twice), 48n18, 50n23, 135n13,
9:231.7–15	136n14, 139n25		69–70
9:231.15–24	140n25	49a	42n9, 44
9:247,30–248,20	40, 81n10	49b	42n9, 44
9:248,2–5	41	68a	40n4
<i>In Aristotelis categorias commentarium</i>		83	43n10, 47n15
7,23–24	259n5	STOBAEUS, JOANNES	
30,14–15	246n8	<i>Anthologium</i> (Wachsmuth)	
38,19–24	40n4	1:8.1–11	72n18, 136n14, 223n3,
43,25	245n1		224n37
55,4–5	246n8	1:10.16a5	134n7
73,15–28	248	1.49.32.68–71	153n69
154,17–20	245n3	SYRIANUS	
201,24–31	245n2	<i>In Aristotelis metaphysica commentaria</i> (Kroll)	
285,1–3	250	82.1–2	153n69
290,1–3	250	151.14–27	136n14
369,9–11	247n12	SPEUSIPPUS	
396,3–6	245n5	THEODORUS ASINUS	
<i>Testimonia</i> (Tarán)		<i>apud Proclus In Timaeum</i>	
1.35–66	41n8	2.275.2	221n29
<i>Fragmenta</i> (Tarán)		THEON SMYRNAEI	
28	76n26	<i>Expositio rerum mathematicarum</i>	
29a.3–8	47n15	(Hiller)	
34.2–4	47n15	21,1–7	230n46
38	47n15		
39	47n15		
39.9–10	46n13		
40.1–5	47n15		
42a	49 nn19 and 22		

Theon Smyrnaei, <i>Exp., cont'd.</i>		121.30–33	227
37,15–18	223n35	121.30–122.1	177, 182n20
100,9–12	230n46	121.31–32	145n41, 226n39
		121.32–34	145n41, 226n39
THEOPHRASTUS		122.8–17	176–77
		122.22–25	176
<i>Metaphysica</i>		123.18–26	145n40
11a18–26	43n10, 47n15	123.18–30	145n41, 226n39
11a27–b1	47n16	125.6–9	175
11a27–b7	47n15, 50n23	125.23–27	174
11b5–7	50n23	126.1–17	133n5
<i>De causis plantarum</i>		124.25–34	144n38
1.1.1.12–16	46n14	125.23–25	141n29
		125.28–32	144n38
	BIBLICA	NHC VIII,1 <i>Zostrianos</i>	
		2.24–32	179
GENESIS		3.6–11	180
		3.12	180
4:25	132	4.23–25	219n23
		5.10–29	134n5
SAPIENTIA		8.9–16	133n5
		9–10	133n5
7:24	199, 202	9.16–10.20	172, 223n36
		9.17–10.2	133n5
	GNOSTICA	12.4–21	133n5
		13.27–18.4	144n38
NAG HAMMADI CODICES		15.18	145n41, 226n39
		17.7	145n41, 226n39
NHC I,5 <i>Tripartite Tractate</i>		17.6–22	133n5
I.51.28–55.14	141n27, 148	20.15–18	145n41, 226n39
NHC II,1 <i>Apocryphon of John</i>		20.16–24	144n38
3.18–33	147, 164–65	20.22–24	157n82
4.19–5.2	158n84	21	
5.5	226, 228	133n5	
5.32–6.2	228n40	23.23–24.1	181
NHC III,3 <i>Eugnostos the Blessed</i>		24.9–10	145n41, 226n39
71.13–72.6	141n27, 148	27.9–12	133n5
NHC VII,5 <i>Three Steles of Seth</i>		24.12–13	145n41, 226n39
120.17–121.11	143n37	24.18–30	219n23
120.21–22	145n41, 226n39	36.1–5	157n82
121.32–34	178	44.11–13	183
121.10–11	178	44.12–13	180n12
		47.15–31	219n23

52	134n5	66.2-3	200
60.24-63.8	219n23	66.3-4	200
63.7-8	145n41, 226n39	66.4-6	200
64.12	198	66.6-7	200
64.13	198	66.8-9	200
64.13-75.21	144n38	66.9	200
64.13-66.11	149, 166-67, 186-88, 197	66.11	200
64.14	198	66.11-12	200
66.14b-68.13	167-68	66.12	204
64.15	197	66.13-14	204
64.15-16	198	66.14-16	200
64.17	198	66.14-67.3	133n5
64.18	198	66.14-68.13	149, 204
64.18-19	198	66.14b-68.13	167, 168
64.19-20	198	66.15-16	206
64.20-21	198	66.16-67.3	157n82
64.21-22.	198	66.16-18	200, 205
64.22-65.1	198	66.20	180n12, 200, 206
66.14-20	151n64, 154n75, 152n66	66.20-21	201, 206
65.1	198	67.19-20	204
65.1-2	198	67.21-22	200, 205
65.2	198	68.4-6	201, 206
65.2-3	198	68.4-11	157n82
65.3	198	74.3-16	145n41, 226n39
65.3-4	198	74.6	180n12
65.4	198	74.17-18	200
65.5	199	74.17-75.21	149, 168-69, 204
65.6	199	75	206
65.7-8	199	75.6-11	152n65,n66
65.9	199	75.12-21a	185
65.10-11	199	75.13-14	201
65.11-12	199	75.15-16	201
65.12-13	199	75.16-17	201
65.15-16	199	75.17-18	201
65.16-17	199	75.18-19	201
65.18-19	199	75.19-20	201
65.19-20	199	75.20-21	201
65.21	199	75.20-25	150n58
65.22	200	75.22	201
65.23	200	75.22-23	201
66.1	200	75.22-25	150
		75.24	201
		76.top-84.21	150

NHC VIII, <i>1</i> <i>Zostrianos, cont'd.</i>		9.7–20	145n41, 226n39
76.12–13	180n12	9.25	145n41
76.20–84.3	169–71	9.29–10.4	154n73
77.20–23	150	10.8–11	145n41, 226n39
79.10–16	157n82	14.22–23	145n41
79.16–23	145n41, 186–88, 182, 184n28, 226n39	17.18–19	193
		25.17–32.5	133n5
80.10–25	144n38	15.1–3	145n41
80.11–20	145n41, 226n39	NHC XI, <i>3</i> <i>Allogenes</i>	
81.6–20	225	45.13–30	145n41, 226n39
82.1–13	133n5	45.17–30	224–25; 229n43
82.8–13	143n33	45.22–33	158n84
83.19–21	183; 184n25	46.6–35	143n33
84.15–22	150, 183	46.30–34	191
85–88	134n5	47.8–9	145n41, 226n39
85.16–19	184	48.32–38	192
87	133n5	49.5–26	133n5, 158n84, 225–26
87.13–14	145n41, 226n39	49.26–37	144n38, 145n40, 152,
91.15	226	152n68, 162, 169,	224
93.6–9	145n41, 226n39	49.33	186 n 36, 201, 207
97.2–3	145n41, 226n39	49.36–38	190
115–16	133n5	51.8–9	145n41, 226n39
117.10–14	156n80	52.13–33	219n23
118.11–12	145n41, 226n39	52.19	145n41, 226n39
119.12–13	133n5, 143n33	52.30–33	145n41, 226n39
123.19–20	145n41, 226n39	53.30	145n41
124.3–4	145n41, 226n39	53.32–55.11	133n5
124.7–9	182, 184n25	54.8–11	159
127	133n5	55.19–30	156n80
128.20–21	145n41, 226n39	55.21	226n39
NHC X, <i>1</i> <i>Marsanes</i>		55.22–24	219n23
4.13–19	145n41, 226n3	58.25	145n41, 226n39
6.19	226n3	59.14–16	159
7.1–9	145n41	59.30–32	133n5
6.19	145n41	59.9–60.35	144n38
7.1–9	226n39	60.19–28	159
7.16–17	145n41, 226n39	60.8–12	133n5
7.27–29	145n41, 226n39	61.1–22	145n41
7.29	145n41, 226n39	61.17–19	133n5
8.5–7	145n41, 226n39	61.2–3	133n5
8.11	145n41, 226n3	61.6,13,20,34	226n39
8.19–20	145n41, 226n39	61.32–39	145n40
9.1–20	170	61.32–39	162, 224

NHC XI,3 <i>Allogenes, cont'd.</i>		AUGUSTINE	
61.36-37	152		
62.28-63.25	147, 164-165	<i>De civitate Dei</i>	
66.19-23	192	10.23	222n30
66.22	191n42	<i>De ordine</i>	
66.33-34	145n41, 226n39	2.16.51	210n20
NHC XIII,1 <i>Trimorphic Protennoia</i>		CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA	
38.14	228		
38.15	226	<i>Stromateis</i>	
BEROLINENSIS Gnosticus 8502		5.12.81.4.1-82.4.1	148n50
		5.12.81.5-82.1	139n25
APOCRYPHON OF JOHN		HIPPOLYTUS	
24.6-25.7	147, 164-165		
25.13-19	158n84	<i>Refutatio</i>	
		4.25.156.1-2	251
CODEx BRUCIANUS		4.43	230n46
		5.12.81.4-6	251
<i>Untitled</i>		5.12.81.5	252
237.20-23	156n80	6.29.2-5	141n27
		7.20.2-21.1	148n51
JUDAICA		7.20.2-21.6	141n27
PHILO		IRENÆUS	
<i>Legum allegoriarum</i>		<i>Adversus Haereses</i> (Rousseau/ Doutreleau)	
1.44	200	1.3.3	224n37
<i>De somniis</i>		1.29	133
1.63	200		
MAGICA		MARIUS VICTORINUS	
PAPYRI GRAECAE MAGICAE		<i>Ad Candidum</i> (Henry-Hadot)	
		2.21-15.12	156
IV.943-4	142n32	14.11-14	142n32
		<i>Adversus Arium</i>	
PATRISTICA		1.16.1	209
		1.48-64	157
ATHANASIUS		1.49.9-18	188
		1.49.17-18	152
<i>Adversus Arium</i> (Stegmann)		1.49.9-40	149, 166, 167, 186-88
4:13	224n37	1.49.9-50.21	144n38, 150n60,

Marius Victorinus, <i>Adv. Ar.</i> , <i>cont'd.</i>	1.50.9	153n71
195–96, 207, 209–12	1.50.9–21	168–169
1.49–54	1.50.10	153n71, 154n74, 200
1.49.7	1.50.10–11	153n71
1.49.9	1.50.10–15	152n66
1.49.9–40	1.50.10–16	167
1.49.12	1.50.11–12	151n64
1.49.18	1.50.12	200, 206
1.49.19	1.50.12–15	152
1.49.19–20	1.50.16–18	152n65, 201
1.49.20	1.50.17	201
1.49.20–21	1.50.18	201, 204
1.49.23	1.50.18–19	201
1.49.24	1.50.18–21	185, 206
1.49.24–25	1.50.19	201
1.49.25	1.50.20	201
1.49.26–27	1.50.21–22	150n58
1.49.28	1.50.22	207, 208n16
1.49.28–29	1.50.22–51.43	150, 150n60, 169–71
1.49.29		
1.49.30	1.51–54	207–10, 212
1.49.32	1.51.31	231n47
1.49.32–33	1.57.7–21	157n81, 158n84
1.49.33	1.62.25	197n4
1.49.33–34	3.1–10	157
1.49.34	3.4.36–38	152n67
1.49.34–35	3.5.31–32	152n67
1.49.35	4.1–29	158
1.49.35–36	4.5.36–45	145n39
1.49.36	4.6.5–7	158n83
1.49.36–37	4.20	198
1.49.37	4.20.15	197
1.49.37–38	4.21.26	20
1.49.38	4.21.26–22.6	152n66
1.49.38–39	4.23.18–31	163
1.49.39	4.24.21–31	158n84
1.49.39–40	4.24.9–20	158n84
1.50.1–8	4.27.1–17	158n84
1.50.1–21	4.28.11–22	158n84
1.50.1		
1.50.4		
1.50.5		
1.50.8		

