

**The Poimandres as Myth
Scholarly Theory and Gnostic Meaning**



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The Poimandres as Myth

Scholarly Theory
and Gnostic Meaning

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Introduction

The academic world, if not the world itself, seems divided into "universalists" and "particularists": into those who stress the similarities among phenomena and those who stress the differences. Amidst apparent differences universalists detect similarities. Amidst apparent similarities particularists perceive differences. Where universalists are concerned with what, for example, makes Socrates a member of a class--Greek, philosopher, or human being--particularists are concerned with what makes Socrates Socrates.

The two approaches seem distinct and therefore compatible. Universalists scarcely deny that Socrates is different from any other Greek, philosopher, or human being. They are simply interested in him as a member of a group. Particularists hardly deny that Socrates is a Greek, a philosopher, and a human being, but it is his uniqueness which concerns them.

The approaches clash when, as inevitably happens, each deems itself not just distinct but superior. Invariably, universalists claim that Socrates' membership in a class is what essentially defines him, and particularists aver that Socrates' uniqueness is what at heart characterizes him.

Universalists grant that even after all possible similarities have been discovered, differences remain: however similar, Socrates is just not the same as any other Greek, philosopher, or human being. Universalists simply dismiss the differences as trivial. Conversely, particularists concede that as distinctive as Socrates is, he is still a Greek, a philosopher, and a human being. They in turn spurn the similarities as superficial.

Though the approaches can surely clash over any class of phenomenon, they clash most over human phenomena: over man and his artifacts. Universalists typically insist that the study of man parallel the study of the physical

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world: that it be reducible to universal laws. Particularists usually demand that the study of man differ from that of the physical world. Stressing exactly the uniqueness of every human being and his creation, they seek the distinctive qualities of each, qualities which are therefore not generalizable.

Like any other artifact, myth is approachable as either a universal or a particular. Any myth is approachable either as an instance of the universal category myth or as a specific myth. Certainly there have been innumerable analyses of both kinds. Numerous universalists have interpreted numerous myths as cases of myth generally, and numerous particularists have interpreted numerous individual myths.

Rarely, however, has there been a comparison of the approaches, and it is my aim to do so. I am not seeking to resolve the intractable issue of the superiority of either approach. I myself think that the approaches are answering distinct questions--precisely what is common and what is unique about phenomena--and therefore run askew. I seek only to juxtapose the approaches. Because I will doubtless be addressing more particularists than universalists, I will be trying to show less what difference a particularistic approach makes and more what difference a universal one does. I am advocating a universal approach not in place of a particularistic one but alongside it.

As a test case, I have chosen a single myth: the Poimandres, the first tractate of the Corpus Hermeticum. I have chosen it because it falls within my area of training: Greco-Roman myths. As test cases of "particularism" I have therefore chosen the leading specialists on the Poimandres, which really means the leading specialists on Gnosticism or Hermeticism generally. As test cases of "universalism" I have chosen two theorists of myth: Mircea Eliade and Carl Jung. Where some universalists seek only to identify similarities, theorists seek to analyze them. Likewise where some particularists seek only to pinpoint differences, the ones I will be citing seek to analyze them.

Just as I am not trying to determine the superiority of either a particularistic or universal approach, so I am not trying to present either approach exhaustively. I am trying neither to analyze the Poimandres exhaustively as a Gnostic myth nor to apply to it every conceivable kind of theory--for example, sociological and structuralist theories. My aim is only to compare a specialized approach with a theoretical one.

In chapter one I will be using the scholarship of specialists to analyze the Poimandres as a specifically Gnostic myth. In chapters two and three I will be using the theories of Eliade and Jung to analyze the Poimandres as a case of myth per se. In characterizing the Poimandres as a Gnostic myth, I am obviously classifying it, but the classification is still particularistic vis-à-vis that of myth generally.

Whether or not the leading scholars of Gnosticism believe that Gnostic myths are unique, they study them in their uniqueness, in isolation from other myths except ones bearing historically on them. They study the Poimandres as a specifically Gnostic or, alternatively, Hermetic myth.

There have been a few theoretical analyses of Gnostic myths, though none of the Poimandres itself. The most notable ones have been Hans Jonas' existentialist interpretation(1) and the psychological interpretations of Jung(2) and several of his followers(3). These psychological interpretations, however, analyze specific themes rather than whole myths. Eliade's main discussion of Gnosticism is historical rather than theoretical: it does not apply his theory to Gnosticism(4).

Theorists of myth abound. They span both the social sciences and the humanities. Any list of the leading theorists would likely include the anthropologists Edward Tylor, James Frazer, Bronislaw Malinowski, Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, and Claude Lévi-Strauss; the psychologists Sigmund Freud and Jung; the historian of religions Eliade; and the existentialist philosopher Rudolf Bultmann(5).

What makes these figures theorists is the scope of their inquiries. Though in principle there can be theorists

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of only creation myths, hero myths, or other particular kinds of myth, in practice virtually all theorists theorize about myth generally. Whether or not they succeed in encompassing all myths within their schemes, they profess to do so.

Theorists of myth differ from specialists, at least of Gnosticism, not only because they are interested in more than one set of myths but also because they are interested in more than one question about myth.

At least three fundamental questions can be asked of myth, either of a single myth or of all mythology: what is its origin? What is its function? What is its subject?

The question of origin is twofold: not only why but also how myth originates. To ascribe myth to a need, particular or universal, is to explain only why myth originates. To describe the process by which myth arises to satisfy that need is to explain how myth originates. Similarly, the question of function is twofold: how as well as why myth functions.

The question of subject means to what entity myth, rightly understood, refers. Man, society, and the cosmos are the subjects most frequently proposed by theorists. For Lévi-Strauss, for example, the subject of myth is the logical operation, or structure, of man's mind. For Tylor, it is the operation of the physical world. For Bultmann, it is the place of man in the world.

Scholars of Gnosticism have concentrated on the question of origin. They have been concerned with the possible Greek, Iranian, Jewish, and Christian roots of Gnosticism. They have simply taken for granted that the function of Gnostic myths was explanatory and their subject cosmic: they have assumed that the myths served to explain the literal beginning and end of the cosmos, including man. Because of their particularistic approach they have, moreover, sought not a recurrent origin like the need for an explanation of the cosmos but a one-time origin like the availability of a specific kind of explanation.

Theorists of myth, by contrast, deal with all three main questions about all myths: origin, function, and subject. Certainly not all theorists deal with all three questions. Eliade, for example, explains only why myth originates--to fulfill man's need for the sacred--but not how. Bultmann explains neither: myth, for him, functions to express man's relationship to the cosmos, but nothing seems to spur that expression. Preoccupied with the effect of myth, Malinowski barely considers its subject. I include them all as theorists because they are concerned with at least two of the three main questions about myth. Moreover, theorists collectively deal with all three questions. Furthermore, they deal most with the question of function, with which scholars of Gnosticism deal least, and deal least with the question of origin, with which scholars of Gnosticism deal most. Of the theorists named, Tylor alone is concerned most with origin.

As different as their approaches are, scholars of Gnosticism and theorists of myth nevertheless agree substantially on the definition of myth. For both, myth must, first, be a story. Though Lévi-Strauss, among theorists, regards the story as only the surface level of myth, even he considers it prerequisite to the deeper, structural level. As a story, myth on the one hand is more than a mere doctrine or conviction like the American "myth" of the frontier or of the self-made man. A myth may well express a belief, but it must do so in the form of a story: a chronological sequence of events.

As a story, myth on the other hand is more, or other, than an argument or proof. Not logic but imagination impels the plot. Events happen not because logic dictates that they do but because the myth says that they do. In myth, anything can happen. Scholars of Gnosticism above all contrast the arbitrariness of events in myth to their logical necessity in philosophy.

Likewise for both scholars and theorists, myth must, second, deem the causes of events personalities. Events happen not because of the mechanical operation of impersonal forces but because of the decisions of willful

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agents. For many of the theorists--Tylor, Frazer, Lévy-Bruhl, Eliade, and Bultmann--the personalities must be gods. For the others, they can be legendary humans or even animals. Moreover, many of the theorists interpret the personalities symbolically: for example, gods as symbols of humans, of the parts of the psyche, or of the forces of nature. Nevertheless, all require that the literal causes of events be personalities of some kind.

Stressing as he does an impersonal sacred reality, Eliade seemingly accords personalities scant importance. Yet the direct causes of events in myth are for him gods, who are somehow agents of a nonvolitional sacred. In translating the divine and human figures of myth into parts of the psyche, Jung, too, seemingly disregards personality. But in fact he sees the ego, the unconscious, and the archetypes composing the unconscious as themselves personalities. Three of the four chief archetypes--the persona, the shadow, and the anima and animus--manifest themselves entirely as personalities, and the fourth, the self, does so in all but its deepest expressions.

Scholars of Gnosticism contrast myth to philosophy on the count of personality, too. To be sure, the causes of events in even philosophy can be personalities, but those personalities are wholly rational agents. For example, they not only are omniscient but also act on the basis of their omniscience. By contrast, personalities in myth are emotional as well as rational. They, too, may be omniscient, but their feelings often override their knowledge.

For scholars of Gnosticism and many theorists of myth alike, the prime kind of myth must, third, be a creation story: a story of the creation of the world itself or of individual phenomena within it. For Tylor, Frazer, Malinowski, and Eliade, myth describes either the creation or the operation of the world. For the rest, there exist other, often more important kinds of myth--for Freud and Jung, for example, hero myths, under which Jung subsumes creation myths. For scholars of Gnosticism, creation myths underlie all others.

Theorists of myth as well as specialists in Gnosticism would consider the Poimandres myth. As interpreted by specialists, the Poimandres is a literal explanation of the beginning and end of both the cosmos and man. It describes the origin of the material world either by or from the immaterial godhead, the fall of immaterial Primal Man into that world, and the need to retrieve his human descendants from it.

The myth preaches radical dualism: the severance of all ties between immateriality and matter. Because those ties began with the emergence of the material world, if not of matter itself, the myth bemoans the creation of that world and preaches its dissolution. Only by escaping from it can the bits of immateriality trapped in human bodies be saved.

Because the Poimandres ascribes the emergence of the material world to, directly or indirectly, the willful act of an apparently omniscient and omnipotent God, the key question it poses is why God creates a world which he subsequently opposes. The Poimandres itself does not say. On the one hand it says that God knowingly and freely decides to create. On the other hand it says that God then seeks to undo creation.

Taken as philosophy, the Poimandres fails to resolve the paradox, which is found in all other Gnostic texts as well. None of the possible resolutions considered in chapter one works. The Poimandres simply leaves unexplained the complicity of God in the event which marks his own fall: creation.

Taken as myth, however, the Poimandres allows for a resolution, though it itself provides none. Because the characters in myth, including the highest god, are ruled by emotion as well as reason, even an omniscient and omnipotent God can act contrary to his knowledge and power.

Alternatively, the Poimandres, taken as myth, need provide no resolution of the paradox. As a story rather than an argument, the Poimandres simply declares that God knowingly and freely creates a world which he then

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strives to topple. The myth presents creation as a fact: as an event which logically should never have occurred yet did. The myth does not deny the paradox. It denies the need to resolve it.

Ancient thinkers themselves distinguish sharply between myth and philosophy. In the Republic, for example, Plato dismisses Homer and Hesiod as false and immoral storytellers who rely on divine inspiration rather than reason. More germane, in Against the Gnostics Plotinus scorns Gnostics not just because they preach radical dualism but also because their preaching relies on revelation rather than reason, assertion rather than argument, and illogical rather than logical claims--in short, because it is mythical rather than philosophical.

If scholars of Gnosticism as well commonly distinguish between myth and philosophy, they differ with one another over the proportion of each in Gnosticism. Most view Gnostic texts as more mythical than philosophical--on, as stated, the grounds that those texts take the form of stories rather than arguments and attribute events at least as much to emotional personalities as to wholly rational ones, let alone to impersonal forces. Says Jonas:

The pathomorphic form of gnostic emanationism directly implies another trait: its irresolubly mythological character. For tragedy and drama, crisis and fall, require concrete and personal agents, individual divinities--in short, mythical figures, however symbolically they may be conceived. The Plotinian descensus of Being, in some respects an analogy to the gnostic one, proceeds through the autonomous movement of impersonal concept, by an inner necessity that is its own justification. The gnostic descensus cannot do without the contingency of subjective affect and will. (This, of course, is among the major reproaches leveled by Plotinus himself against the Gnostics.) The mythological--and thus nonphilosophical--form belongs to the nature of Gnosticism: a difference not of form only but of substance(6).

For some scholars, the Gnostics derive their beliefs from Oriental mythology rather than Greek philosophy(7). For others, the Gnostics take Greek philosophy and "mythologize" it(8). For some scholars, Gnosticism is always mythological(9). For others, it is at first mythological and later becomes philosophical(10).

I contend that in various ways a theoretical approach to the Poimandres makes an enormous difference. First, I will argue, Jung's theory, though not Eliade's and therefore not theory per se, resolves the paradox of creation. Taken as a particular, the myth itself, again, provides no resolution and may even scorn the need for one. By interpreting the godhead as the unconscious and the material world as ego consciousness, Jung's theory can explain the creation of the material world as the natural emergence of ego consciousness out of the unconscious and can explain the rejection of that world as the equally natural, if unfortunate, response of an inflated ego to its rediscovery of the unconscious. Eliade's theory, it will turn out, can explain only why God creates the material world, not why he rejects it.

Second, I will argue that Jung's theory, not Eliade's, provides an alternative to the particularistic subject of the Poimandres. For Jung's theory transforms the subject of the myth from the external world to the world of man's mind. The subject ceases to be metaphysical and becomes psychological. Because the subject of myth for Eliade is the external world of the sacred and the profane, his theory does not alter the particularistic subject of the Poimandres.

Third, I will argue that the theories of both Eliade and Jung provide an alternative--better, supplement--to the particularistic function of the Poimandres. The myth ceases to serve merely to reveal the existence of the godhead and becomes a means of reaching it as well. The myth ceases to be merely an explanation of the beginning and end of the cosmos and becomes a vehicle for realizing that end as well. The myth ceases merely to tell man what to do and also enables him to do it. The myth ceases to be

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merely a statement and becomes an activity, too. It becomes not merely "expressive" but also "instrumental."

Fourth and last, I will argue that the theories of Eliade and Jung, as theories, necessarily "universalize" both the subject and the function of the Poimandres. The subject of the myth ceases to be merely the particular, Gnostic world of immaterial and material realities and becomes the universal world, metaphysical or psychological, of ultimate and everyday realities. Immaterial Mind and material Nature become only the particular forms which those realities take. The Gnostic yearning to transcend the material world and reach the godhead becomes only an instance of every man's yearning to transcend everyday reality and reach ultimate reality. That experience fulfills not just Gnostic man but every man.

At the least, the desire merely to encounter ultimate reality becomes universal. At the most, the desire to return wholly and permanently to it becomes universal. In between, the desire to return wholly and permanently becomes an extreme version of the universal desire to do so partly and temporarily. How far the theories of Eliade and Jung can universalize the world-rejecting nature of the Poimandres I will consider at length.

Footnotes

- 1 See Hans Jonas, Gnosis and spätantiker Geist, first ed., II, part 1 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1954), passim.
- 2 See the references below, p. 147 note 25.
- 3 See the references below, p. 153 note 62.
- 4 See the references below, p. 87 note 47.

- 5 See Edward B. Tylor, Primitive Culture, 2 vols., first ed. (London: Murray, 1871); James G. Frazer, The Golden Bough, third ed., 12 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1911-1915); Bronislaw Malinowski, Myth in Primitive Psychology (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1926); Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, How Natives Think, tr. Lilian A. Clare (London: Allen and Unwin, 1926); Claude Lévi-Strauss, "The Structural Study of Myth," Journal of American Folklore, 68 (October-December 1955), 428-444; Sigmund Freud, The Interpretation of Dreams, tr. A. A. Brill (London: Allen, 1913); C. G. Jung and Carl Kerényi, Essays on a Science of Mythology, tr. R. F. C. Hull (New York: Pantheon, 1949); Mircea Eliade, Myth and Reality, tr. Willard R. Trask (New York: Harper, 1963); Rudolf Bultmann, "New Testament and Mythology," in Kerygma and Myth, ed. Hans Werner Bartsch, tr. Reginald H. Fuller (London: SPCK, 1953), 1-44. See also Robert A. Segal, "In Defense of Mythology: The History of Theories of Myth," Annals of Scholarship, 1(Winter 1980), 3-49.
- 6 Hans Jonas, "Delimitation of the Gnostic Phenomenon--Typological and Historical," in Le Origini dello Gnosticismo, ed. Ugo Bianchi (Leiden: Brill, 1967), 93.
- 7 See, for example, E. F. Scott, "Gnosticism," in Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, ed. James Hastings, VI (1913), 234.
- 8 See, for example, A.-J. Festugière, La Révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste, III (Paris: Librairie Lecoffre, 1953), 23-26.
- 9 See, for example, Robert M. Grant, Gnosticism and Early Christianity, rev. ed. (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1966), ch. 5.

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- 10 See, for example, Jonas, Gnosis und spätantiker Geist, II, part 1, esp. ch. 4; Jonas, "Myth and Mysticism: A Study of Objectification and Interiorization in Religious Thought," Journal of Religion, 49 (October 1969), 315-329; Jonas, "Delimitation of the Gnostic Phenomenon--Typological and Historical," 107. To be sure, Jonas equates philosophy with not only impersonal forces rather than personalities but also internal forces rather than external ones, so that the shift from myth to philosophy is also a shift from gods projected onto the cosmos to gods found mystically within.

Chapter 1

The *Poimandres* as a Gnostic Myth

The Corpus Hermeticum, of which the Poimandres is the first tractate, is a collection of from fourteen to eighteen ancient Greek texts. The Corpus is part of the *Hermetica*(1), an array of Greek and Latin texts written in Egypt during the Greco-Roman period. The *Hermetica* is composed of two kinds of texts: metaphysical ones, which served to explain the world, and magical, astrological, and alchemical ones, which served more practically to cure illnesses, cast spells, and tell the future. So great is the difference between the one kind of text and the other that they may share only their purported origin: a revelation by the god Hermes Trismegistus, an amalgam of Thoth, the Egyptian god of wisdom, and Hermes, the Greek messenger god.

The differences within the metaphysical and the magical *Hermetica* are as great as those between them. The metaphysical works, of which the ones forming the Corpus are the most important, evince two opposed outlooks: an optimistic, worldly, monistic one, and a pessimistic, otherworldly, radically dualistic one. The Poimandres is the Hermetic work most resolutely pessimistic.

Gnosticism

Gnosticism is definable in several ways. Defined most narrowly(2), it is a second-century Christian heresy. By this definition the Poimandres does not qualify: it is almost entirely non-Christian. In addition, it lacks two other common prerequisites: a savior god distinct from the

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highest god and, more, a creator god opposed to the highest god(3).

Defined more broadly(4), Gnosticism is not merely a Christian phenomenon. It is non-Christian and even pre-Christian as well. It spans the Hellenistic world and encompasses Christianity rather than is encompassed by it. The Nag Hammadi discovery(5) firmly establishes Gnosticism as at least a non-Christian, whether or not pre-Christian, movement.

Gnosticism here is the belief in a radical, or antithetical, dualism of immateriality and matter. More specifically, it is the belief in radical dualism in man, the cosmos, and god; the primordial unity of all immateriality; the yearning to restore that unity; the present entrapment of a portion of immateriality in man; the need for knowledge to reveal to man that entrapment; and the need for a savior to reveal to him that knowledge.

By this definition the Poimandres qualifies as Gnostic, and this definition will be used here. The fact that the savior god is the same as the highest god does not temper the severity of the dualism. Nor, more important, does the fact that the creator god is the agent rather than the opponent of the highest god temper it. The dutifulness of the creator god simply underscores the key paradox in not only the Poimandres but Gnosticism generally: how an omniscient and omnipotent God can permit, let alone direct, the creation of a world which he then seeks to topple.

Within Gnosticism there are degrees of even radical dualism. First, texts in which matter originates out of immateriality are less radically dualistic than ones in which matter is pre-existent. At the same time the origin of matter out of immateriality does not constitute the reconciliation of the two and therefore the resolution of the dualism. The emergence of matter out of immateriality is paradoxical, so that the opposition between the one and the other remains. In texts in which matter is pre-existent the involvement of immateriality in the creation of the material world does not resolve the

even greater tension but on the contrary only makes any involvement even more paradoxical. In the Poimandres matter may or may not be pre-existent.

Second, texts in which matter, whatever its origin, is illusory are obviously less radically dualistic than ones in which matter, however ephemeral, is real. In texts like the Gospel of Truth matter exists only as long as one deems it real. The Poimandres never goes this far: matter is real in fact, not just in the eyes of the unenlightened beholder. In this respect the text is more radically dualistic.

Third, texts in which matter is merely inferior to immateriality are clearly less radically dualistic than ones in which matter is outright evil. To be sure, if matter is no more than inferior, the dualism is mild rather than radical, the aim is only to subordinate rather than to reject matter, and by the definition employed here there is no Gnosticism. The dualism is radical and therefore Gnostic only when the aim is to eliminate matter altogether, in which case matter is more than merely inferior. Still, texts like the Poimandres, which do not explicitly label matter evil, are less radically dualistic than ones which do.

Fourth and last, texts which consider the creation of the material world the means to a better end are necessarily less radically dualistic than ones which consider it a sheer mistake. For if creation, even by its dissolution, leads to an "improved" godhead, matter abets immateriality and thereby stands less opposed to it. If, by contrast, the dissolution of creation yields the sheer restoration of the original godhead, matter is of no help. Seeking as it does the restoration of the pristine godhead, the Poimandres is in this respect more radically dualistic.

The Text(6)

(section 1) Once, when I had been reflecting on the things that are, and my thought had soared very high while the

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senses of my body had been curbed--like those asleep who have been weighed down by overeating or physical fatigue--it seemed to me that some exceedingly large, infinite being was calling my name and saying to me: What do you wish to hear and see and, having understood, to learn and know?

(sec. 2) I said: Who are you? I am, he said, Poimandres, the mind of absolute authority. I know what you wish, and I am with you everywhere.

(sec. 3) I said: I want to learn about the things that are, to perceive their nature, and to know God. How (much), I said, I wish to hear! He said to me again: Hold fast in your mind what you want to learn, and I will teach you.

(sec. 4) Having said this, he changed his form, and immediately all things opened up to me at once, and I saw a limitless sight: everything had become light, serene and happy. I fell in love with the sight. But shortly afterwards there appeared in one part (of the light) a darkness hanging downwards, dreadful and gloomy, coiling sinuously, so that to me it resembled a snake. Then the darkness changed into a kind of moist Nature, indescribably agitated and giving off smoke, as if from a fire, and uttering a kind of unutterable, mournful sound. Then an inarticulate cry went forth from it, as if it were a voice of fire.

(sec. 5) From out of the light a holy Word (i.e., Logos) mounted on Nature, and pure fire leaped out of the moist Nature upwards to the height. It (i.e., fire) was light, swift, and active all at once, and the air, being light, followed the fire, rising up from the earth and the water to the fire, so that it seemed to hang from it (i.e., fire). The earth and the water (, however,) remained mingled, so that one could not see the earth (apart) from the water. But they were moved to obedience by the breath-like Word hovering over them. (Or: But they were kept in motion by hearing the breath-like Word hovering over them.)

(sec. 6) Poimandres said to me: Do you understand what this vision means? Yes, I said: I shall (i.e., resolve to) understand it. That light, he said, is I, Mind (i.e., Nous), your God, who antedates the moist Nature which appeared

out of the darkness. The bright Word from Mind is the son of God. What then, I said? Know this: that which in you sees and hears (i.e., your word) is the Word of the Lord, and the mind (in you) is God the Father (i.e., Father Mind). For they are not separated from each other. Rather, their union is (i.e., constitutes) life. Thank you, I said. (Poimandres:) Now, then, fix your mind on the light and familiarize yourself with it.

(sec. 7) With these words he gazed at me for a long time, such that I trembled at the sight of him. Then, when he had raised his head, I beheld in my mind the light which (now) consisted of countless powers and which had (now) become a limitless cosmos. The fire was encompassed by a great power and, having been subdued, stood still. This is what I saw, understanding it through the word(s) of Poimandres.

(sec. 8) As I was still astonished, he said to me again: You saw in the Mind the archetypal form, which antedates the infinite beginning. Thus Poimandres said to me. I said: From where, then, have the elements of Nature come? To this he said again: From the Will of God, which, having received the Word and having beheld the beautiful (archetypal) world, imitated it, making a world out of her own elements and (out of) her offspring, the souls.

(sec. 9) But the Mind, God, being androgynous and life and light, brought forth, by means of a word, another Mind, the Demiurge, who, as god of fire and air (or: wind), fashioned seven Governors, who encompass the material world in their spheres. Their government is called Fate.

(sec. 10) At once the Word of God leaped out of the downward hanging elements into the pure (part of the) created (i.e., material) world and was united with the Demiurgical Mind, for it (i.e., Word) was consubstantial (with the Demiurge). The downward hanging elements of Nature were left behind, deprived of reason, so that they were (i.e., became) sheer matter.

(sec. 11) Together with the Word, the Demiurgical Mind, encompassing the spheres and spinning them in a whirl, set his creations revolving and let them turn from an

indeterminate beginning to an infinite end, for it (i.e., their revolution) begins where it ends. Their revolution, as the Mind wanted, brought forth from the downward hanging elements irrational living beings, for he did not grant them reason: the air brought forth birds, the water fish, and--the earth and the water having been separated from each other, as the Mind wanted--the earth brought forth from herself the animals which it had in itself: quadrupeds and reptiles, both wild and tame beasts.

(sec. 12) But the Mind, the Father of all, who is life and light, brought forth a (Primal) Man (i.e., Anthropos) equal to himself. He loved Man as his own son, for he (i.e., Man) was very beautiful, since he possessed the image of his Father. Actually, it was his own form which God loved. He (i.e., God) handed over to him all his creations.

(sec. 13) Having beheld what the Demiurge had created in the fire, Man wished to create as well, and the Father consented. So entering the Demiurgical realm, where he was to have full power, he beheld his brother's creations. The Governors loved him, and each gave him a share of his own position. After he had mastered their essence and had received a share of their nature, he wished to break through the bounds of their spheres and to learn well (or: subdue) the power of him who rules over the fire.

(sec. 14) So he (i.e., Man) who had full power over the world of mortal beings and irrational living beings bent downward through the harmony (of the spheres), having (already) broken through its exterior, and showed to downward hanging Nature the beautiful form of God. When she saw that he possessed insatiable beauty and every power of the Governors plus the form of God, she smiled with love. For she saw the image of the most beautiful form of Man in the water and its shadow over the land. When he (in turn) saw the form similar to himself existing in her in the water, he loved it and wished to inhabit it. Immediately with the wish came the deed, and he (thus) inhabited the irrational form. When Nature had received her beloved, she embraced him completely, and they mingled, for they were lovers.

(sec. 15) For this reason man, distinct from all (other) living beings on earth, is twofold: mortal through the body, immortal through the essential man. For although he is immortal and has power over all, he suffers mortality, for he is subject to Fate. Although he is above the harmony (of the spheres), he has become a slave to the harmony. Although he is androgynous, for he is from an androgynous father, and although he is sleepless, for he is from a sleepless father, he is conquered by love and sleep.

(sec. 16) After this (I said:) Oh my Mind. I, too, love (your) word (i.e., teaching). Poimandres said: This is the mystery kept hidden until this day: Nature, having had intercourse with Man, brought forth the most wonderful wonder. Since he himself possessed the nature of the harmony of the seven, which, as I said to you, are of fire and air (or: wind), Nature did not delay but immediately brought forth seven men, corresponding to the natures of the seven Governors, androgynous and standing upright. After this (I said:) Oh, Poimandres, I have now had a great desire, and I desire to hear. Do not run away. Said Poimandres: Be quiet. I have not yet unfolded to you the first point. I said: I am quiet.

(sec. 17) The birth of these seven happened as follows, as I (i.e., Poimandres) said. The earth was the female and the water the male. From fire Nature took ripeness and from ether breath and brought forth the body corresponding to the form of Man. From life and light Man became soul and mind: from life soul and from light mind. All things in the material world remained thus until the end of a period of time and the beginnings of kinds.

(sec. 18) (Poimandres:) Hear the remaining point which you desire to hear. When the period ended, the bond binding all things was loosened by the will of God. All living beings, being androgynous, were separated at the same time as man. Some became males, others females. Immediately, God, through a sacred word, said: Increase in increase and increase in increase, all you creatures and creations. Let him who is thoughtful recognize that he is immortal and that the cause of death is love. And (let him recognize) all things that exist.

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(sec. 19) When he (i.e., Poimandres) had said this, Providence, through Fate and the harmony (of the spheres), made the intercourses and established the generations, and all things were multiplied according to their species. He who has recognized himself comes into abounding good, but he who, out of the error of love, has loved the body remains in the dark straying, suffering through the senses the things of death.

(sec. 20) What sin so great, I (i.e., narrator) said, have the ignorant committed to be deprived of immortality? (Poimandres:) Indeed, you seem not to have heeded what you heard. Did I not tell you to think? (Narrator:) I am thinking and remembering and at the same time I am thankful. (Poimandres:) If you have thought, tell me, Why do those who are in death deserve death? (Narrator:) Because prior to the individual body is the gloomy darkness, from which (came) the moist Nature, of which the body was composed in the material world, by which death is watered.

(sec. 21) (Poimandres:) Indeed, you have understood correctly. But how does "he who has recognized himself go toward him," as the word of God has it? I said: Because the Father of all things is composed of light and life, and from him Man is born. (Poimandres:) You have spoken well. Light and life are God and Father, from whom Man was born. If, then, you learn that he (i.e., Man) is (composed) of light and life and that you (i.e., narrator) are (composed) of them, you will go back to life. This is what Poimandres told me. I said: But tell me yet, How will I go to life, oh my Mind? For God says, "Let the thoughtful man recognize himself."

(sec. 22) (I said:) Do not all men possess mind? (Poimandres:) Be quiet, you there who are chattering. I myself, Mind, am present with holy, good, pure, merciful, and pious men, and my presence proves helpful (to them). Immediately they recognize all things, propitiate the Father with love, and give thanks, praising and hymning him regularly with love. Before handing over the body to its proper death they loathe the senses, for they know their

effects. Even more so, I myself, Mind, will not permit the effects which attack the body to be fulfilled. As the gatekeeper, I will close off the entrances to the evil and shameful effects by cutting off the(ir) imaginations.

(sec. 23) But to the foolish, evil, wicked, envious, selfish, murderous, and impious ones I am far away, giving way to the avenging demon. By increasing the sharpness of the fire, he attacks one through the senses and prepares him for more lawless actions, so that he may meet with more tortures. He does not cease having his desire for inordinate desires, which fight in the dark insatiably, and this tortures (him) and further increases the fire in him.

(sec. 24) (I said:) You have taught me well all things, Oh Mind, as I wished. But tell me yet of the ascent which takes place. To this Poimandres said: First, upon the death of the material body you hand over the body itself for alteration, and the form which you had becomes invisible. You hand over your (now) inactive character to the demon. The senses of the body return to their own sources, becoming part (of them) and rising together again in their (i.e., sources') energies. Passion and desire go to the irrational nature.

(sec. 25) In this way man then rushes up through the harmony. At the first zone he gives up the power to grow and decrease; at the second, malice, (hereafter) powerless; at the third, lust, (hereafter) powerless; at the fourth, pride, (hereafter) without surplus; at the fifth, audacity; at the sixth, covetousness (growing out) of wealth, (hereafter) powerless; and at the seventh zone, deceit.

(sec. 26) Then, having been stripped of the effects of the harmony, he comes to the eighth nature (i.e., zone), possessing his own power, and with the beings there hymns the Father, and those who are present rejoice at his (i.e., man's) presence. Having been made like those who are with (him), he also hears certain powers beyond the eighth nature (i.e., zone), hymning God in a sweet voice. Then, in order, they go up to the Father, hand themselves over to the powers and, having become powers, enter into God. This is the good end for those who possess knowledge: to

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be deified. Why do you delay further? Since you have received everything, will you not become a guide to the worthy, in order that through you the human race may be saved by God?

(sec. 27) Having said this, Poimandres mingled with the powers. After I had thanked and praised the Father of all things, I went free from him, having been strengthened and taught (by him) the nature of everything and the greatest vision. I began to proclaim to men the beauty of piety and of knowledge: Oh people, earthborn men, you who have surrendered yourselves to drunkenness and sleep and to ignorance of God. Be sober, cease your debauchery, spellbound as you are by irrational sleep.

(sec. 28) When they had heard, they came in unanimity. I said: Why, earthborn men, have you surrendered to death when you have the power to share in immortality? Repent, you who have journeyed with error and have shared in ignorance. Leave the dark light and, having forsaken death, share in immortality.

(sec. 29) Some of them, chattering on, withdrew, surrendering themselves to the way of death. But others cast themselves at (my) feet and begged to be taught. I raised them up and became the guide of the race, teaching the words, how and in what way they will be saved. I planted in them the words of wisdom, and they were nourished by immortal water. When evening came and the ray of the sun began to sink, I exhorted them to thank God. When they had fulfilled their thanksgiving, each man went to his own bed.

(sec. 30) I wrote down for myself (or: I inscribed in my memory) the kindness of Poimandres, and having been filled with what I had desired, I greatly rejoiced. The sleep of the body became the wakefulness of the soul, the closing of the eyes true vision, my silence pregnant with the good, and the utterance of the word the offspring of good things. This happened (to me) when I received from my Mind--i.e., Poimandres--the word of absolute sovereignty. Being divinely inspired by the truth, I came. Therefore with all my soul and strength I give praise to God the Father.

(sec. 31) Holy is God, the Father of all.
 Holy is God, whose will is done by his own powers.
 Holy is God, who wants to be known and is known to his own.
 Holy are you, who through the Word have created what exists.
 Holy are you, of whom all nature became an image.
 Holy are you, whom nature has not formed.
 Holy are you, who are stronger than every power.
 Holy are you, who are greater than every excellence.
 Holy are you, who are better than praises.

Accept rational, pure sacrifices from a soul and heart which stretch out toward you, (oh) unspeakable, ineffable one named in silence.

(sec. 32) I pray that I may not fall from the knowledge of that which is appropriate to our being: grant me (this) and strengthen me. With this grace I will enlighten those of (my) race who are in ignorance--my brothers, your sons. Therefore I believe and bear witness. I go to life and light. Blessed are you, Father. Your man wishes to sanctify (together) with you, just as you have given over to him all authority.

Analysis

The Poimandres is a story within a story. It is the story of creation set within the story of a quest for salvation. The story of creation gets presented in detail. The story of the quest is simply presupposed. One never learns who the Gnostic narrator is or what inspires his search for a world beyond the everyday one. The text simply opens with his reflecting intensely on the nature of things by curbing his senses and thereby rejecting the material world for a higher one (sec. 1).

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Because the heart of every Gnostic text is exactly the revelation of a world beyond the everyday, material one, prior to the revelation the recipient frequently not simply is content with the sole, present world he knows but is oblivious to even the possibility of another one. In that case god sends a revelation precisely to awaken both speculation and discontent. By contrast, the narrator in the Poimandres is already awakened: his method of seeking knowledge presupposes the radical dualism revealed. How he has already discovered it is the missing story of his quest. Still, that quest roots the abstract revelation which follows in his actual experience. He secures the revelation only because he is ready for it, whatever the source of his readiness.

But if on his own the narrator can seek true knowledge, he cannot find it. Exactly because the true, radically dualistic nature of reality not simply transcends but outright contradicts the monistic, entirely material reality which he, like the rest of mankind, has known so far, he cannot on his own discover it. Rather than making observations or deductions, he awaits revelation. Still, his inability to discover immaterial reality on his own is less striking than, in the wake of the capacity of the material world to explain itself, his search for anything nonmaterial.

Whether or not the narrator has been seeking the god who appears, he is unfamiliar with him, for he must ask the god his name. "Poimandres" (ποιμάνδρης), which probably means "man shepherd" (ὁ ἄνθρωπος ὁ ποιμήν) or "shepherd of man" (ποιμήν ἀνθρώπων)(7), is likely identical with Hermes Trismegistus, who in other Hermetic writings is both the highest god and the revealer to man(8). Where in most Gnostic myths the revealer is distinct from the highest god, who sends him, Poimandres is both(9).

No sooner does Poimandres agree to reveal the nature of reality than he transforms himself into sheer "light" (φῶς) (sec. 4). He "becomes" (γίγνομαι) everything, and everything becomes light (sec. 4).

Because God is identical with the light (sec. 6), and because the light is everything, God is identical with the

world, not, as in mainstream Judaism and Christianity, above it(10). The world with which he is identical is, however, the immaterial rather than the material one. Because God is identical with that world, he is an impersonal principle as well as a personality. Because he is identical with the whole immaterial world, he is not simply one deity but deity, or godhead, itself.

Shortly after everything becomes light, "darkness" (σκότος) appears (sec. 4). Incontestably, the darkness appears after the light. The question is whether it arises after the light(11). If the darkness arises after the light, it must arise out of the light, since the light encompasses everything(12). If, however, the darkness existed before its appearance and somehow only appears later, it likely has always existed alongside the light(13).

On the one hand the sheer fact that the darkness appears after the light suggests that it arises out of the light. The subsequent heeding by the light of the plaintive cry of the transformed darkness (sec. 5) suggests a prior attachment. On the other hand the sheer fact that the text does not describe any initial emergence of the darkness out of the light suggests that the darkness did not emerge out of it. If, moreover, the darkness did arise out of the light, then the story is incomplete: it begins in medias res, after not just the initial but the decisive development has occurred(14).

Just as Poimandres changes into light, which becomes in turn the immaterial cosmos, so the darkness changes "into a kind of moist Nature" (εἰς ὑγρᾶν τινα φύσιν) (sec. 4), which is the raw matter out of which the material world is made but which, as a character in myth, is also a personality.

The state of Nature is the opposite of that of the light. Where the light, itself personified, is "serene" (εὐδιδος) and "happy" (ἡλαρός) (sec. 4), Nature is "indescribably agitated" (ἀφάτως ταρασσου), and even the seemingly impersonal darkness from which it comes is "gloomy" (στρυγνός) (sec. 4). Where the light is alluring, Nature, or the darkness, is "dreadful" (φοβερός) (sec. 4).

Where the light is unchanging, Nature changes form. Where the light proceeds to utter speech (sec. 5), Nature utters a groan and an "inarticulate cry" (βοή ασυνάρθρωε) (sec. 4).

In response to that cry the light emanates a "Word," or "Logos" (λόγος) (sec. 5), which, as an emanation, is part of the light: the light produces the Word not merely by itself but out of itself.

Whether as sexual partner or only as midwife, the Word enables Nature to release, which means bear, fire (πῦρ) and air (πνεῦμα) (sec. 5), both of which are, like the emanations of God, at once her children and parts of herself. They are likewise at once impersonal principles and personalities. Their birth is equivalent to their differentiation, which is thus the manner of creation.

The moment fire and air are differentiated, they ascend. Although they do not reach the light, they do soar above the Word and so do not merely take its place (sec. 5). They form the supralunar realm--the highest material realm.

The other two elements, earth (γῆ) and water (ὕδωρ), perhaps seek to rise as well but, if so, are too heavy to budge. They remain not only below fire and air, where they form the sublunar realm, but also "intermingled" (συμμίγνυμι) (sec. 5). Their differentiation comes only later (sec. 11). Still, they get set in orderly motion by the Word (sec. 5).

Whatever attracts fire and air to the light is surely no different from whatever attracts Nature as a whole. The serenity and happiness of the light may be inherently enchanting or may symbolize a deeper enchantment of some kind. In any case the attraction appears to be natural.

One might, however, expect matter, like the narrator of the story, to be ignorant of its true status and therefore complacent rather than restless. One might, then, propose the opposite: that fire and air are themselves parts of divinity trapped in matter and so, like other parts, are inherently restless. But the portion of at least the fire

which Primal Man later receives from the seven Governors is evil and can therefore scarcely be divine. If, moreover, fire and air were parts of divinity trapped in matter, the Poimandres would be failing to explain their initial entrapment. More likely, then, fire and air are material.

If the response of fire and air to the Word requires an explanation, God's earlier responding to Nature with the Word requires far more of one. Why God responds to the cry of an entity which proves to be his nemesis the Poimandres does not say. God's response here is only the first of a series of responses leading to the creation of the very material world which he then opposes.

Insofar as God is an impersonal principle, his response is entirely mechanical. But in the wake of the radical dualism of immateriality and matter, that response is inexplicable: whether or not matter naturally seeks immateriality, immateriality should automatically spurn it.

In responding to the cry of Nature, God seems in fact to be far more of a personality than an impersonal force. He acts neither necessarily nor, like Plotinus' impersonal One, spontaneously but rather both willfully and freely(15). Yet here, too, his response may be inexplicable. Insofar as the Poimandres is philosophy, God, even as a personality, is a wholly rational agent. He not only has both omniscience and omnipotence but also acts on the basis of them. In that case his response remains inexplicable: he not only should but can act differently.

Yet insofar as the Poimandres is less philosophy than myth, God may not be wholly rational. He has feelings as well as a mind and power. He remains both omniscient and omnipotent, but he may not always act accordingly. He harbors an emotional side, which can override his reason. Though the text itself does not say, God may, then, be responding to the cry of Nature out of compassion, which makes his response no less unfortunate but at least explicable.

Why, furthermore, God responds by emanating a part of himself, thereby dividing himself, the text does not say either. Since the ideal state proves to be one of not just

sheer but unified divinity, any emanation, its encounter with matter aside, constitutes a fall. Again, as a wholly rational personality, not to say an impersonal force, God should be deterred, but as an emotional as well as rational entity he is likely stirred by feelings. His complicity in his own fall is therefore explicable, even if, again, scarcely less lamentable.

Taken as myth, the Poimandres not merely "humanizes" God, whose irrational behavior therefore becomes explicable, but also tells a story, in which anything, explicable or not, can happen. If on the one hand the Poimandres, as myth, provides an explanation that as philosophy it cannot, on the other hand the Poimandres, as myth, does not, like philosophy, need to provide an explanation. Events happen because the story says that they do.

Having transformed himself into the light, Poimandres tells the narrator that that light is identical with him, Poimandres; that he, the personality Poimandres, is identical with the impersonal principle Mind, or Nous; that Mind is in turn identical with the personality God; that God antedates Nature, though the question remains whether God antedates the darkness out of which Nature emerged; and that the Word, which is also a personality as well as an impersonal principle, is the "son of God" (ὁ υἱὸς θεοῦ) (sec. 6). As father and son, Mind and the Word are here personalities rather than impersonal principles.

Poimandres reveals above all that the narrator himself possesses both Mind and the Word, in which case he, man, is also god. But he is more: he is not just another god alongside the highest God but the highest God himself. Man and God are not just divine or even equal but outright identical(16). Their proper relationship is one of outright union.

To say that man is identical with God is to say that the fall of man, subsequently described, is the fall of God. God's saving man is therefore not selfless, as in mainstream Judaism and Christianity, but selfish: in saving man God is saving himself.

To say that man is identical with God is to say, moreover, that he is identical with the immaterial world. Knowledge of that world is therefore self-knowledge. Similarly, knowledge of the material world is identical with man's knowledge of the material part of himself. Man must understand the world in order to understand himself.

The narrator has so far seen God become light and light emanate the Word. Now he sees the order in the light: the "countless powers" (δύναμεις ἀναρίθμηται) (sec. 7) into which the light is differentiated. These powers are the "archetypal forms" (ἀρχέτυπον εἶδος) of the cosmos (sec. 8). They comprise the immaterial pattern of the material world. Presumably, there are as many forms as kinds of material phenomena.

The narrator sees not only countless powers but also fire, which is encompassed and subdued by a "great power" (δύναμις μέγιστος) (sec. 7). In the first place it is not clear what the fire has to do with the immaterial world of forms. In the second place it is not clear what the "great power" is. Like the "great power," the Demiurge encompasses and so perhaps subdues fire, but at this point the Demiurge does not exist(17). The Word exists, but it lies below fire, either embedded in earth and water or hovering above them. Indeed, if it existed beyond the fire, it would not later have to be freed(18). Like the great power, the archetypal "powers" (δύναμεις) encompass the material world and therefore the fire, but it is hard to see how any of them, as immaterial entities, can "subdue" (κρατέω) a material entity(19).

The narrator has already seen the division of Nature into four elements through contact with the Word. Now he learns the details of that process: upon receipt of the Word the "Will of God" was able to behold the archetypal world and order the material world accordingly--its initial ordering being exactly the division into the four prime elements. The Will of God first passively received the Word, but the Word then transformed the Will into an active creator, who "made a cosmos" (κοσμοποίησω) out of the four elements (sec. 8).

The "Will of God" (βουλὴ θεοῦ) appears here (sec. 8) for the first and, as an active force, last time. Because the creation or emanation of it never gets mentioned, it likely refers to an existing entity. Perhaps it refers to Nature(20). Like Nature, the Will is feminine(21), "receives" (λαμβάνω) the Word sexually(22), bears offspring, and thereby gets ordered (sec. 8). Where, however, the Word ordered Nature into four elements (sec. 5), upon receipt of the Word the Will orders herself (sec. 8). Where, furthermore, the offspring of Nature are material "fire" and "air," those of the Will are the presumably immaterial "souls" (ψυχὴ) of some kind (sec. 8). Where, finally, Nature may not have arisen out of God, the Will, as the Will of God, surely must(23). Since, in fact, God is next characterized as male and female alike (sec. 9), not only the masculine partner Word but also the feminine partner Will must surely originate within him(24).

Perhaps the Will is not Nature but the Word(25). This identification makes better sense of the Will as the source of the four elements. For if the Will is Nature, the narrator, one might argue, has already learned that Nature is the source of the elements, in which case the revelation at hand would be redundant. The equation of the Will with the Word would, however, make a masculine entity identical with a feminine one and, more, would make the Will the recipient of itself! Overall, the equation of the Will with Nature is therefore more plausible(26).

Whose souls the Will bears is even less clear than who the Will is. The souls, or minds, of human beings are the inheritance of Primal Man, who does not yet exist. No other entities in the story possess souls(27), for otherwise they would be divine. The reference may, then, be an error(28).

After the Word, God emanates the "Demiurge" (δημιουργός) (sec. 9), whose efforts begin where those of the Word ended. The Demiurge uses fire and air, which ascended upon the descent of the Word, to make seven "Governors" (διοικητεῖς), who, though never identified, are doubtless the seven known planets: the moon,

Mercury, Venus, the sun, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn (sec. 9). They do not include the fixed stars, to which the text never even alludes. The planets exist near the boundary of the material world. Beyond them lies the immaterial world of God and the archetypal forms. The planets encircle the rest of the material world and presumably through their rotation control it: their "government" (διοίκησις) constitutes "Fate" (εἰμαρμένη) (sec. 9).

The text fails to explain the necessity of the Demiurge in the wake of the Word and vice versa(29). Perhaps the two represent rival cosmogonic traditions, each with its own creator(30).

In any event the Demiurge plays a far more important role in creation than the Word, even if the Word aids him (sec. 11). The text thus characterizes the Demiurge as "another Mind" (ἕτερος Νοῦς) alongside God (sec. 9). Just as, one might say, God is the Mind of the immaterial world, so the Demiurge is the Mind of the material world. He is far more of an independent agent than the Word, which is more like a mere tool of God(31).

The Poimandres values the Demiurge not only far more than it does the Word but also far more than most Gnostic texts do. Indeed, for this reason above all the Poimandres is often considered less than fully Gnostic. However evil the world created by the Demiurge may turn out to be, the Demiurge himself remains uncorrupted. As a good, nearly equal ally of God rather than, as in most Gnostic texts, his inferior and at times even evil antagonist(32), the Demiurge fails to muster the rivalry that radical dualism in heaven requires.

Insofar as the Poimandres is philosophy, the goodness and dutifulness of the Demiurge are simply irreconcilable with the evilness of the world he creates. If he is faithfully obeying God, one must, again, blame God for that evilness, which is therefore inexplicable. But insofar as the Poimandres is myth, the goodness and dutifulness of the Demiurge manage to produce an evil world because the story says that they do.

Immediately at birth, the Demiurge, like the Word, descends toward matter. Where, however, the Word

descended all the way to the earth, the Demiurge remains above fire and air. The moment he descends, the Word "leaps" (πηδάω) out of the earth to unite with him (sec. 10), just as fire and air "leaped out" (ἐκπηδάω) toward the light upon the descent of the Word itself (sec. 5). Though presumably directed by God to descend into matter, the Word somehow became trapped in it and is now at last able to free itself by an almost magnetic-like attraction to the Demiurge, which is thus virtually its savior(33). The text ascribes that attraction to the "consubstantiality" of the two (sec. 10)(34).

Once freed, the Word ascends not all the way back to the godhead but to only the level of the Demiurge (sec. 10), whom it then helps create the rest of the world. Conversely, the Demiurge, by remaining at the border of the material world, does not, like the Word and, later, Primal Man, get trapped himself(35).

The Demiurge arises less to release the Word than to create the world. Indeed, his release of the Word seems almost a byproduct of his descent in order to create--a further expression of the tension between the evilness of the material world and the willfulness of its creation.

Having earlier fashioned fire and air into the seven planets and placed them in their spheres (sec. 9), the Demiurge now sets them revolving (sec. 11). Somehow their revolution spurs the remaining elements to "bring forth" (φέρω) various "irrational" (ἄλογα) "living beings" (ζῷα): birds from the air, fish from the water, and animals from the earth (sec. 11). Plants never get mentioned(36). Bereft of the Word, earth and water would have regressed to their original chaotic state had the Demiurge not intervened. That intervention not only preserves but enhances their order: earth and water get separated for the first time--their ability to produce animals and fish presupposing their separation.

If these living things are "irrational" because, tautologically, they lack reason(37), the planets, which are presumably rational, should be irrational as well. For they are created out of fire and air, not out of reason. Perhaps

the creation of the living beings at only the behest of the Demiurge rather than, like the planets, by the Demiurge himself makes them irrational--if, that is, the revolution of the planets which impels the air, water, and earth to produce them represents only indirect creation by the Demiurge.

With the creation of living beings the Demiurge completes his work. The creation of only "Primal Man" ("Ἀνθρωπος) remains(38). Where the Demiurge, directly or indirectly, creates all other living beings, God himself fathers Man (sec. 12). Had the Demiurge created Man, Man would at best have been only his equal, not, as the story intends, his superior.

Although the Word as well as Man is the "son of God" (υἱὸς θεοῦ) (sec. 6), the emphasis is on the subordination of the Word to God, not their equality. Although the Demiurge is, as noted, "another Mind," he is not, like Man, explicitly "equal" (ἴσος) (sec. 12) to God. Although the Demiurge is the "brother" (ἀδελφός) of Man (sec. 13), and although the Word is "consubstantial" (ὁμοούσιος) with the Demiurge (sec. 10), kinship and consubstantiality do not necessarily mean equality. Although God himself "brings forth" (ἀποκυέω) both the Demiurge and Man (secs. 9, 12), Man alone "bears the image of his father" (τὴν τοῦ πατρὸς εἰκόνα ἔχων) (sec. 12). God "loves him" alone "as his son" (ἠγάσθη ὡς ἰδίου τέκνου) (sec. 12).

God's love of Man is not simply paternal but sexual: God explicitly "loves" (ἐρώω) his son's beauty (sec. 12)(39). Yet that love is not incestuous but narcissistic: in his son's beauty God truly loves his own (sec. 12). For in the fashion of Genesis 1.26, Man is in God's own "image," (εἰκόν) (40), and it is with that image, or "form" (μορφή), that God falls in love (sec. 12). Presumably, the perfect quality of God's, and so Man's, beauty is what entrances God(41).

Insofar as God is perfect, his narcissism would not seem improper. Yet the Poimandres clearly condemns narcissism as a delusion to which an omniscient God is somehow nevertheless subject. Narcissism blinds God to

the true relationship between himself and Man, just as it later blinds Man to the true, if opposite, relationship between himself and Nature. The truth to which God is blind is twofold: on the one hand that Man is only an image of God, not God himself; on the other hand that Man is really only a part of God, not a separate entity.

Indeed, Man, like both the Word and the Demiurge, is less than God himself precisely insofar as he is an independent entity. All three emanations are inferior to God exactly insofar as they, as individual entities, exist outside the godhead. Because the desired end is a unified godhead, the fall necessarily begins with its division, which comes in response to matter.

Even if superior to God's other emanations, Man, in contrast to them, gets created for no apparent purpose(42). For in contrast to most Gnostic texts in which he appears(43), creation is complete by the time of his birth. Insofar as the Poimandres is philosophy, the emanation of immateriality once creation is complete is as inexplicable as the emanation of it to create. The argument that Man must be created in order to account for the existence of human beings(44) violates the logic of the story, according to which human beings exist only as a consequence of the unintended fall of Man. The argument that Man must be created in order to save man makes no sense: not only does God rather than Man save man, but man's plight is the product of the fall of Man, who is therefore not the savior but the saved(45).

Yet insofar as the Poimandres is myth, God begets a son for the same, unspecified reasons that fathers beget children. Again, God remains both omniscient and omnipotent: he both knows better and can act better. He just does not act on the basis of his knowledge and power.

God "hands over" (παράδωμι) to Man all of creation and lets him create himself for no apparent purpose either (sec. 13). In assuming control over creation Man dispossesses not God, who remains ultimately in control, but the Demiurge, who had earlier dispossessed

the Word. Man proceeds to descend through several levels of the cosmos: first, to the eighth sphere, or outer rim, of the material world, where the Demiurge resides; then through the seven spheres where the planets reside; and finally, to the center of the material world, where the Word had lain.

In desiring not just to rule over creation but, like Nature later, to create himself, Man seems to be motivated by jealousy(46): "having beheld what the Demiurge had created in the fire" (sec. 13)(47), he wants to duplicate the feat. Yet not only does his father consent, but so, implicitly, does the Demiurge: upon Man's entering the Demiurgical sphere, the seven Governors, who are surely under the sway of the Demiurge, "fall in love" (ἔραμαι) (sec. 13) with him, just as God did earlier and as Nature does later, and out of love, not malice(48), bestow on him a share of their "position" (τάξις) (sec. 13).

Man's quest for, presumably, power(49) is the direct cause of his fall. Yet in the light of the emphasis throughout the text on ignorance and knowledge as seemingly the sole cause of at least human evil and good (for example, secs. 1-3, 18-20, 26-29), it might appear wrongheaded to consider an alternative motive like the desire for power on the part of humanity's father. If, however, the true cause of Man's fall is ignorance, the cause of ignorance cannot be the fall itself. Insofar as the fall begins strictly with the birth itself of Man, his ignorance must be innate--the result of his separation from the godhead.

If Man's ignorance is explicable as innate, it is seemingly inexplicable as a full or even partial cause of his fall. If Man can act in the wake of ignorance, he seemingly cannot act on the basis of it. For ignorance seemingly constitutes no motive itself but only the absence of one--better, the absence of an inhibition: knowledge. Man acts not for ignorance itself but for some other reason which knowledge, if present, would block. As a motive, the desire for power is thus compatible with ignorance, which, if a motive at all, is necessarily an insufficient one.

In many Gnostic texts, however, ignorance is not just the absence of knowledge but a mental state of its own(50), which can therefore constitute an actual and even sufficient motive. In the Poimandres itself, then, ignorance likely represents a sufficient, whether or not necessary, explanation of Man's fall--a cause somehow to be reconciled with a quest for power.

Yet to ascribe Man's action to ignorance is to treat the Poimandres as philosophy rather than myth. It is to assume that with more knowledge Man would not do what he does--as if reason, together with power, ruled him. But in fact Man is not only far more of a personality than an impersonal principle but also far more of an emotional personality than a rational one. Man may therefore be acting not out of ignorance, the source of which must in any case be explained, but despite his knowledge, which emotion simply overrides.

As unclear as it still is why Man wants to create, it is even less clear why God lets him. For God must eventually save Man from exactly the consequences of his creating. On the one hand God permits, if not praises, Man's efforts. On the other hand God ultimately, if not immediately, seeks to undo their consequences. When the Poimandres is taken as philosophy, God's action is simply inexplicable(51), but when the Poimandres is taken as myth, it is not. God acts out of either narcissism or, more likely, paternal pride, either of which overrides his omniscience.

Alternatively, God may be unaware of the consequences of Man's actions. But then God would be less than omniscient, which the Poimandres, taken as either myth or philosophy, otherwise surely assumes him to be. Since the Poimandres deems God the revealer of ultimate truth, God would surely have to be omniscient in order to be able to reveal it.

Perhaps God is unable to stop Man. But then God would be less than omnipotent, which, again, the Poimandres, taken as either myth or philosophy, otherwise assumes him to be. Moreover, Man's request for permission to create (sec. 13) would make no sense.

Still another possibility is that Man's initial action--his descent to the supralunar level of the seven planets--is not itself harmful and so need not be opposed. What is improper is only Man's further descent to the sublunar level of the earth(52)--a descent which is therefore not the culmination of any fall of the godhead but a distinct failing of Man's. Man's salvation, however, would thereby require his return to only the supralunar realm, not, as it does, all the way back to the godhead (secs. 25-26). Furthermore, Man's salvation would not thereby require, as it does, the return of his "acquisitions" from the seven Governors (sec. 25)(53) since they belong to the supralunar realm. Above all, a salvation so limited would not mean the severance with matter relentlessly preached by the text since the supralunar realm is as fully material as the sublunar one.

A final possibility, that Man's fall begins not even with his entry into the sublunar realm but only with his mating with Nature(54), suffers from the same difficulties, only magnified. Because Man's salvation requires his return all the way back to the godhead, his fall must begin no later than his descent to the Demiurgical sphere. It must actually begin not with any descent at all but with his separation from God, which is to say with his birth itself. God is surely responsible for that birth. Man's further fall is therefore only the consequence of his initial one.

In any event the relentless denunciation by the text of the created world makes Man's desire to create itself evil, the consequence of that desire aside(55). The continual insistence by the text on God's willfully and freely letting Man create makes God culpable as well(56). One can, then, no more blame Man than the Demiurge for the evilness of the world. God is responsible for the behavior of both.

"Breaking through" (ἀναρρήγνυμι) the "harmony" (ἁρμονία) of the spheres, Man "shows" (δείκνυμι) himself to Nature, who, like God and the Governors before her, falls in love with him: she "smiles in love" (μειλιδιάω ἔρωτι) (sec. 14). Yet what explicitly attracts her is not only Man's "beauty" (κάλλος) but also his

"power" (ἐνέργεια) (sec. 14). Conversely, what beckons Man to the material world is not only its power, or his desire for power over it, but also its beauty (sec. 14), even if his appreciation of beauty emerges only after his appreciation of power. Man's beauty comes from God, but his power comes from the Governors. For what entrances Nature is "the beautiful form (μορφή) of God" he bears on the one hand and the "every power (ἐνέργεια) of the Governors" he bears on the other (sec. 14).

The scenario leading to the embrace of Man and Nature is tripartite(57). First, Man likely initially sees Nature herself, not his projection of himself onto her, but then spontaneously projects his image onto her (sec. 14). That image becomes embedded in Nature, so that his entrapment begins not later but now, however much earlier still the cause of it began.

Second, Nature in turn is likely initially attracted not to Man directly but to the image of him embedded in her. For almost narcissistically she apparently first sees not his form itself but the image of it implanted in the water and earth, which is to say in herself, and falls in love with that image (sec. 14). Still, her love is really for him, not for herself, and so is really not, like his, narcissistic(58).

Third, Man in turn looks again and now sees the same image of himself implanted in her and likewise falls in love with it (sec. 14). What attracts him, like what in him attracts God, is truly narcissistic. Where, however, God's narcissism leads him to indulge Man, the screen onto which he casts his self-love, Man's narcissism compels him to embrace Nature, the screen onto which he in turn casts his self-love. Like Adam and Eve, Man succumbs to temptation, but the true tempter is he himself(59), not female Nature(60). His human descendants' love of their sexual opposites, male and female alike, is the almost happenstance consequence of his love of himself.

In several respects something other than sexual desire might seem to be the cause of Man's fall. First, Man's desire to create, which is what initially prompts him to enter the sublunar realm, is not itself sexual: Man initially

seeks power, not sex, which only follows, not causes, his descent. Second, Man's desire for Nature is, as noted, really narcissistic: Man truly seeks union with himself, not with her. Third, Man is immaterial, so that what attracts him narcissistically is his immaterial self. Fourth and foremost, Man, as the progenitor of androgynous man, is surely androgynous himself and therefore seemingly sexually fulfilled.

In actuality, the direct cause, at least, of Man's fall is sexual. First, even if Man's sexual desire surfaces only, and almost merely coincidentally, after his desire for power, the desire is still sexual. Second, even if Man's sexual desire is narcissistic, the desire is still surely sexual: Man "loves" (φιλέω) the image of himself embedded in Nature (sec. 14). Third, even if Man is attracted to his immaterial self, the attraction is still, like God's, surely sexual: again, Man "loves" the image of his immaterial self embedded in Nature.

Fourth, even if Man is androgynous and therefore sexually complete, he still harbors a sexual desire: he is simply able to fulfill it himself. Although Man mistakes Nature for the object of his desire, she is really only the means. Fifth, androgynous Man is also somehow the "son" (sec. 12) of God and so perhaps desires female Nature herself. Sixth, even if the Poimandres does not explain how an immaterial entity can harbor a sexual desire, much less satisfy that of a material entity, the text still says that it does: as myth, the Poimandres deems Man a full-fledged personality, who thereby possesses not only a soul but also a body. Finally, the Poimandres itself proceeds to single out sexual desire as the prime, if not exclusive, cause of mankind's, and so surely of Man's, entrapment in the material world (for example, secs. 15, 18-20).

Sexual desire, like the desire for power, need not be incompatible with ignorance as the cause of Man's fall. If on the one hand ignorance is itself an insufficient motive on Man's part, sexual desire could be the direct cause and ignorance the underlying one--ignorance allowing Man to act on a desire which knowledge, if present, would veto. If on the other hand ignorance is a sufficient motive on Man's

part, it would still not preclude sexual desire as an additional one.

However much responsible for his fall Man's sexual desire is, that desire might seem to be acquired rather than innate--acquired from the material nature bestowed on Man by the Governors (sec. 13). In actuality, it is not. First, the acquisition from them intensifies only Man's creative desire, not his sexual one: only upon sight of Nature does Man's desire turn sexual. At the same time, second, Nature awakens, not implants, Man's sexual desire: Man has intercourse with her because he is sexually attracted to her (sec. 14). Third, Man is, as noted, sexually attracted to himself, not Nature, who serves as only a vehicle for the realization of his narcissism. Finally, Man is, as also noted, sexually attracted to his immaterial self, which can scarcely be the gift of the material Governors. Consequently, Man's fall begins with his acquisition of his immaterial self, which means, once again, with his birth.

Nature's attraction to Man may explain her original attraction to the light (sec. 4): Nature's possibly mating with the Word sent by the light may be fulfilling the same sexual desire in her as her mating with Man. Where, however, the Word is an emissary sent to Nature by God, who is identical with the light, Man in effect sends himself. Indeed, where God's emanation of the Word is an apparently selfless response to Nature, Man's descent is an entirely selfish one: he descends in order to satisfy himself, not her, whose satisfaction is only coincidental (sec. 14).

The consequence of Man's union with Nature is the twofold(61) nature of their human descendants: man possesses both a "body" (σῶμα), which he inherits from Nature, and an "essential" (οὐσιώδης) self, which he inherits from Man and ultimately God (sec. 15). Through his body he is "mortal" (θνητός) (sec. 15), presumably because it is material and therefore eventually dissolves. Yet according to the Poimandres, man is mortal because he is "subject to Fate" (ὑποκείμενος τῇ εἰμαρμένῃ), which

means subject to the astrological determinism of the "harmony of the spheres" (sec. 15). Likely, subjection to Fate spells mortality because man experiences mortality as beyond his control and so fated.

Through his "essential" nature(62), which means his mind, or soul, man is, conversely, "immortal" (ἀθάνατος) and consequently is above the harmony, or Fate (sec. 15). Doubtless freedom from Fate entails immortality because subjection to Fate is what entails mortality.

Through his "essential" nature man is free from not only Fate and death but also "sexual desire" (ἔρωσις) (sec. 15). For he, like both God (sec. 9) and surely Man, is "androgynous" (ἀρρενόθηλος). He is therefore sexually complete and so beyond the need for further sexual satisfaction, which here means sexual satisfaction with someone of the opposite sex. Through his body, however, man is subject to not just Fate and death but also sexual desire (sec. 15). For he possesses only a single gender, which means that he thereby needs someone of the opposite sex for sexual fulfillment.

As philosophy, the Poimandres fails to explain how not man but Man ever succumbed to sexual desire. For it is scarcely clear not only how an immaterial entity can harbor a seemingly physical desire but also how an androgynous entity, immaterial or not, can harbor a sexual desire it cannot itself fulfill. Possessing as each does only a single gender, Man's human descendants understandably need one another to fulfill their heterosexual desires. Containing both genders, Man should need no one else, in which case he should never have been attracted to Nature, in which case he should never have fallen, at least not into his final entrapment.

As myth, however, the Poimandres "humanizes" Man. Even though Man remains both immaterial and androgynous, he is still sexually attracted to female Nature. The text does not explain how Man can have a sexual drive but simply ascribes it to him.

Yet Man may in fact need only himself. For Nature, as noted, is really only the means, not the object, of his

sexual desire. Because Man mistakes her for the object of his desire, ignorance, not sexuality, is the true cause of his attraction to her. Again, then, ignorance either is a sufficient cause of Man's fall or else merely opens the way for another cause: sexual desire and, earlier, the desire for power. Man's androgyny, like his immateriality, is therefore compatible with his sexual desire as either the direct cause of his fall, if ignorance alone is an insufficient one, or else the mere consequence of ignorance, if sheer ignorance is a sufficient cause.

The "twofold" (διπλοῦς) nature of man makes him "distinct from all (other) living beings on earth" (sec. 15). Where all other living beings are entirely material, man alone is both immaterial and material. Where all other living beings are the progeny of Nature exclusively, even if created at the behest of the Demiurge, man alone is the product of both Man and Nature. Had he been created by Nature alone, even if indirectly ordered by the Demiurge, he would have been like the other living beings: irrational. Had he even been created by Nature but directly ordered by the Demiurge, he would have been like the planets: rational but not divine. Only by being produced by, in part, Man himself is he in part divine.

Perhaps because the gap between Man and mankind is so great, the story needs a transitional stage of seven primal, or "post-primal," androgynes (secs. 16-17)(63). They correspond to the seven Governors but reside on earth, not in the planetary spheres.

After an unspecified time the "bond binding (σύνδεσμος) all things was loosened" (λύω), and "all living beings" became split into males and females. Not only human beings but all other living things were, then, originally androgynous, even though human beings were deemed androgynous through their unique descent from Primal Man (sec. 15)(64).

Much less explicable is the source of this division: God. Still less explicable, God then orders all living things to "increase" (αύξάνω and πληθύνω) (sec. 18)(65)--reproduction everywhere else being the most insidious

form of involvement in matter. Indeed, God immediately proceeds to condemn intercourse, at least among human beings, as exactly the worst form of materiality: "Let him who is thoughtful (ἔννοους) recognize (ἀναγνωρίζω) that he is immortal (ἀθάνατος) and that the cause of death (θάνατος) is love" (ἔρω) (sec. 18)(66).

Clearly, this message, which the text proceeds to restate (for example, secs. 19, 20), is itself a restatement (sec. 15) of the main message of the text. What the restatement here adds or stresses is the role of sexuality as not just the consequence of mortality (sec. 15) but the cause. Love is not the cause of death merely because, as earlier (sec. 15), the body, which love fulfills, is, as material, ephemeral. Almost on the contrary, love is here the cause of death despite the fact that it perpetuates the body through reproduction. What is ordinarily the cause of life is here the cause of death. Love would thus be the cause of death even if the body were immortal.

Conversely, immateriality is immortal because it is divine, and man is immortal because, through Primal Man, he is divine: "If, then, you learn that he (i.e., Man) is (composed) of light and life and that you (i.e., narrator) are (composed) of them, you will go back to life" (sec. 21)--life meaning eternal life. Clearly, the statement of the divinity of man, which the text likewise proceeds to restate (for example, sec. 26), is itself a restatement as well (sec. 6). What the restatement here adds or emphasizes is the consequence for behavior: exactly because man is essentially immaterial (sec. 15), he should cultivate his immateriality.

In Gnostic fashion the text assumes that man engages in sex because he is ignorant (secs. 19, 20) and that once, being "thoughtful" (ἔννοους) (secs. 18, 21), he learns, or "recognizes" (ἀναγνωρίζω) (secs. 18, 19, 21)(67), that sex is evil, he will cease. As argued, ignorance itself may either, as the direct cause, mandate indulgence in the body or, as the indirect cause, simply permit it, in which case the possession of a single-gender body would be the direct cause(68).

The "fate" of man mimics that of his Primal progenitor: the fall of both stems either directly or indirectly from ignorance, involves the corruption of an immaterial essence by contact with matter, and takes the form of above all sexual intercourse. The difference is that man begins fallen where Man began "saved." Beginning as wholly immaterial, androgynous, and knowledgeable, Man should never have fallen, just as the godhead itself should never have. Beginning, by contrast, as already partly material, single-sexed, and ignorant, man is already fallen and merely perpetuates his state. Not his fall but his salvation needs explaining. As philosophy, the Poimandres attributes man's fall to sheer ignorance, which in this case is not inexplicable. But as myth, the Poimandres subsequently attributes it to something more.

The text assumes that the fall of man, which means the fall of Man, is, through knowledge, reversible: by asceticism during life and separation from the body at death. At death man must shed, first, those assorted parts of the body which he acquired while on earth (sec. 24) and then, ascending through the spheres of the material world, those parts which he acquired through his, or Primal Man's, descent: the portions of the essences which the Governors graciously bestowed on Primal Man(69). Their motive might have been love--itself a corrupting impetus--but their essences are material and therefore inherently corrupt. What is true of them is true of the whole material world: if at the outset it seemed good, it proves to be evil(70). The process of salvation involves literally "stripping" (γυμνῶω) off (sec. 26) all material casings and thereby extricating the pristine, naked immaterial self(71).

Once man reaches the eighth, Demiurgical sphere(72), which separates the immaterial from the material worlds, he becomes one of the unnamed immaterial "beings" (τὸ ὄν) in that sphere who praise God (sec. 26). In the realm beyond this sphere he becomes one of the archetypal "powers" (δύναμις) who outright unite with God (sec. 26). Those powers are presumably the archetypes which compose the primordial light(73) and so which, as the

contents of the light, are identical with God himself (sec. 6)(74).

Because man is the descendant of Primal Man, who is an emanation of God, the union of man with God is really their reunion. The final state of man and the cosmos is therefore the sheer restoration of the original one. Because the end is a return to the beginning, what has come in between--creation--is worthless. Because the final state requires the dissolution of creation, creation is not just worthless but, implicitly, evil.

In contrast to most Gnostic texts, the Poimandres is egalitarian. The difference between Gnostics and non-Gnostics is not that Gnostics alone possess minds but that they alone choose to cultivate them(75). Non-Gnostics choose instead to nurture their bodies(76). They therefore "deserve" (εὐμὲν ἄξιός), not merely receive, death (sec. 20), which is thus less their destiny than their punishment. Indeed, their choice of the body constitutes sin, so that the narrator initially asks, "What sin (ἁμαρτάνω) so great ... have the ignorant (ἀγνοῦντες) committed to be deprived of immortality (ἀθανασία)" (sec. 20)?

To ascribe the choice to ignorance, as the narrator does in referring to sinners as "ignorant," is simply to prompt the question of why they are ignorant. If only Gnostics have heard the revelation, non-Gnostics have in practice had no choice. But if, as the text later states (secs. 27-29), non-Gnostics are those who ignore the message they hear, then the explanation cannot be ignorance alone. It must be a perverse will as well, even if the text itself mentions nothing of the kind and instead "officially" attributes evil to sheer ignorance. Likewise the acceptance by Gnostics of the message must stem in turn from a pure will(77), even if the text itself mentions nothing of the kind and instead "officially" attributes good to sheer knowledge.

As philosophy, the Poimandres attributes the behavior of not just non-Gnostics but also Gnostics and, more, both

God and his emanations to either ignorance or knowledge. Other motives like power are secondary. The ignorance of man, in contrast to that of God and his emanations, may not be inexplicable, but it is still the cause of his behavior.

As myth, however, the Poimandres allows for nonintellectual as well as intellectual motives. Here non-Gnostics fall not just because they are ignorant but also because they are weak-willed: their will overpowers their knowledge. The same is even more true of the behavior of an omniscient God and his emanations.

Footnotes

- 1 On the Hermetica see above all A.-J. Festugière, La Révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste, 4 vols. (Paris: Librairie Lecoffre, 1944-1954), passim; Festugière, L'Hermétisme (Lund: Gleerup, 1948), passim; Joseph Kroll, Die Lehren des Hermes Trismegistos (Münster: Aschendorf, 1914), passim; Wilhelm Kroll, "Hermes Trismegistos," in Pauly-Wissowa, Real-Encyclopädie der Classischen Altertumswissenschaft, VIII, part I (1912), 792-823; Walter Scott and A. S. Ferguson, Hermetica, 4 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1924-1936), passim; G. R. S. Mead, Thrice-Greatest Hermes, 3 vols. (London and Benares: Theosophical Publishing, 1906), passim; Arthur D. Nock and A.-J. Festugière, Corpus Hermeticum, 4 vols. (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1945-1954), passim; J. M. Creed, "The Hermetic Writings," Journal of Theological Studies, 15 (July 1914), 513-538; St. George Stock, "Hermes Trismegistus," in Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, ed. James Hastings, VI (1913), 626-629; Th. Zielinski, "Hermes und die Hermetik," Archiv für Religionswissenschaft, 8 (1905), 321-372; 9 (1906), 25-60; Martin P. Nilsson, Geschichte der griechischen Religion, II, first ed. (Munich: Beck,

- 1950), 556-586; Gerard van Moorsel, The Mysteries of Hermes Trismegistus (Utrecht: Kemink, 1955), *passim*; S. Angus, The Religious Quests of the Graeco-Roman World (New York: Scribner, 1929), chs. 18-19.
- 2 See, notably, Adolf Harnack, History of Dogma, trs. Neil Buchanan and others, I (Boston: Little, Brown, 1899), ch. 4; Carsten Colpe, Die religionsgeschichtliche Schule (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1961), *passim*; A. D. Nock, "Gnosticism," Harvard Theological Review, 57 (October 1964), 255-279; "Proposal for a Terminological and Conceptual Agreement with Regard to the Theme of the Colloquium," in Le Origini dello Gnosticismo, ed. Ugo Bianchi (Leiden: Brill, 1967), xxvi-xxvii; Simone Pétrement, "La notion de gnosticisme," Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale, 65 (October-December 1960), 385-421; Pétrement, "Le Colloque de Messine et le problème du gnosticisme," Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale, 72 (January-March 1967), 344-373; Pétrement, "Sur le problème du gnosticisme," Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale, 85 (April-June 1980), 145-177.
- 3 See Van Moorsel, 20-21; Angus, 378; Robert M. Grant, Gnosticism and Early Christianity, rev. ed. (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1966), 148.
- 4 See, notably, Wilhelm Bousset, Hauptprobleme der Gnosis (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1907), *passim*; Richard Reitzenstein, Poimandres (Leipzig: Teubner, 1904), *passim*; Rudolf Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, tr. Kendrick Grobel, I (New York: Scribner, 1951), ch. 15; Kurt Rudolph, Gnosis, trs. Robert McLachlan Wilson and others (San Francisco: Harper, 1983), esp. 56-59.

- 5 See James M. Robinson, ed. The Nag Hammadi Library in English (San Francisco: Harper, 1977), esp. 6, 9-10.
- 6 The translation, based on the text of Nock and Festugière, is my own. For other translations see Scott, I, 114-133; Mead, II, 3-20; Festugière, in Nock and Festugière, I, 7-19; Hans Jonas, The Gnostic Religion, second ed. (Boston: Beacon, 1963), 148-153; William R. Newbold, in Selections from Hellenistic Philosophy, ed. Gordon H. Clark (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1940), 192-200; F. C. Grant, in Gnosticism, ed. Robert M. Grant (New York: Harper, 1961), 211-219; Robert Haardt, in Gnosis, ed. Haardt, tr. J. F. Hendry (Leiden: Brill, 1971), 167-176; Werner Foerster, in Gnosis, ed. Foerster, trs. R. McL. Wilson and others, I (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972), 328-335.
- 7 On the name "Poimandres" see Ralph Marcus, "The Name Poimandres," Journal of Near Eastern Studies, 8 (January 1949), 40-43; Scott, II, 15-17; Mead, II, 50-52; Frank Granger, "The Poemandres of Hermes Trismegistus," Journal of Theological Studies, 5 (April 1904), 400; Stock, 627; Kroll, 822; H. Gundel, "Poimandres," in Pauly-Wissowa, Real-Encyclopädie der Classischen Altertumswissenschaft, XXI, part I (1951), 1196-1197; Ernst Haenchen, "Aufbau und Theologie des 'Poimandres'," Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche, 53 (1956), 152; C. H. Dodd, The Bible and the Greeks (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1935), 99n1; Dodd, The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1953), 30n2; John Dillon, The Middle Platonists (Ithaca: Cornell University, 1977), 389n2.
- 8 Festugière, L'Hermétisme, 23; Dodd, The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel, 15, 30. To be sure, some commentators identify the narrator

himself with Hermes and so distinguish him from Poimandres, who, as the revealer to Hermes, is a higher god. See Festugière, La Révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste, III, 18; Gundel, 1197; Haenchen, 149.

- 9 On Poimandres as possibly only an emissary of the highest god see Scott, II, 18; Dillon, 389. Since, however, as Haenchen notes (153), Poimandres deems himself the original principle, it is hard to see how he can, let alone need, be other than the highest god himself.
- 10 Scott (II, 19) asserts that the material world, not Poimandres, is what becomes the light--Poimandres himself remaining beyond the light. But Poimandres later explicitly identifies himself with the light (sec. 6).
- 11 The light is subsequently said (sec. 6) to antedate the moist Nature, which the darkness becomes, but the question remains whether the light antedates the darkness itself.
- 12 In that event the text fits what, accurately or not, has been labeled the Syrian-Egyptian variety of Gnosticism.
- 13 In that case the text fits what has been called the Iranian brand of Gnosticism. If only as ideal types, "Syrian-Egyptian" and "Iranian" varieties of Gnosticism are distinct. For the differences see Hans Jonas, Gnosis und spätaniker Geist, I, first ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1934), 328-335; Jonas, "Gnosticism," in Encyclopedia of Philosophy (1967), ed. Paul Edwards, III, 341; Foerster, I, 10-11; Rudolph, 65-66. The more recent categorization of Gnosticism is into Valentinian and Sethian brands. See Bentley Layton, ed., The Rediscovery of Gnosticism, I (Leiden: Brill, 1980), xii.

- 14 Mead (II, 8) and especially Jonas (The Gnostic Religion, 170, 172-173) assert that the Poimandres is Syrian-Egyptian. Jonas notes not just the fact that the darkness appears after the light but also the fact that Will (βουλή), with which he later equates the darkness (see n. 20), acts like Sophia, who is the source of the darkness in Valentinian, which is Syrian-Egyptian, Gnosticism and who arises out of divinity. At the same time he concedes that the dreadful, hateful, and snake-like attributes of the darkness in the Poimandres characterize not Syrian-Egyptian Sophia but Iranian darkness. Foerster (I, 11) simply states, not argues, that the Poimandres is Iranian. Haenchen (passim) argues that the text is both Syrian-Egyptian and Iranian, but he does so by, in effect, wrongly equating Syrian-Egyptian Gnosticism with Stoic-like monism and Iranian Gnosticism with Platonic-like dualism. The fact that in Syrian-Egyptian Gnosticism matter arises out of immateriality does not mean either that matter is reducible to immateriality, let alone the Stoic reverse, or that the relationship between even distinct matter and immateriality is therefore harmonious.
- 15 For Plotinus, as for the Poimandres, god--more precisely, the One--creates by emanating immateriality, which orders matter: for Plotinus, as for the Poimandres taken as a case of Syrian-Egyptian Gnosticism, the highest principle emanates matter as well as immateriality. Where for Plotinus, however, the highest principle emanates--better, produces--nonvolitionally, for the Poimandres God emanates volitionally. For neither is the highest principle compelled to emanate, but where for Plotinus that principle does not freely will emanations, for the Poimandres it does. For Plotinus, there is no reason, internal or external, for emanating. For the Poimandres, there is an internal

reason. Insofar as the Poimandres is myth rather than philosophy, it is indifferent, if not oblivious, to the logical stake Plotinus has in his explanation of creation: the preservation of the autonomy of the highest principle. On Plotinus' view see J. M. Rist, Plotinus (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1967), chs. 3, 6; R. T. Wallis, Neoplatonism (London: Duckworth, 1972), 61-72; A. H. Armstrong, Plotinus (New York: Collier Books, 1962), 28-32. On the differences between the mythic explanation of Gnosticism and the philosophical one of Plotinus see Jonas, Gnosis und spätantiker Geist, I, 333-335.

- 16 Plotinus provides the most sophisticated explanation in ancient thought of the identity between man and the highest principle. For him, the relationship is that of the identity of the parts with the whole: each man, as a part, is no mere part of a larger whole but is the whole itself, which is therefore fully present in every part. The whole is not larger than the sum of its parts. As myth, the Poimandres never explicates the logical relationship between the parts and the whole. On Plotinus' view see Rist, chs. 7, 16; Wallis, 54-61; Armstrong, 33-36.
- 17 Scott (II, 30) proposes that the "great power" is a reference to the future Demiurge, who is therefore not named here, but not naming the Demiurge is still invoking him to explain an action prior to his existence.
- 18 Jonas (The Gnostic Religion, 170-171) suggests that the "great power" is the Word, which, he asserts, lies within, not outside, the fire. But the text itself places the power outside, not within, the fire.
- 19 Haenchen (163, 165) assumes that the great power is one of the archetypal powers but thereby encounters the same difficulty: the subduing of a material entity

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by an immaterial one. Rather than trying to solve the difficulty, he argues that it stems from the vainly attempted fusion of two incompatible traditions: a dualistic, Platonic one and a monistic, Stoic one.

- 20 Jonas, The Gnostic Religion, 171-172; Mead, II, 7nl.
- 21 See Festugière, in Nock and Festugière, I, 19n22.
- 22 See Jonas, The Gnostic Religion, 172.
- 23 In that case the Poimandres must fit the Syrian-Egyptian variety of Gnosticism. See Mead, II, 29-30; Jonas, The Gnostic Religion, 171-173. Both parallel the Will, as Nature, to Sophia of Valentinian, and therefore of Syrian-Egyptian, Gnosticism. Festugière (L'Hermétisme, 25) makes the Will virtually the equivalent of Sophia as well.
- 24 Mead, II, 30-32. By contrast, Reitzenstein (46) argues that the subordination of the feminine Will to the masculine Word in sec. 8 contradicts the equality of the femininity and masculinity of God in section 9. He thereby concludes that sec. 8 represents an interpolation.
- 25 Scott, II, 28-29.
- 26 Dodd's suggestion (The Bible and the Greeks, 128-132) that the "Will of God" means the "Counsel of God," an entity which is distinct from both Nature and the Word and which mediates between God and the material world, at once unnecessarily complicates the cosmogony and really makes the Will equivalent to the Word. Reitzenstein (45) also deems the Will a third entity, but one which, in pantheistic fashion, is both God and Nature. Without identifying the Will with any entity Haenchen (163-165) sifts out of the description of it, just as he does out of that of the

"great power," two contrary traditions which the text is futilely trying to fuse: a dualistic, Platonic one and a monistic, Stoic one. On the one hand, notes Haenchen, the Will beholds the immaterial archetypes and imitates them, thereby producing the material elements out of herself. Here the Will is both orderer and ordered, in which case she is somehow both immaterial and material. On the other hand the Will gets impregnated by the archetypes and produces the material elements as offspring. Here the Will is simply the material ordered. A separate entity--most likely, the Word--is the immaterial orderer. Haenchen in effect wrongly equates the first view of the Will with Syrian-Egyptian Gnosticism and the second with Iranian.

- 27 See sec. 15: among all living things man alone is twofold, for he alone possesses not only a body but also, as surely his "essential" self, a soul.
- 28 Dodd, The Bible and the Greeks, 126nl.
- 29 Both Festugière (L'Hermétisme, 26-27) and Reitzenstein (47) deem the Demiurge superfluous in the wake of the Word. Others deem the Word superfluous in the wake of the much greater role played by the Demiurge. Haenchen (165-166, 167) says that either would have sufficed but that each plays a distinct role.
- 30 Dodd, The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel 37; Festugière, L'Hermétisme, 26-27; Scott, II, 32.
- 31 Dodd, The Bible and the Greeks, 132-133. Still, Dodd goes too far in considering the Word less a separate entity than an attribute of God.
- 32 Jonas, The Gnostic Religion, 148.

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- 33 Jonas' argument (The Gnostic Religion, 170) that the Word does not get trapped in matter but voluntarily remains there only to preserve its separation of earth and water until the Demiurge "relieves" it makes no sense: no sooner does the Demiurge "relieve" it than the separation dissolves (sec. 10).
- 34 On the doctrine of consubstantiality see Christopher Stead, Divine Substance (Oxford: Clarendon, 1977), ch. 8, esp. pp. 201-202.
- 35 Jonas, The Gnostic Religion, 155.
- 36 Scott, II, 32.
- 37 As stated (see n. 27), man alone has soul, or reason. Scott (II, 31-36) suggests that the living things are irrational because in lacking λόγος they lack speech.
- 38 For references elsewhere to Primal Man, or Anthropos, see Festugière, in Nock and Festugière, I, 21n34.
- 39 Scott (II, 37) proposes substituting "admiration" (ἀγαμαί) for "love" (ἐράω) on precisely the dubious grounds that the relationship between God and Man cannot be sexual.
- 40 For some contrasts between the Biblical account of the creation of man and that of the Poimandres see Jonas, The Gnostic Religion 154-155. For other contrasts between Genesis 1 and the Poimandres see Haenchen, 169.
- 41 C. K. Barrett, ed., The New Testament Background (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1961), 85, note to line 1.
- 42 Jonas, The Gnostic Religion, 154-156.

- 43 Ibid., 154.
- 44 Festugière, L'Hermétisme, 26; Haenchen, 166.
- 45 Colpe (15-16) makes this decisive point against Reitzenstein, for whom Primal Man is a distorted version of the archetypal savior of man.
- 46 Festugière, La Révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste, III, 17.
- 47 Festugière (in Nock and Festugière, I, 21n36), Haenchen (172), and above all Dodd (The Bible and the Greeks, 153n1) suggest "in the Father" (ἐν τῷ πατρὶ) in place of "in the fire" (ἐν τῷ πυρὶ).
- 48 Haenchen (172-173) asserts that the Governors are acting at the behest of, ultimately, God, however malevolent the consequences of their--and so, again, his--actions later prove to be. Jonas (The Gnostic Religion, 156) argues that if the Governors were acting out of malice, they would be seeking to sever Man from a higher, immaterial world of which they would therefore necessarily be aware. They could scarcely, then, be acting out of ignorance, to which the Poimandres, like most Gnostic texts, seemingly alone ascribes indulgence in matter. Because most Gnostic texts nevertheless do deem the Demiurge and the archons outright malicious rather than merely ignorant, they must explain at once the source of their malice and the impotence of their knowledge. Because the Poimandres deems the Governors merely ignorant, it escapes this difficulty.
- 49 Festugière, La Révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste, III, 90.

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- 50 Indeed, in above all Valentinianism ignorance constitutes an external, metaphysical power. See Jonas, "Evangelium Veritatis and the Valentinian Speculation," Studia Patristica, 6 (1962), 102, 110; Jonas, "Delimitation of the Gnostic Phenomenon--Typological and Historical," in Le Origini dello Gnosticismo, ed. Bianchi, 98.
- 51 Unlike so many other commentators, Festugière (La Révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste, III, 94-95) at least recognizes the existence of this contradiction. His first suggestion (*ibid.*, 96), that the text does not in fact reject creation altogether but preaches only the subordination of matter to immateriality, is untenable, as he himself seems to realize. For the text explicitly rejects creation altogether. His other suggestion (*ibid.*), that the text represents a failed fusion of optimistic with pessimistic strains of Hermeticism, concedes the inability to resolve the contradiction.
- 52 Scott, II, 40-41.
- 53 Jonas, The Gnostic Religion, 156-158; Festugière, La Révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste, III, 90; Dodd, The Bible and the Greeks, 154; and, somewhat inconsistently, Scott, II, 40.
- 54 So, further inconsistently, Scott, II, 39. Both Haenchen (167, 173-174) and Barrett (85, note to line 14) suggest that Man's fall begins here and, whether or not approved by God, is accidental: Man happens to fall prey to his own image. But surely they thereby beg the main question: whether Man falls prey because of some trait within him, in which case the fall begins earlier.
- 55 Festugière, La Révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste, III, 88-89.

- 56 Ibid.
- 57 See Jonas, The Gnostic Religion, 161-165.
- 58 Barrett, 86, note to line 26.
- 59 Festugière, La Révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste, III, 92; Festugière, L'Hermétisme, 29.
- 60 Both Scott (II, 42) and Dodd (The Bible and the Greeks, 152-153) are therefore wrong to draw a parallel to Genesis 3.
- 61 There is no threefold division of man into spirit, soul, and body, as there is in some Gnostic texts.
- 62 On the term "essential" (οὐσιώδης) see Festugière, in Nock and Festugière, I, 22n41. Man earlier learned the "essence" (οὐσία) of each planet (sec. 13).
- 63 Haenchen (171, 176) argues that the stage represents a mythological throwback simply inserted into a description of present-day man.
- 64 Haenchen (176) notes that the androgyny of other living beings contradicts their irrationality.
- 65 As Jonas (The Gnostic Religion, 152) notes, here is the sole reference to Genesis (1.22) which comes close to a quotation. Mead (II, 38) says, however, that exactly because no other quotation from Genesis occurs, the phrase might simply have been "in the air" rather than have been taken from Genesis itself. Haenchen (177) notes one key difference: what in Genesis is a blessing is here a curse.
- 66 Oddly, no commentator deals with this inconsistency. Noting that the order to reproduce leads to death, both Haenchen (177) and Hans Dieter

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leads to death, both Haenchen (177) and Hans Dieter Betz ("The Delphic Maxim 'Know Thyself' in Hermetic Literature," Harvard Theological Review, 63 (October 1970), 466-467) deem it a curse but fail to explain why God should damn man and then seek to save him. Dodd (The Bible and the Greeks, 229) notes that man is ordered to reproduce only after the fall of Man, but why God himself orders man to do what only damns him further Dodd does not say.

- 67 Betz (*passim*) argues that the phrase "Let him who recognizes himself ..." (secs. 18, 19, 21) stems from the Delphic maxim to "know thyself" but reverses it: where self-knowledge in the Oracle means the knowledge that man is merely human and therefore limited, the knowledge in the Poimandres is that he is divine and unlimited.
- 68 On ignorance as the cause of man's indulgence in matter see Festugière, La Révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste, III, 104-107.
- 69 On the theme of "shedding" the acquisitions from the Governors see Bousset, 361-369.
- 70 Haenchen, 182.
- 71 Jonas, The Gnostic Religion, 166.
- 72 On the eighth sphere see the references in Festugière, in Nock and Festugière, I, 25n64, and Festugière, La Révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste, III, 130-133.
- 73 Festugière, in Nock and Festugière, I, 25n65; Scott, II, 66.
- 74 On the powers as both separate entities and parts of God see Festugière, La Révélation d'Hermès

Trismégiste, III, 152-166. Haenchen (183-184) suggests that God may be no more than the sum of the powers.

- 75 Festugière (La Révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste, III, 111; L'Hermétisme, 30-31) says the same. But Bousset (Kyrios Christos, tr. John E. Steely, fifth ed. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1970), 186) argues that at least as a whole the Corpus Hermeticum preaches elitism: only the pious few possess minds.
- 76 Festugière, La Révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste, III, 18, 107-118; Scott, II, 55; Haenchen, 179.
- 77 On will as well as knowledge as necessary to salvation see Festugière, La Révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste, III, 110-111.

Chapter 2

An "Eliadean" Analysis of the *Poimandres*

Religion

Religion, for Eliade(1), is the experience of the sacred, a realm beyond the natural, everyday, profane world. Sacred reality is ultimate reality:

... the sacred is pre-eminently the real, at once power, efficacy, the source of life and fecundity. Religious man's desire to live in the sacred is in fact equivalent to his desire to take up his abode in objective reality, not to let himself be paralyzed by the never-ceasing relativity of purely subjective experiences, to live in a real and effective world, and not in an illusion(2).

Profane reality is illusory not because it is nonexistent but because it is less than all of reality.

Only a few experience the sacred directly. Most experience it through only its manifestations in the profane world. Those manifestations, which take the form of an unlimited number of objects and places, are called "hierophanies"(3).

Eliade distinguishes between the sacred itself, which is impersonal, and gods, who reside in it. Religion is the experience of the sacred itself. Gods are secondary. Still, they, as agents of the sacred, created the profane world: "If the World exists, if man exists, it is because Supernatural Beings exercised creative powers in the 'beginning'"(4).

Myth

Man discovers the existence of the sacred through hierophanies--for example, a profane tree or stone through which the sacred manifests itself. But only from myth does he discover the creation of the profane world by the sacred. Where hierophanies provide experience, myth provides information. Myth alone explains how the sacred, through gods, created the profane world:

Myth narrates a sacred history; it relates an event that took place in primordial Time, the fabled time of the "beginnings." In other words, myth tells how, through the deeds of Supernatural Beings, a reality came into existence, be it the whole of reality, the Cosmos, or only a fragment of reality ...(5).

To explain the world is, for Eliade, to give not its function but its origin. Myth, for him, explains the origin of not only all natural phenomena but also all human ones, which, strictly, are the work of not gods but legendary humans: myth "recounts a primordial event that took place in the beginning of time and involved characters who are either gods or heroes and whose deeds created civilization"(6).

In explaining phenomena myth serves to justify them as well. It justifies them not, however, by pronouncing them good but by pronouncing them simply hoary and therefore unalterable. It justifies them by giving them a primordial origin, which makes them less arbitrary and therefore more acceptable. Myth justifies death, for example, less by postulating an afterlife than by describing an event which long ago brought death irremediably into the world:

... man is mortal because a mythical Ancestor stupidly lost immortality, or because a Supernatural Being decided to deprive him of it, or because a certain mythical event left him endowed at once with sexuality and mortality, and so on(7).

In justifying as well as explaining phenomena myth serves the individual, not society. Eliade is no social functionalist. Myth does justify social phenomena like kinship and rituals as well as natural phenomena like death and weather(8). But it does so to give an individual's life meaning and only coincidentally, if at all, to keep him in his social place:

Myth, in itself, is not a guarantee of "goodness" or morality. Its function is ... to give a meaning to the World and to human life.... Through myth, the World can be apprehended as a perfectly articulated, intelligible, and significant Cosmos(9).

At the least, Eliade ignores any social function. At the most, he denies any. By confining himself to the function of myth for the individual he never says for sure. The fact that myth, for him, operates in a group hardly means that it therefore operates for the group.

Man no more needs myth to experience the sacred than he does to discover it. He can experience as well as discover it through hierophanies. But just as myth alone explains the sacred, so myth alone enables him to experience the sacred most fully. Only by reciting and perhaps re-enacting myth can he return to the pre-fallen, primordial time when the sacred was most fully present in the profane:

He who recites or performs the origin myth is thereby steeped in the sacred atmosphere in which these miraculous events took place.... As a summary formula we might say that by "living" the myths one emerges from profane, chronological time and enters a time that is of a different quality, a "sacred" Time at once primordial and indefinitely recoverable(10).

The function of myth is thus not only explanatory and justificatory but also experiential. Indeed, the explanatory and justificatory functions are really only means to the experiential one: myth tells man of the origin and irreversibility of primordial time in order magically to

transport him back to it. That return renews him spiritually: "By symbolically participating in the annihilation and re-creation of the world, man too was created anew; he was reborn ..." (11). Rebirth is tantamount to salvation--the ultimate aim of myth.

Man's desire to return to primordial time is, for Eliade, his deepest one. It fulfills him as man: "... religious man ... does not consider himself to be truly man except in so far as he imitates the gods, the culture heroes, or the mythical ancestors" (12). So fundamental is this need that the failure to fulfill it is fatal: "For religious man ... it is by virtue of this eternal return to the sources of the sacred and the real that human existence appears to be saved from nothingness and death" (13).

Eliade explains why myth originates but never how. He attributes myth to man's need for the sacred, but he never explains how man creates myth to satisfy that need. For example, he never says whether individuals or society collectively invents myth. He never even says whether man invents myth or supernaturally receives it. In short, he explains far more of the function than the origin of myth.

The Classification of Mankind

Eliade assumes that all mankind is fundamentally the same (14), which means religious: "... even the most avowedly nonreligious man still, in his deeper being, shares in a religiously oriented behavior" (15). Every man needs both to know and to experience the sacred. The fulfillment of that need takes different forms, but the need itself is the same for all: "... almost all the religious attitudes man has, he has had from the most primitive times. From one point of view there has been no break in continuity from the 'primitives' to Christianity" (16).

Eliade does, however, divide mankind into two categories: "mythic" and "historical." Mythic man, whom he also calls "primitive," "archaic," "traditional," and

"premodern," refers to both pre-literate man and ancient man of Asia, Europe, and America(17). Historical man refers to Western man, beginning with not the Greeks but the Israelites(18).

Since myth describes the primordial state of the world, to be "mythic" is to yearn to return to that state. Since history describes the state of the world ever since, to be "historical" is to be contented with that state. It is to find meaning in that state:

And the crucial difference between the man of the archaic civilizations and modern, historical man lies in the increasing value the latter gives to historical events, that is, to the "novelties" that, for traditional man, represented either meaningless conjunctures or infractions of norms (hence "faults," "sins," and so on) and that, as such, required to be expelled (abolished) periodically(19).

The difference between mythic and historical man is not that mythic man alone is mythic and historical man really historical. All mankind is truly mythic. The difference is that only mythic man knows it(20). Mythic man is consciously mythic where historical man is consciously historical and only unconsciously, if still truly, mythic: "We thus find in man at every level, the same longing to destroy profane time and live in sacred time"(21).

Eliade subdivides historical man into two categories: religious and secular. Religious historical man means Jews and Christians(22). Secular historical man means modern man, man since the proverbial rise of science(23).

Just as all mankind is really mythic, so all mankind is really religious: every man believes in the sacred, his desire to return to it aside. But again, not all mankind knows it. Where religious historical man is consciously religious, secular historical man is consciously atheistic and only unconsciously religious:

... it could be said that in the man of desacralized societies, religion has become "unconscious"; it lies

buried in the deepest strata of his being; but this by no means implies that it does not continue to perform an essential function in the economy of the psyche(24).

For both religious and secular historical man, history is progressive and even purposive. Where for religious historical man God directs its course, for secular historical man man himself does. But because history for both is progressive, it leads away from sacred time and is therefore in fact, if unconsciously, meaningless.

Because Eliade assumes that all mankind is truly mythic as well as religious, he interprets the end of sacred history for religious historical man as really only a return to its beginning. The desire to return to that time he interprets as the rejection, not the culmination, of the intervening time and therefore as the expression of an unconscious desire to abolish history:

(Jewish) Messianic beliefs in a final regeneration of the world themselves also indicate an antihistoric attitude. Since he can no longer ignore or periodically abolish history, the Hebrew tolerates it in the hope that it will finally end, at some more or less distant future moment.... Periodic regeneration of the Creation is replaced by a single regeneration that will take place in an in illo tempore to come. But the will to put a final and definitive end to history is itself still an antihistorical attitude, exactly as are the other traditional conceptions(25).

Similarly, Eliade interprets the meaning for secular historical man of various cultural activities like travel, reading, and movie going as really an escape from history and as the expression of an unconscious desire to do so. The world man enters is the opposite of his ordinary one and so is like the sacred vis-à-vis the profane. Because that world is somehow an earlier one, escape to it is really a return to it and is therefore like the return to primordial time(26). Stories about that world constitute modern man's myths:

A whole volume could well be written on the myths of modern man, on the mythologies camouflaged in the plays that he enjoys, in the books that he reads. The cinema, that "dream factory," takes over and employs countless mythical motifs--the fight between hero and monster, initiatory combats and ordeals, paradigmatic figures and images (the maiden, the hero, the paradisaal landscape, hell, and so on). Even reading includes a mythological function ... because, through reading, the modern man succeeds in obtaining an "escape from time" comparable to the "emergence from time" effected by myths. Whether modern man "kills" time with a detective story or enters such a foreign temporal universe as is represented by any novel, reading projects him out of his personal duration and incorporates him into other rhythms, makes him live in another "history"(27).

The Return to the Sacred

Eliade makes three additional assumptions which will prove decisive for analyzing the Poimandres. He assumes, first, that no one, including mythic man, returns permanently to the sacred. No one lives continuously in it(28). Even mythic man feels that he is living in profane rather than primordial time. Though he, in contrast to historical man, consciously deems historical events meaningless, not even he can efface their memory. His periodic recitation or re-enactment of the cosmogonic myth proves that he is not free of history and so is not living permanently in primordial time:

The need these societies also feel for a periodic regeneration is a proof that they too cannot perpetually maintain their position in what we have just called the paradise of archetypes, and that their memory is capable (though doubtless far less

intensely than that of a modern man) of revealing the irreversibility of events, that is, of recording history. Thus, among these primitive peoples too, the existence of man in the cosmos is regarded as a fall(29).

Eliade does say that mythic man knows no profane world(30), but he presumably means that mythic man believes that sacred time is continuously present for him to embrace, not that he continuously embraces it:

Religious man feels the need to plunge periodically into this sacred and indestructible time. For him it is sacred time that makes possible the other time, ordinary time, the profane duration in which every human life takes its course(31).

Eliade assumes, second, that no one, in leaving the profane world temporarily, ever leaves his own profanity even temporarily. Ordinarily, even mythic man merely gets close to the sacred, never becoming sacred himself:

To live near to a Center of the World is, in short, equivalent to living as close as possible to the gods.... To reintegrate the sacred time of origin is equivalent to becoming contemporary with the gods, hence to living in their presence ...(32).

Here man remains entirely profane.

Shamans and other religious adepts, however, become, like hierophanies, sacred themselves(33):

The most elementary hierophanies, that is, are nothing but a radical ontological separation of some object from the surrounding cosmic zone; some tree, some stone, some place, by the mere fact that it reveals that it is sacred, that it has been, as it were, "chosen" as the receptacle for a manifestation of the sacred, is thereby ontologically separated from all other stones, trees, places, and occupies a different, a supernatural plane.... What it is important to note now is the parallel between the singularization of

objects, beings, and sacred signs, and the singularization by "election," by "choice," of those who experience the sacred with greater intensity than the rest of the community--those who, as it were, incarnate the sacred...(34).

Yet just as hierophanies remain profane while becoming sacred, so do shamans: "... the shaman participates in the condition of the 'spirits' while still continuing to exist in the flesh..."(35). Indeed, the shaman's prime role as intermediary between man and god(36) surely requires his being both profane and sacred.

Eliade assumes, third and most important, that the sacred time to which man returns is, ordinarily, the time just after creation, the time of the Garden of Eden:

Man desires to recover the active presence of the gods; he also desires to live in the world as it came from the Creator's hands, fresh, pure, and strong. It is the nostalgia for the perfection of beginnings that chiefly explains the periodical return in illo tempore.... (We may say that the desire to live in the divine presence and in a perfect world (perfect because newly born) corresponds to the nostalgia for a paradisaal situation(37).

The time following creation is perfect not only because the world is yet unfallen but also because the sacred, through the gods, is consequently near. In fact, the world is as much unfallen because the sacred is near as vice versa. Since everything created stems ultimately from the sacred, everything in the world is good: "... for (mythic man), the whole of life is capable of being sanctified"(38). Myth is thus wholly world-affirming(39).

As regularly as Eliade says that the sacred time to which man returns is the time just after creation, occasionally he notes that the time to which some believers return is the time before creation(40). Their myths consider creation imperfect, even evil, and strive to reverse it. The time of creation becomes like the time

shortly after it for other myths: history itself rather than the antidote to it. These myths are world-denying rather than world-affirming(41).

On the one hand Eliade says of the liberated yogin that, like other adepts, he "has abolished time and history; his spontaneity in some sort resembles the paradisaical existence of the primordial man evoked by the myths"(42). On the other hand he says that "what the Indian actually wants is ... to abolish creation by reincorporating all forms in the primordial Unity"(43)--a considerable break with the conventional religious desire to repeat creation.

Indeed, Eliade says more boldly that

... the Taoist alchemist tries to bring about in his own body the union of the two cosmological principles, Heaven and Earth, in order to reproduce the primordial chaotic situation that existed before the Creation.... The aim is no longer to reiterate the cosmic creation; it is to recover the state that preceded the cosmogony, the state of "chaos"(44).

Eliade says that the Dayak of Borneo also seek to return to a superior state before creation:

The world is good and significant because it is sacred, since it came out from the tree of life, that is to say from the total godhead. But only the primordial total godhead is perfect.... (I)t is only that stage which precedes the creation which represents a plenitude and a beatitude ... inaccessible in the created world(45).

Eliade concludes by distinguishing

two species of religious nostalgias: (1) the (atypical) longing to reintegrate the primordial totality that existed before the creation (the Dayak type of religious nostalgia); and (2) the (typical) longing to recover the primordial epoch that began immediately after the creation (the Aranda type)(46).

Though Eliade does not do so, he could subdivide his category of mythic man into him who seeks to return to the time before creation and him who seeks to return to the time of creation: into him whose myths are world-denying and him whose myths are world-affirming.

Eliade on Gnosticism

Because Gnosticism consciously preaches a return to primordial time, it must fall under the mythic rather than historical category of religion. Because the primordial time to which it preaches a return is that before creation, it must fall under the world-denying rather than world-affirming variety of return.

Eliade himself discusses Gnosticism in three places in his writings(47). First, he mentions the Hymn of the Pearl while discussing the symbolism of pearls. He says simply that the pearl in the myth symbolizes at once the saved and the savior: "... the Pearl represents, on the one hand, the fallen soul of man in the world of darkness, and, on the other hand, the 'Saviour saved' himself"(48). He does not explicitly equate the "world of darkness" with the created, material world or salvation with escape from it.

Second, Eliade mentions the Hymn and several other Gnostic myths while discussing the symbolism of sleep. Here he makes the equations explicit:

The Gnostic texts that we have quoted stress, on the one hand, the soul's fall into Matter (Life) and the mortal "sleep" that ensues, and, on the other hand, the soul's extraterrestrial origin.... The crowning revelation is that "though he (the Gnostic) is in the world, moves in the world, he is not of the world, he does not belong to it, but he comes and is from elsewhere"(49).

Eliade goes so far as to say that "unlike a man of the archaic societies--who, learning the myths (of creation), assumes the (world-affirming) consequences that follow

from those primordial events--the Gnostic learns the myth in order to dissociate himself from its results"(50). Clearly, Gnostic myths, for Eliade, are world-denying.

Third and most important, Eliade discusses Gnosticism in its own right in his multi-volume history of religion, in which he repeatedly describes its world-denying nature:

... the redeeming knowledge taught by the Gnostics consists above all in the revelation of a "secret history" ... of the origin and creation of the world, the origin of evil, the drama of the divine redeemer come down to earth to save men, and the final victory of the transcendent God--a victory that will find expression in the conclusion of history and the annihilation of the cosmos.... (T)he Gnostic learns that his true being (i.e., his spiritual being) is divine by origin and by nature, though at present it is captive in a body; he also learns that he lived in a transcendent region but that he was later cast into this world below, that he is rapidly advancing toward salvation, and that he will end by being freed from his fleshly prison; in short, he discovers that, whereas his birth was equivalent to a fall into matter, his rebirth will be purely spiritual(51).

Clearly, Eliade is acknowledging that Gnosticism preaches a return to the time not after but before creation, which is not just imperfect but evil and which must therefore be not purified but abandoned:

By the mere fact that he lives on this earth, that is, that he is endowed with an incarnate existence, man suffers, which is as much as to say that he is the prey of evil.... (A) cosmos dominated by evil cannot be the work of God, the good and transcendent, but of his adversary. So the existence of the world presupposes an earlier, precosmic state, just as the miserable, fallen condition of man presupposes a blissful primordial situation(52).

Eliade's description of Gnosticism is not, however, an analysis of it. He does not characterize the godhead as the

sacred, the material world as the profane, or the time to which man seeks to return as primordial time. He presents Gnosticism in itself, not as an instance of religion or myth in general.

Eliade's Theory Applied to the Poimandres

Analyzed in "Eliadean" fashion, the Poimandres is, as it is at face value, a myth of creation and salvation par excellence. It serves to explain the origin of the profane world as a whole and of various phenomena within it, man above all. It explains the world by attributing its creation to gods, who are agents of the sacred. It urges man to return to his original, pre-fallen state of absorption in the sacred--a return that constitutes salvation.

In postulating an immaterial godhead beyond the material world, the Poimandres, for Eliade, is postulating a higher, sacred realm beyond the profane one. The profane realm here may not in fact be entirely natural, for Nature, who composes it, is largely a personality. But Eliade would stress that Nature is not sacred, for she is not quite a god. Conversely, he would stress that even if the godhead is partly a personality, it is an impersonal principle as well. He would add that its three emanations--the Word, the Demiurge, and above all Primal Man--are partly, if not largely, personalities.

On the one hand, Eliade would note, these emanations serve to link the sacred to the profane world, which indeed gets created by the sacred, if not out of it. On the other hand, he would emphasize, the sacred and the profane remain irreconcilable opposites. The godhead and the material world are outright defined as opposites: as that which the other is not. The material world is not merely inferior to the godhead but also illusory--not in the Valentinian sense that it does not exist but in the sense that it is not ultimate reality.

Beyond attributing to the gods the will and the power to create the profane world, Eliade would ignore them. He

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would be indifferent to their number, their appearance, their desires, their activities, or their relationships with one another. Certainly he would not try to correlate conceptions of god with his categories of religion. Mythic and historical man differ over the nature of time, not of gods(53). The Poimandres, Eliade would say, uses gods only to connect the sacred to the profane.

One characteristic of gods which Eliade would single out is their androgyny(54). For him, as for others, it signifies completion and therefore perfection: "For basically, what is implied in such a conception (as androgyny) is the idea that perfection, and therefore Being, ultimately consists of a unity-totality.... This is proved by the androgyny of the Gods ..." (55). In contrasting the androgynous state of above all Primal Man to the divided one of his human descendants, the Poimandres, Eliade would say, is deeming the profane world both inferior and illusory.

A kindred divine characteristic for Eliade is the reconciliation of opposites: "All these myths present us with ... the coincidentia oppositorum in the very nature of the divinity, which shows itself, by turns or even simultaneously, benevolent and terrible, creative and destructive, solar and serpentine, and so on ..." (56). Like androgyny, the reconciliation of opposites signifies completion and therefore perfection. Also like androgyny, which Eliade sometimes subsumes under it, reconciliation represents an achievement of which the profane is incapable. In contrasting the unified state of the sacred to the divided one of the profane, the Poimandres, for Eliade, is, again, pronouncing the profane world both inferior and illusory:

In his immediate (=profane) experience, man is made up of pairs of opposites. What is more, he not only distinguishes the agreeable from the disagreeable, pleasure from pain, friendship from hostility, but comes to believe that these opposites hold also for the absolute; in other words, that ultimate reality

can be defined by the same pairs of opposites that characterize the immediate reality in which man finds himself immersed by the mere fact of living in the world. Indian myths, rites and speculations shake this human tendency to consider the immediate experience of the world as a metaphysically valid knowledge reflecting, as one might say, the ultimate reality.... By philosophical reflection ... a man succeeds in rising above duality ...(57).

Among the opposites which, for Eliade, gods reconcile are male and female, long and short, hot and cold, left and right, pleasurable and painful, visible and invisible, light and dark, and good and evil. It is hard to see what opposites, beyond androgyny, Eliade would find reconciled in the Poimandres. To say that the emanated gods and man are reconciled with the godhead is to confuse reconciliation with reunion. Eliade would surely have to grant that in the Poimandres the sacred represents only one pole of the most important oppositions: those between immateriality and matter, goodness and evil, and reason and irrationality. Yet since, for Eliade, the opposites reconciled lie within the profane rather than between it and the sacred, he could note that the irreconcilable opposites of the Poimandres are exactly ones between the sacred and the profane. Since in the Poimandres androgyny is an immaterial state, it constitutes a reconciliation within the sacred and is therefore not incompatible with the irreconcilability of the other, admittedly more important opposites.

All myths, for Eliade, are explanatory: "Every myth shows how a reality came into existence To tell how things came into existence is to explain them .."(58). If there are myths to explain the origin of everything in the world, the fundamental myths, on which the rest build, explain the origin of the world itself: "Every mythical account of the origin of anything presupposes and continues the cosmogony.... The creation of the world being the pre-eminent instance of creation, the cosmogony

becomes the exemplary model for 'creation' of every kind"(59). Eliade would surely type the Poimandres a fundamental myth.

For Eliade, the world explained by fundamental myths is less the sacred than the profane one. Eliade recognizes the existence of myths which explain the origin of the sacred itself--for example, the Enuma Elish and the Theogony--but for him myths primarily explain the origin of the profane world by the sacred. He would thus note that although the Poimandres does describe the origin of gods out of the godhead, it concentrates on the creation of the material world by those gods.

At the same time Eliade would ignore the process of creation(60). He would therefore discuss neither the origin nor the ordering of matter in the Poimandres. What phenomena get created, in what sequence, with what characteristics, and with what importance he would also ignore. The creation of the profane world by the sacred one is what counts.

Eliade would ignore, further, the reason for creation. At most, he would say that the sacred seeks naturally to create the profane world. Although the Poimandres itself conspicuously fails to say why God either begets matter or responds to it, Eliade would consider creation the act of a spontaneously creative godhead.

Like any other myth, the Poimandres, for Eliade, serves not merely to reveal to man the sacred origin of the profane world but also to enable him to return to the time of its origin and thereby experience the sacred most fully. That return amounts to salvation, and the knowledge which the Poimandres, like any other myth, contains makes it indispensable to salvation. A hierophany would yield knowledge of the existence of the sacred world, but only myth yields knowledge of the sacred origin of the created one.

If knowledge, for Eliade, is the means to salvation, ignorance is not the cause of the fall. On the contrary, ignorance is more likely the consequence--Eliade never specifying the cause. Whether he would deny that in the

Poimandres ignorance is the ultimate cause of the fall it is hard to say.

Because man, for Eliade, yearns instinctively to return to primordial time, myth serves less to implant than to fulfill that desire:

What is revealed to us by all these myths and symbols?... First of all, man's deep dissatisfaction with his actual situation, with what is called the human condition. Man feels himself torn and separate. He often finds it difficult properly to explain to himself the nature of this separation, for sometimes he feels himself to be cut off from "something" powerful, "something" utterly other than himself, and at other times from an indefinable, timeless "state", of which he has no precise memory, but which he does however remember in the depths of his being: a primordial state which he enjoyed before Time, before History(61).

Man's prior yearning for the state revealed by myth is not inconsistent with the revelatory function of myth: myth reveals the existence of a state he has sought but has not found. He once knew of it and indeed once lived in it but since his fall has not only lost but also forgotten it.

In the Poimandres, Eliade would say, the Gnostic narrator represents religious man: he is instinctively dissatisfied with his present, profane state and is instinctively seeking another, sacred one. The revelation discloses it. The non-Gnostic, Eliade would say, is akin to secular man: consciously, he is contented with his present, profane state, but unconsciously he is not. At least in contrast to other Gnostic myths, everyone in the Poimandres possesses a soul as well as a body and so, Eliade could say, is a potential "seeker."

For Eliade, knowledge is necessary but insufficient for salvation: man still needs a magic carpet to carry him back to primordial time. Myth, recited and perhaps re-enacted, serves as that magic carpet as well. The Poimandres, Eliade would therefore speculate, was not simply believed by its adherents but also recited and even re-enacted.

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To return to primordial time is, for Eliade, to undo the present and to restore the past. It is to obliterate the period since primordial time: "In general, there is a belief in the possibility of recovering the absolute 'beginning'--which implies the symbolic destruction and abolition of the old world"(62). Like any other myth, then, the Poimandres seeks to undo the present in order to restore the past.

The past most myths seek to restore is, for Eliade, the time just after creation. The past the Poimandres seeks to restore is, like that for a few myths, the time before creation. The fall begins not, as for most myths, with the corruption of an initially good creation but with creation itself--indeed, with the emanation of the gods who create it. More than most Gnostic myths, to be sure, the Poimandres deems creation intentional. But creation proves evil and must be dissolved, not revived. Man must escape from it entirely, not merely return to its pristine state.

For Eliade, the aim of returning to primordial time is, for most myths, to link an otherwise profane world and mankind to the sacred:

... this desire (to return to primordial time) is no "spiritual" attitude, which depreciates life on earth and all that goes with it in favour of a "spirituality" of detachment from the world. On the contrary, what may be called the "nostalgia for eternity" proves that man longs for a concrete paradise, and believes that such a paradise can be won here, on earth, and now, in the present moment(63).

For the Poimandres, Eliade would say, the aim is the opposite: to link the sacred side of man to the sacred, and to do so by severing it from both the profane side and the profane world. For Eliade, the goal of most myths is to "sacralize" the profane: not to make the profane sacred itself but to give it sacred underpinnings. For the Poimandres, he would say, the goal is the reverse: to "de-sacralize" the profane, to dispossess it of not just its would-be sacred underpinnings but the bits of sacredness

trapped in it. For Eliade, the ideal relationship between the sacred and the profane is, for most myths, one of harmony. For the Poimandres, he would say, it is one of antipathy.

Eliade doubtless sees the desire to return to the state before creation as only an extreme version of the more common desire to return to the state just after creation. Less important than the differences between the desires are, then, the similarities: the conviction that perfection once existed, can exist again, and requires the dissolution of precisely what has come in between.

Eliade would emphasize in all myths the tension between the sacred and the profane, in which case all myths might seem Gnostic-like:

This complete opposition (of sacred) to (profane) life is not new, either in India or elsewhere; the archaic and universal polarity between the sacred and the profane is clearly to be seen in it. From the beginning, the sacred has always been something totally different from the profane(64).

Indeed, Eliade defines the sacred as the opposite of the profane(65). He describes a hierophany as "the coexistence of contradictory essences: sacred and profane, spirit and matter, eternal and non-eternal, and so on"(66). Because the sacred and the profane are antithetical, their linkage is paradoxical: "... all hierophanies are simply prefigurations of the miracle (=paradox) of the Incarnation, ... every hierophany is an abortive attempt to reveal the mystery of the coming together of God (=sacred) and man (=profane)"(67).

Because the sacred and the profane are antithetical, they can at most mix but never fuse. The sacred manifests itself through the profane but never becomes profane or the profane sacred: "... what is implied in the paradox of the idol (and of all other hierophanies too): the sacred manifesting itself in something profane"(68). The reconciliation of opposites, which is different from a hierophany, takes place within the sacred, not, like a hierophany, between the sacred and the profane(69).

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Nevertheless, Eliade would concede that the aim in most myths is to connect the sacred with the profane as fully as possible. The undeniable aim in the Poimandres is to separate them.

Eliade would stress in all myths the craving to leave the profane world for the sacred one, in which case all myths might seem Gnostic-like. He would, however, acknowledge that in most myths man can never escape permanently from the profane world and should strive instead to model his profane life on the sacred. In the Poimandres man can and should reject the profane world for the sacred.

Eliade would emphasize in all myths the fallenness of the world outside Eden, in which case all myths might seem Gnostic-like. But he would grant that in most myths the world beyond Eden is merely imperfect and is only presently so. In the Poimandres it is outright evil and is innately so. Furthermore, the fallen world here is not just the world beyond Eden but the whole created world.

In most myths, moreover, the aim, for Eliade, remains to purify the world, and to do so precisely by infusing it with divinity:

But this World is no longer the atemporal and unchangeable Cosmos in which the Immortals dwelt. It is a living world--inhabited and used by creatures of flesh and blood, subject to the law of becoming, of old age and death. Hence it requires a periodical repairing, a renewing, a strengthening.... The World is not only made more stable and regenerated, it is also sanctified by the symbolic presence of the Immortals(70).

In the Poimandres the aim is to abandon the created world, and to do so precisely by dispossessing it of divinity.

The sacred "sacralizes" the profane of most myths in various ways. First, it descends to the profane, in the form of not just gods but also hierophanies: "One may say that the history of religions ... is constituted by a number of important hierophanies, manifestations of sacred

realities"(71). In the Poimandres the Word and Primal Man do descend to matter, but their descent constitutes entrapment, as does the subsequent birth of human souls in matter. The aim is to free divinity from matter.

Second, the sacred "sacralizes" the profane by giving it a sacred origin, as described in myth: "... the cosmos is a divine creation; coming from the hands of the gods, the world is impregnated with sacredness"(72). The Poimandres gives the material world a divine origin as well, but that origin represents a most lamentable error.

Third, the sacred "sacralizes" the profane by giving not just the natural world but also all human actions a sacred origin: "... the archaic world knows nothing of 'profane' activities: every act which has a definite meaning-- hunting, fishing, agriculture; games, conflicts, sexuality-- in some way participates in the sacred"(73). The actions of the gods described in myth become models for man:

Hence the supreme function of the myth is to "fix" the paradigmatic models for all rites and all significant human activities--eating, sexuality, work, education, and so on. Acting as a fully responsible human being, man imitates the paradigmatic gestures of the gods, repeats their actions, whether in the case of a simple physiological function such as eating or of a social, economic, cultural, military, or other activity(74).

The performance of these actions serves to link both man to the sacred and the sacred to the world: "This faithful repetition of divine models has a twofold result: (1) by imitating the gods, man remains in the sacred, hence in reality; (2) by the continuous reactualization of paradigmatic divine gestures, the world is sanctified"(75).

Whether the Poimandres provides any models for behavior it is not clear. Any that it does would surely sanctify only Gnostics themselves, not the world. The sole conceivable model provided is for asceticism, but it represents the opposite of the intercourse practiced by Primal Man and perhaps the Word. The true models for behavior are the actions of not the gods but the narrator.

For Eliade, man's return to primordial time is temporary and recurrent. Man can never return permanently. Though he never discusses the possibility, Eliade would likely say that the single, permanent return preached by the Poimandres represents the logical consequence of its world-denying outlook.

For Eliade, man invariably returns to a state of mere harmony with the sacred. Man either never becomes sacred himself or else never loses his profanity in so doing. Though, again, Eliade never discusses the possibility, he would likely say that the shedding of man's profanity and the uniting with the godhead preached by the Poimandres similarly represent the logical consequence of its world-denying stance.

Eliade's theory, as a theory, universalizes the meaning of the Poimandres. The Gnostic's desire to transcend the everyday, natural, secular, material world and to reach a divine, immaterial one, a world in which he once lived and to which he would therefore be returning, becomes universal. By his uncompromising rejection of the everyday world the Gnostic becomes only an extreme exemplar of that universal desire.

Footnotes

- 1 Mircea Eliade presents his theory of religion and myth in all of his writings. See esp. The Sacred and the Profane, tr. Willard R. Trask (New York: Harvest Books, 1968), passim; Patterns in Comparative Religion, tr. Rosemary Sheed (Cleveland: Meridian Books, 1963), passim; Myth and Reality, tr. Willard R. Trask (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1968), passim; Cosmos and History, tr. Willard R. Trask (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1959), passim. See also John A. Saliba, 'Homo Religiosus' in Mircea Eliade (Leiden: Brill, 1976), ch. 2; Guilford Dudley III, Religion on

- Trial (Philadelphia: Temple University, 1977), 50-104; Douglas Allen, Structure and Creativity in Religion (The Hague: Mouton, 1978), chs. 4-5.
- 2 Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane, 28. See also ibid., 12-13, 63, 95-96; Myth and Reality, 139-140.
 - 3 On hierophanies see Eliade, Patterns in Comparative Religion, *passim*; The Sacred and the Profane, introduction, chs. 1, 3; Cosmos and History, 3-11; Myths, Dreams, and Mysteries, tr. Philip Mairet (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1967), 124-126.
 - 4 Eliade, Myth and Reality, 11. See also, for example, The Sacred and the Profane, 64.
 - 5 Eliade, Myth and Reality, 5. See also The Sacred and the Profane, 95-97, 165.
 - 6 Eliade, Ordeal by Labyrinth, tr. Derek Coltman (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1982), 156.
 - 7 Eliade, Myth and Reality, 92.
 - 8 On myth as justifying phenomena of all kinds see the references in n. 74.
 - 9 Eliade, Myth and Reality, 144-145. See also ibid., 141-143; Ordeal by Labyrinth, 156-157.
 - 10 Eliade, Myth and Reality, 18. See also ibid., 37; The Sacred and the Profane, 80.
 - 11 Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane, 79. See also ibid., 80, 82, 201.
 - 12 Ibid., 99-100.
 - 13 Ibid., 106-107. See also ibid., 64; Cosmos and History, 162.

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- 14 See Saliba, 49; G. Richard Welbon, "Some Remarks on the Work of Mircea Eliade," Acta Philosophica et Theologica, 2 (1964), 470.
- 15 Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane, 211.
- 16 Eliade, Patterns in Comparative Religion, 463. See also The Sacred and the Profane, 17-18.
- 17 See Eliade, Cosmos and History, 3. On mythic man, to whom Eliade devotes most of his writings, see esp. The Sacred and the Profane, 8-201; Patterns in Comparative Religion, passim; Myth and Reality, chs. 1-7; Cosmos and History, chs. 1-2; A History of Religious Ideas, tr. Willard R. Trask, I-II (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1978, 1982), passim. On Eliade's terms see Saliba, 46.
- 18 See Eliade, Cosmos and History, 74.
- 19 Ibid., 154.
- 20 See Welbon, 470-471.
- 21 Eliade, Patterns in Comparative Religion, 407. See also ibid., 395.
- 22 On religious historical man see esp. Eliade, Myth and Reality, 47-50, 64-69, 168-181; Cosmos and History, ch. 3; A History of Religious Ideas, I, 162-186, 334-356; II, 247-276, 330-416.
- 23 On secular historical man see esp. Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane, 24, 70-71, 201-213; Myth and Reality, 72-74, 76-79, 181-193; Cosmos and History, ch. 4; Myths, Dreams, and Mysteries, ch. 1; Rites and Symbols of Initiation, tr. Willard R. Trask (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1965), 127-134.

- 24 Eliade, Rites and Symbols of Initiation, 128. See also Lawrence E. Sullivan, review of Eliade's A History of Religious Ideas, II, Religious Studies Review, 9 (January 1983), 17.
- 25 Eliade, Cosmos and History, 111-112. See also Robert A. Segal, "Eliade's Theory of Millenarianism," Religious Studies, 14 (June 1978), 159-173.
- 26 Eliade's own fiction gets interpreted this way. See Norman J. Giradot and Mac Linscott Ricketts, eds., Imagination and Meaning (New York: Seabury, 1982), parts I-II; Constantin Tacou, ed., Mircea Eliade (Paris: L'Herne, 1978), 315-390; Joseph M. Kitagawa and Charles H. Long, eds., Myths and Symbols (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1969), 343-406; Matei Calinescu, "Imagination and Meaning: Aesthetic Attitudes and Ideas in Mircea Eliade's Thought," Journal of Religion, 57 (January 1977), 1-15; Dudley, 68-70.
- 27 Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane, 205. On modern man's myths see the references in n. 23.
- 28 See Eliade, Cosmos and History, passim. See also Saliba, 54.
- 29 Eliade, Cosmos and History, 75.
- 30 See ibid., 86.
- 31 Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane, 88-89.
- 32 Ibid., 91. See also ibid., 12.
- 33 See Eliade, Shamanism, tr. Willard R. Trask (Princeton: Princeton University, 1972), passim; Myths, Dreams, and Mysteries, ch. 4. See also W. W. Malandra, "The Concept of Movement in History of

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Religions: a Religio-Historical Study of Reindeer in the Spiritual Life of North Eurasian Peoples," Numen, 14 (March 1967), 29.

34 Eliade, Shamanism, 32.

35 Eliade, Myths, Dreams, and Mysteries, 96.

36 See Eliade, Shamanism, 265; Australian Religions (Ithaca: Cornell University, 1973), 129, 156-157.

37 Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane, 92. See also ibid., ch. 2; Cosmos and History, passim; Myth and Reality, passim; Patterns in Comparative Religion, chs. 11-12; Myths, Dreams, and Mysteries, chs. 2-3; The Two and the One, tr. J. M. Cohen (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1969), ch. 3; The Quest (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1969), ch. 6; The Forge and the Crucible, tr. Stephen Corrin (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1971), ch. 15.

38 Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane, 167.

39 Saliba (127-128) and Jonathan Z. Smith ("The Wobbling Pivot," Journal of Religion, 52 (April 1972), 145) criticize Eliade for exactly his assumption that myth is uniformly world-affirming.

40 See Eliade, Yoga, tr. Willard R. Trask, second ed. (Princeton: Princeton University, 1969), passim; Myth and Reality, 83-88; esp. The Quest, ch. 5.

41 Smith (145-146) himself notes that Eliade allows for world-denying myths.

42 Eliade, Yoga, 340.

43 Ibid., 35.

- 44 Eliade, Myth and Reality, 83-84.
- 45 Eliade, The Quest, 81.
- 46 Ibid., 87.
- 47 See Eliade, Images and Symbols, tr. Philip Mairet (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1969), 148-150; Myth and Reality, 126-134; A History of Religious Ideas, II, 371-395.
- 48 Eliade, Images and Symbols, 149.
- 49 Eliade, Myth and Reality, 132.
- 50 Ibid., 133.
- 51 Eliade, A History of Religious Ideas, II, 372.
- 52 Ibid., 388.
- 53 The only conceptions of god which Eliade does specify fall within the mythic stage: the earliest chief gods, he maintains, are sky gods, who, having created the world, withdraw from it and get succeeded by fertility and ancestor gods. See Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane, 121-128; Patterns in Comparative Religion, ch. 3; Myth and Reality, 93-98; Myths, Dreams, and Mysteries, 134-154; "Structures and Changes in the History of Religions," tr. Kathryn K. Atwater, in City Invincible, eds. Carl H. Kraeling and Robert M. Adams (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1960), 353-358. The only correlations which he draws are between various inventions or discoveries--for example, hunting and farming--and the deification of these phenomena. See Eliade, A History of Religious Ideas, I, chs. 1-2; "Structures and Changes in the History of Religions," 358-361.

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- 54 On androgyny see Eliade, Patterns in Comparative Religion, 420-422; Myths, Dreams, and Mysteries, 174-175; esp. The Two and the One, 98-124.
- 55 Eliade, The Two and the One, 108.
- 56 Eliade, Patterns in Comparative Religion, 419. On the unification of opposites see ibid., 419-425; Yoga, 267-273; The Quest, 168-170; Zalmoxis, tr. Willard R. Trask (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1972), ch. 3; esp. The Two and the One, ch. 2.
- 57 Eliade, The Two and the One, 95.
- 58 Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane, 97.
- 59 Eliade, Myth and Reality, 21. See also Patterns in Comparative Religion, 412.
- 60 Eliade does categorize the means of creation into five types. See From Primitives to Zen (New York: Harper, 1977), 83.
- 61 Eliade, The Two and the One, 122.
- 62 Eliade, Myth and Reality, 50.
- 63 Eliade, Patterns in Comparative Religion, 408.
- 64 Eliade, Yoga, 96.
- 65 See, for example, Eliade, Patterns in Comparative Religion, xiii-xiv; The Sacred and the Profane, 10.
- 66 Eliade, Patterns in Comparative Religion, 29.
- 67 Ibid. See also The Sacred and the Profane, 11. See also Allen, 126-127; Allen, "Mircea Eliade's Phenomenological Analysis of Religious Experience,"

- Journal of Religion, 52 (April 1972), 181-182; Stephen J. Reno, "Eliade's Progressional View of Hierophanies," Religious Studies, 8 (June 1972), 156-160; Thomas J. J. Altizer, Mircea Eliade and the Dialectic of the Sacred (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963), *passim*; Mac Linscott Ricketts, "Mircea Eliade and the Death of God," Religion in Life, 3 (Spring 1967), 44-48.
- 68 Eliade, Patterns in Comparative Religion, 28-29. See also The Sacred and the Profane, 12. See also Welbon, 476; Allen, Structure and Creativity in Religion, 126-127; Allen, "Mircea Eliade's Phenomenological Analysis of Religious Experience," 181-182; Reno, 155; Ricketts, 46.
- 69 On the difference between the reconciliation of opposites and a hierophany see Ricketts, 48-50.
- 70 Eliade, Myth and Reality, 45.
- 71 Eliade, Myths, Dreams, and Mysteries, 124.
- 72 Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane, 116. See also *ibid.*, 97.
- 73 Eliade, Cosmos and History, 27-28. See also The Sacred and the Profane, 14.
- 74 Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane, 98. See also *ibid.*, 95-99, 167-201; Patterns in Comparative Religion, 410-416; Myth and Reality, 6-8, ch. 2; Cosmos and History, 21-34; Rites and Symbols of Initiation, x-xi.
- 75 Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane, 99.

Chapter 3

A Jungian Analysis of the *Poimandres*

For both Carl Jung and Eliade, the subject of myth is a deeper reality than the everyday reality man knows. Everyday reality is not illusory, as if it does not exist. The mistaking of it for ultimate reality is the illusion. At the same time the deeper reality manifests itself through everyday reality. Unknowable directly, it is knowable through only this manifestation.

Myth, for both Jung and Eliade, functions to reveal to man a deeper reality. Man once knew of it but has since forgotten. Consciously or unconsciously, he has nevertheless been seeking it. Coming as literally a revelation to its recipient, myth reveals, first, the sheer existence of a deeper reality and, second, the origin of everyday reality either from or through it.

For Jung and Eliade alike, myth functions not only to reveal to man this deeper reality but also to enable him to experience it. Just as man originally knew of it but has since forgotten, so he originally lived in it but has since left. Consciously or unconsciously, he has been seeking to re-experience, not just rediscover, it.

Man, for both Jung and Eliade, does not simply happen to be seeking this deeper reality. Qua man he needs contact with it. His separation from it is equivalent to a fall. The restoration of contact with it is tantamount to salvation. For Eliade, man is ordinarily seeking mere contact with this reality. For Jung, he is ordinarily seeking outright integration with it.

In seeking to return to this deeper reality, man, for both, is ordinarily seeking not to reject everyday reality but, on the contrary, to infuse everyday reality with it. Ordinarily, man truly wants to bridge the two realities rather than to abandon one for the other. The Poimandres,

both would be obliged to concede, is an exception to this rule.

Jung and Eliade differ most over the location of deeper reality. For Eliade, it exists outside man. For Jung, it exists within him. Deeper reality, for Eliade, is the sacred world. Everyday reality is the profane world, of which man is ordinarily wholly a part. Deeper reality, for Jung, is man's unconscious, even if man strives to make it as conscious as possible. Everyday reality is his ego consciousness, which is only a part of him. For Eliade, the sacred is not just a deeper reality but ultimate reality. For Jung, a distinct, ultimate reality may lie beyond the deeper reality of the unconscious, but he himself usually refrains from speculating.

The Unconscious

All mankind, for Jung, has two kinds of needs: Freudian ones and distinctively Jungian ones. The prime Freudian needs are hunger, thirst, sex, and aggression. These needs are instincts. Their direct, full satisfaction takes physical form: eating, drinking, having sex, and hurting others. The satisfaction involves the release of psychic energy. Any mental, sublimated satisfaction is only partial and compensatory.

Freudian instincts, or drives, are innately conscious. Sexual and aggressive instincts subsequently become largely unconscious because the ego, fearing retribution by parents or society, makes them so in order to insure their containment. Far from natural, their unconscious state is the artificial product of repression.

Freud labels "unconscious" only repressed instincts. Innocently forgotten ones he calls "pre-conscious." Jung lumps both under what he calls the "personal unconscious": "... the personal unconscious is made up essentially of contents which have at one time been conscious but which have disappeared from consciousness through having been forgotten or repressed ..." (1). This

unconscious is "personal" because it is individually created during one's life and because its contents therefore vary from individual to individual.

Because the personal unconscious is the product of either forgetfulness or repression, it can in theory be dissolved(2). Indeed, the Freudian goal is exactly to dissolve the repressed unconscious in order to redirect its contents.

Distinctively Jungian needs are psychological rather than physical. They can, to be sure, be fulfilled physically as well as mentally, but the "payoff" is nonphysical: it is self-knowledge rather than relief. The satisfaction lies not in the venting of the energy of a denied part of oneself but in the sheer discovery of that denied--better, unknown--part.

That unknown self is composed of an indefinite number of "archetypes." Where instincts are physical, archetypes are irreducibly psychological. Where instincts are reflex actions, archetypes are the emotional and intellectual significance of those actions. Shutting one's eyes upon looking at the sun is instinctual. Feeling terrified or fascinated by the sight is archetypal. An archetypal experience is not any emotional or intellectual event but only an overwhelming one, the extraordinariness of which stems exactly from the power of the archetype encountered. Because the archetype really lies within one, one is really experiencing a side of himself which he has simply projected onto an external object. An archetype can itself dictate action--for example, fleeing the sun--but the action stems from the meaning of the experience rather than from a reflex.

Instincts and archetypes are distinct but connected. To every instinct corresponds an archetype and vice versa:

What we properly call instincts are physiological urges, and are perceived by the senses. But at the same time, they also manifest themselves in fantasies and often reveal their presence only by symbolic images. These manifestations are what I

call the archetypes.... The unconscious ... seems to be guided chiefly by instinctive trends, represented by corresponding thought forms--that is, by the archetypes(3).

Jung distinguishes between the personal unconscious and what he calls the "collective unconscious." The collective unconscious is composed of both instincts and archetypes. It encompasses all instincts, including the ones which, when repressed, form part of the personal unconscious. The collective unconscious is collective rather than personal, first, because its contents are the same universally and, second, because it is innately unconscious. One inherits its contents as unconscious rather than making them so. Indeed, one can never become conscious of instincts or archetypes themselves, the way one can become conscious of instincts directly for Freud. One can become conscious of only the manifestations of instincts or archetypes:

The collective unconscious consists of the sum of the instincts and their correlates, the archetypes.

... there exists (in addition to the personal unconscious) a second psychic system of a collective, universal, and impersonal nature which is identical in all individuals. This collective unconscious does not develop individually but is inherited. It consists of pre-existent forms, the archetypes, which can only become conscious secondarily ...(4).

Even if the collective unconscious is the same for all, each person confronts it on his own. It stirs him individually, he responds to it individually, and his realization of it is individual. Because the function of myth for Jung is to help man realize his collective unconscious, its function is not, as for social functionalists, social but, as for Eliade, individual. Myth may well, as for Eliade, have a social consequence, but that consequence is, as for Eliade, merely coincidental.

Jung distinguishes not only between instincts and archetypes but also between archetypes and symbols, which are their manifestations(5). Despite the misleading synonym "primordial images," archetypes are not pictures themselves but the tendency to form them. Symbols are the pictures formed. Symbols are the means by which archetypes, unknowable directly, manifest themselves. Where archetypes are transmitted by heredity, symbols are transmitted by acculturation. Where archetypes are the same for all, symbols vary from culture to culture and family to family. Where archetypes are universals, symbols are particulars:

Again and again I encounter the mistaken notion that an archetype is determined in regard to its content, in other words that it is a kind of unconscious idea It is necessary to point out once more that archetypes are not determined as regards their content, but only as regards their form and then only to a very limited degree.... Its form ... might perhaps be compared to the axial system of a crystal, which, as it were, preforms the crystalline structure in the mother liquid, although it has no material existence of its own. This first appears according to the specific way in which the ions and molecules aggregate. The archetype in itself is empty and purely formal, nothing but a facultas praeformandi, a possibility of representation which is given a priori. The (symbolic) representations themselves are not inherited, only the forms ...(6).

Where, for example, a specific savior like Jesus is a symbol, the category saviors, or the inclination to project savior symbols, is an archetype.

Insofar as archetypes are universal patterns in myths, any theorist of myth, as a comparativist, postulates archetypes. Insofar as the particular expressions of those patterns differ from culture to culture, any theorist postulates symbols as well.

What is distinctively Jungian is the source of archetypes: the mind. Whatever their ultimate origin, Jung's archetypes are innate mental patterns. The universality of those patterns, which get expressed in not only myths but innumerable other phenomena as well, stems from the universality of the collective unconscious. By contrast, Eliade's patterns, which he, too, sometimes calls "archetypes," originate in man's experience of the sacred. Their universality reflects the universality of man's experience(7). Where Jung's patterns get transmitted by heredity, Eliade's get discovered anew by each generation(8). For both, the symbols expressing archetypes get conveyed culturally.

Identifying archetypes is not easy. First, the number of possible ones seems unlimited: "There are as many archetypes as there are typical situations in life"(9). Second, archetypes can take the most disparate of forms: natural objects like the moon and fire, human beings like mothers and children, artifacts like rings and weapons, invisible figures like gods and witches, legendary figures like heroes and monsters, abstractions like circles and squares, ideas like the anima and the self, and events like birth and death.

Third, the same entity can often be both a symbol and an archetype. As a particular, Zeus may be a clear-cut symbol, but sky gods collectively can be either an archetype or a set of symbols in turn of the god archetype, which itself can be either an archetype or a set of symbols of the self archetype.

Jung considers most important four archetypes: the persona, the shadow, the anima or animus, and the self(10)--the last three of which will be discussed in the application of his theory to the Poimandres. The importance of these four stems from the frequency of their realization, their power over individuals, and the likely subordination to them of other archetypes, which thereby become mere symbols of them. If, for example, Merlin is a symbol of the archetype of the Wise Old Man, the Wise Old Man is a case, and so a symbol, of the self archetype.

Neither all archetypes nor all manifestations of them are, for Jung, religious. Jung does say continually that all archetypal experiences are "numinous"(11), for any experience, to qualify as archetypal, must be stirring. But an archetypal experience is religious only when the symbol--for example, the sun--is experienced as a god.

Jung sometimes labels archetypes "mythological motifs" or "mythologems"(12), but archetypes are not for him myths themselves. Even though archetypes can be events, they are the themes of myths rather than the plots, which are what convey those themes(13).

Myth

Myth, for Jung, serves several functions. It serves, first, to reveal the existence of the unconscious:

Myths are original revelations of the preconscious (=collective) psyche, involuntary statements about unconscious psychic happenings Modern psychology treats the products of unconscious fantasy-activity as self-portraits of what is going on in the unconscious, or as statements of the unconscious psyche about itself(14).

One who takes myth literally thinks that it is revealing the existence of something outside him--for example, god--but even unconsciously it is in fact revealing the existence of his unconscious. Myth reveals, furthermore, the significance of the unconscious: that it is not just a different but a deeper side of his personality and that his everyday self has emerged out of it.

Myth serves, second, to guide one in dealing with the unconscious. The lives of the characters described in myth become models to emulate:

For instance, our ancestors have done so-and-so, and so shall you do. Or such and such a hero has done so-and-so, and that is your model. For instance, in the

teachings of the Catholic Church, there are several thousand saints. They serve as models, they have their legends, and that is Christian mythology(15).

Myth here assures one that others have had experiences like his and that he is not going crazy.

Myth serves, third, not just to tell one about the unconscious but actually to open him up to it. Because one experiences the unconscious through only its symbolic manifestations, the symbols in myth serve as a conduit for encountering the unconscious. If on the one hand myth makes sense of any prior encounters, on the other hand it itself provides an encounter.

Myths describe the development of personality in the form of stories. Their collective plot is the emergence of the ego out of the unconscious, its establishment of its independence, its return to the unconscious, and its elevation of the unconscious to consciousness(16).

There are two main kinds of myths for Jung: myths of the first half of life and myths of the second. The prime myths of each are hero myths, which in the first half of life are identical with creation myths. Creation myths describe the birth of the ego, symbolized by the created world, out of the primordial unconscious, symbolized by its divine creator. Similarly, the first kind of hero myth, which describes the birth of the hero out of his parents and his establishment of his place in society, symbolizes the birth of the ego out of the unconscious and its establishment of its independence. So great is the effort required that the feat, which is the goal of young adulthood, is truly heroic. Because the feat requires extraordinary boldness and assurance, the mythic hero is usually both male and superhuman(17).

The second kind of hero myth describes the second stage in the development of consciousness. The hero's return to his parents and reconciliation with them symbolizes the return of the ego to the unconscious, which it has abandoned, and its formation with it of the self(18). So great is the effort required here, too, and so rare is

success at it, that this feat as well, which is the goal of middle age and beyond, is truly heroic(19). The mythic hero here, too, is typically male and superhuman.

Because the true subject of myth for Jung is man rather than the world, the richest myths for him deal literally with personalities rather than the world. They are, in other words, hero myths--of either variety. Creation myths, as myths, do literally involve personalities, whose actions create the world, but hero myths deal with personalities in their own right. They therefore present both a fuller and a clearer picture of the state of the unconscious:

The finest of all symbols of the libido is the human figure, conceived as a demon or hero. Here the symbolism leaves the objective, material realm of astral and meteorological images and takes on human form, changing into a figure who passes from joy to sorrow, from sorrow to joy, and, like the sun, now stands high at the zenith and now is plunged into darkest night, only to rise again in new splendour. Just as the sun, by its own motion and in accordance with its own inner law, climbs from morn till noon, crosses the meridian and goes its downward way towards evening, leaving its radiance behind it, so man sets his course by immutable laws and, his journey over, sinks into darkness, to rise again in his children and begin the cycle anew(20).

The specific plot of hero myths is either the difficulty of the hero's birth and survival or his later confrontation with his parents. Literally, the child, upon birth, is reluctant to leave the alluring security of his parents. Symbolically, the ego is initially afraid to separate itself from the unconscious. Literally, the hero, once grown, returns to his birthplace--not, however, to rejoin his parents but to re-establish his ties to them. Symbolically, the ego eventually returns to the unconscious, from which it has by now long been severed, to rediscover its roots without lapsing back into them(21). The ego seeks not to

return permanently to the unconscious but rather to integrate the unconscious with itself.

Characters in myth symbolize not persons but parts of the psyche. A female, for example, symbolizes not a male's mother but his anima. The hero symbolizes the believer's ego, and his parents symbolize his unconscious. The hero's return home and reconciliation with his parents symbolize the believer's fusion of his parts into his self.

A myth works for anyone who is entranced by it. To be entranced by it one need not deem the myth true, take it literally, or identify himself with the hero. One need only take the myth seriously and imagine living it out, literally or otherwise.

Jung's Interest in Gnosticism

In his autobiography, Memories, Dreams, Reflections, Jung describes his search for objective evidence of the collective unconscious--evidence beyond his own experience of it:

As my life entered its second half, I was already embarked on the confrontation with the contents of the unconscious.... First I had to find evidence for the historical prefiguration of my inner experiences. That is to say, I had to ask myself, "Where have my particular premises already occurred in history?" If I had not succeeded in finding such evidence, I would never have been able to substantiate my ideas(22).

Jung found that evidence in two sources: alchemy and Gnosticism. Interpreted psychologically, both served as hoary counterparts to his brand of psychology and so as evidence of its objectivity:

The experiences of the alchemists were, in a sense, my experiences, and their world was my world. This was, of course, a momentous discovery: I had stumbled upon the historical counterpart of my

psychology of the unconscious. The possibility of a comparison with alchemy, and the uninterrupted intellectual chain back to Gnosticism, gave substance to my psychology(23).

To be sure, Jung considers alchemy a more important prefiguration of his psychology than Gnosticism. Though he discusses both Gnosticism and alchemy throughout his writings, he devotes several whole volumes to alchemy(24) but only one essay to Gnosticism, and even it deals mostly with parallels to alchemy(25). As he explains, he found Gnosticism too distant a phenomenon to be tied directly to modern psychology and saw alchemy as the medieval nexus between the one and the other:

But the Gnostics were too remote for me to establish any link with them in regard to the questions that were confronting me. As far as I could see, the tradition that might have connected Gnosis with the present seemed to have been severed, and for a long time it proved impossible to find any bridge that led from Gnosticism--or neo-Platonism--to the contemporary world. But when I began to understand alchemy I realized that it represented the historical link with Gnosticism, and that a continuity therefore existed between past and present. Grounded in the natural philosophy of the Middle Ages, alchemy formed the bridge on the one hand into the past, to Gnosticism, and on the other into the future, to the modern psychology of the unconscious(26).

The remoteness of Gnosticism for Jung stems partly from the paucity of texts available to him. Working before the discovery of Gnostic texts at Nag Hammadi, he was, as he says, dependent largely on the writings of the Gnostics' adversaries:

Since we possess only very few complete texts, and since most of what is known comes from the reports of Christian opponents, we have, to say the least, an inadequate knowledge of the history as well as the

content of this strange and confused literature, which is so difficult to evaluate(27).

Yet the remoteness of Gnosticism for Jung surely goes deeper. Gnosticism may, for him, be simply too otherworldly. Perhaps because alchemy combines the ancient, Gnostic focus on the immaterial and transcendent soul with the modern, scientific-like focus on the transformation of matter, it serves to link the two.

Despite his professed closer kinship to alchemy, Jung interprets it and Gnosticism virtually identically(28). Indeed, he interprets alchemy as not just the link to Gnosticism but the outright continuation of it: "In spite of the suppression of the Gnostic heresy, it (Gnosticism) continued to flourish throughout the Middle Ages under the guise of alchemy"(29). For Jung, the alchemical process of extracting gold from base metals is a continuation of the Gnostic process of liberating fallen souls from matter. Both processes are seemingly outward, physical or metaphysical ones which in fact are inner, psychological ones. Both represent a progression from sheer ego consciousness to the ego's rediscovery of the unconscious and reintegration with it to forge the self: in alchemy a progression from base metals to the distillation of vapor out of them and the return of that vapor to the metals to form gold; in Gnosticism a progression from the Gnostic's sheer bodily existence to the release of the immaterial soul within his body and the reunion of that soul with the godhead. In both cases the state truly sought lies within man--between his ego and his unconscious--rather than outside him--between the vapor and the metals or the soul and the godhead. The human state simply gets projected onto the external world(30).

Jung's psychological approach to Gnosticism is really twofold. On the one hand he interprets Gnostic myths psychologically because he interprets all myths psychologically. On the other hand he interprets Gnostic myths psychologically because he considers Gnosticism, together with alchemy, a distinctive effort at unraveling

the unconscious: "My enthusiasm arose from the discovery that they (Gnostics) were apparently the first thinkers to concern themselves (after their fashion) with the contents of the collective unconscious"(31). Jung goes so far as to declare that "Gnosis is undoubtedly a psychological knowledge whose contents derive from the unconscious"(32) and that "... it is clear beyond a doubt that many of the Gnostics were nothing other than psychologists"(33).

On the one hand Jung acknowledges that the Gnostics and the alchemists were probably unaware of the psychological meaning of their beliefs. What he says here of the Gnostics he says elsewhere of the alchemists as well: "It seems to me highly unlikely that they had a psychological conception of them (archetypal images)"(34). They thought that they were dealing primarily with the cosmos, not themselves: "The Gnostics projected their subjective inner perception ... into a cosmogonic system and believed in the (metaphysical) reality of its psychological figures"(35).

On the other hand Jung denies that the existence of the unconscious is a recent discovery:

Since all cognition is akin to recognition, it should not come as a surprise that what I have described as a gradual process of development had already been anticipated, and more or less prefigured, at the beginning of our era. We meet these images and ideas in Gnosticism The alchemists ... in their own way knew more about the nature of the individuation process than we moderns do The same knowledge, formulated differently to suit the age they lived in, was possessed by the Gnostics. The idea of an unconscious was not unknown to them(36).

If, however, Jung not only interprets all myths psychologically but also deems the Gnostics and the alchemists unaware of the psychological meaning of their myths, it remains to be seen how either they or their myths were closer to his views than other believers and other myths(37).

The History of the Psyche

Tracing Jung's history of the psyche will help pinpoint the significance of Gnosticism for him.

Jung divides the psychological history of man into four stages: primitive, ancient, modern, and contemporary. To be sure, he makes this division only implicitly and uses other terms for some of the stages(38).

According to Jung, man at birth is entirely unconscious. Only out of his unconscious does consciousness slowly emerge(39). Because man's initial state is unconscious, his unconscious is natural rather than, as for Freud, artificially created by repression. Where for Freud the unconscious arises out of consciousness, for Jung consciousness arises out of the unconscious(40).

By "consciousness" Jung means awareness of oneself as a subject, or "I," distinct from both the external world and the unconscious. The initial center of consciousness is the ego, so that the development of consciousness means initially the development of the ego.

Because the consciousness of mankind has developed slowly, the ego of primitive man(41) is weak. To say that primitive man's ego is weak is to say that he projects himself onto the world(42). He thereby encounters his unconscious rather than the world and so is differentiated from neither. Indeed, not until the ego is distinct from the unconscious does it encounter the world itself rather than the projections of the unconscious.

In projecting himself, as a personality, onto the world, primitive man creates a religious world--a world ruled not by impersonal forces like atoms but by personalities, or gods. Events in that world are not merely caused but willed(43).

So weak is the ego of primitive man that he not only projects himself onto the world but identifies himself with it. Like an infant, of which he is the phylogenetic counterpart, primitive man has no firm sense of himself "over against" the world. He does not distinguish between subjectivity and objectivity. He experiences himself objectively, as part of the world itself:

Thanks to our one-sided emphasis on so-called natural causes, we have learned to differentiate what is subjective and psychic from what is objective and "natural." For primitive man, on the contrary, the psychic and the objective coalesce in the external world. In the face of something extraordinary it is not he who is astonished, but rather the thing which is astonishing.... What we would call the powers of imagination and suggestion seem to him invisible forces which act on him from without.... Primitive man is unpsychological. Psychic happenings take place outside him in an objective way. Even the things he dreams about are real to him; that is his only reason for paying attention to dreams.... The simple truth is that primitive man is somewhat more given to projection than we because of the undifferentiated state of his mind and his consequent inability to criticize himself(44).

In identifying himself with the world, primitive man identifies himself with the gods he has projected onto it. He and they are one. Between him and them, and therefore between him and the world, there exists what Lucien Lévy-Bruhl terms participation mystique(45).

The world with which primitive man identifies himself includes other human beings as well as gods. Because the primitive identifies himself with them, too, he has no sense of individuality either. Identifying himself with the group, he is what Jung calls a "herd animal"(46).

The difference between ancient and primitive man is that ancient man has a sturdier ego. Because even his ego is shaky, he, too, projects himself onto the world in the form of gods, but he does not identify himself with those gods and so with the world. He worships the gods but deems them distinct from him. He, too, experiences the world through his unconscious and so is not truly separated from either, but he nevertheless has a budding sense of himself vis-à-vis both.

The term "ancient" man, which is doubtless misleading, refers to man not just immediately beyond the primitive stage but up to modern times. Apart from primitive man, ancient man means religious man. Ancient man includes Egyptians, Mesopotamians, Greeks, Romans, Jews, and Christians(47). It does not, however, include mystics. For Jung, Eastern mystics are striving to dissolve the ego and return to the pristine stage of sheer unconsciousness. Conversely, Western mystics are striving to integrate the ego with the unconscious and thereby reach the final stage of "selfhood."

To the extent that ancient man forges an ego, he creates a split within himself between it and his unconscious, from which it has emerged. That split is not, however, antagonistic. In developing his ego, ancient man does not forsake his unconscious. Like primitive man, he continues to tend to it through religion. As Jung says repeatedly:

Whenever there exists some external form, be it an ideal or a ritual, by which all the yearnings and hopes of the soul are adequately expressed--as for instance in a living religion--then we may say that the psyche is outside and that there is no psychic problem(48)

The difference between modern(49) and ancient man is that modern man possesses a fully independent ego. By withdrawing his projections from the world(50), he has largely "demythitized" it. He thereby experiences the world itself, unfiltered by his unconscious, and so is differentiated from both.

Invariably, modern man not merely separates himself from his unconscious but rejects it altogether. He thereby pits himself--his ego--against his unconscious, from which he is thus severed. Modern man regards himself as wholly rational, unemotional, scientific, and atheistic. Religion, through which earlier man had realized his unconscious, he dismisses as a pre-scientific delusion. The unconscious itself he similarly dismisses as a pre-scientific delusion. He identifies himself wholly with his ego: "... nowadays

most people identify themselves almost exclusively with their consciousness, and imagine that they are only what they know about themselves.... Rationalism and doctrinairism are the disease of our time; they pretend to have all the answers"(51). Where primitive man identifies himself entirely with the world, which in fact means with his unconscious, modern man identifies himself entirely with his ego, which deals with the world but is distinct from it.

Modern man's dismissal of the unconscious does not, however, eliminate it. He still partly projects it onto the world--for example, in superstitions(52), which perpetuate participation mystique, and in the quintessentially modern belief in flying saucers(53). Moreover, he continues to project his unconscious onto other persons:

Modern science has subtilized its projections to an almost unrecognizable degree, but our ordinary life still swarms with them. You can find them spread out in the newspapers, in books, rumours, and ordinary social gossip. All gaps in our actual knowledge are still filled out with projections. We are still so sure we know what other people think or what their true character is. We are convinced that certain people have all the bad qualities we do not know in ourselves or that they practise all those vices which could, of course, never be our own. We must still be exceedingly careful not to project our own shadows too shamelessly; we are still swamped with projected illusions(54).

Even though modern man projects his unconscious, his conscious dismissal of a nonrational side to himself means rejection of the unconscious: merely to express the unconscious is not, for Jung, to tend to it. Where the religiosity of primitive and ancient man constitutes recognition of a nonrational side to life, even if it gets projected onto gods, the atheism of modern man constitutes denial of even a projected nonrational side.

To convince modern man otherwise the unconscious forces itself upon him in the form of neurosis:

When in the Babylonian epic Gilgamesh's arrogance and hybris defy the gods, they create a man equal in strength to Gilgamesh in order to check the hero's unlawful ambition. The very same thing has happened to our patient: he is a thinker who has settled, or is always going to settle, the world by the power of his intellect and reason. His ambition has at least succeeded in forging his own personal fate. He has forced everything under the inexorable law of his reason, but somewhere nature escaped and came back with a vengeance It was the worst blow that could be dealt to all his rational ideals and especially to his belief in the all-powerful human will.... Being highly rationalistic and intellectual he had found that his attitude of mind and his philosophy forsook him completely in the face of his neurosis and its demoralizing forces. He found nothing in his whole Weltanschauung that would help him to gain sufficient control of himself(55).

The difference between contemporary(56) and modern man is that contemporary man is conscious of his nonrational side, whether or not of its Jungian source. Like modern man, who corresponds crudely to nineteenth-century man, contemporary, or twentieth-century, man dismisses religion as a pre-scientific delusion. Unlike modern man, however, he is not satisfied with his scrupulously rational life, which he inherits from modern man, and yearns for the kind of fulfillment which religion provided. He seeks new, nonprojective outlets to replace the dead, projective ones of religion(57). He does not, like modern man, boast of having transcended the need which religion once fulfilled:

But the conscious, modern (=contemporary) man can no longer refrain from acknowledging the might of the psyche, despite the most strenuous and dogged

efforts at self-defence. This distinguishes our time from all others. We can no longer deny that the dark stirrings of the unconscious are active powers, that psychic forces exist which, for the present at least, cannot be fitted into our rational world order.... The revolution in our conscious outlook, brought about by the catastrophic results of the World War, shows itself in our inner life by the shattering of our faith in ourselves and our own worth.... The rapid and worldwide growth of a psychological interest over the last two decades shows unmistakably that modern man is turning his attention from outward material things to his own inner processes.... The psychological interest of the present time is an indication that modern man expects something from the psyche which the outer world has not given him: doubtless something which our religion ought to contain, but no longer does contain, at least for modern man(58).

In identifying contemporary man with twentieth-century man, Jung is deeming him not the average but the distinctive twentieth-century man. Most persons living in Jung's time are either "moderns," who are oblivious to any nonrational needs, or "ancients," who are satisfied with traditional, projective means of fulfilling them. Because "contemporaries" are sensitive to both the existence of nonrational needs and the demise of past means of fulfilling them, they comprise a select minority:

... the man we call modern (=contemporary), the man who is aware of the immediate present, is by no means the average man.... The modern man--or, let us say again, the man of the immediate present--is rarely met with, for he must be conscious to a superlative degree.... Even in a civilized community the people who form, psychologically speaking, the lowest stratum live in a state of consciousness little different from that of primitives. Those of the succeeding strata (=ancients) live on a level of

consciousness which corresponds to the beginnings of human culture, while those of the highest stratum (=moderns) have a consciousness that reflects the life of the last few centuries. Only the man who is modern in our meaning of the term really lives in the present; he alone has a present-day consciousness, and he alone finds that the ways of life on those earlier levels have begun to pall upon him.... (O)nly the man who has outgrown the stages of consciousness belonging to the past, and has amply fulfilled the duties appointed for him by his world, can achieve full consciousness of the present(59).

Because contemporary man, unlike modern man, consciously experiences rather than ignores his nonrational needs, he does not suffer from ordinary neurosis, or threats to his ego from an ignored unconscious. Rather, he suffers from a sense of emptiness, or meaninglessness. Like modern man, he is severed from his unconscious, but unlike modern man he strives to overcome the severance. He is severed not because, like modern man, he spurns his nonrational side but because, as the heir of modern man, he does not know how to reconnect himself with it:

Most of (my patients) already have some form of psychotherapeutic treatment behind them, with partial or negative results. About a third of my cases are not suffering from any clinically definable neurosis, but from the senselessness and aimlessness of their lives. I should not object if this were called the general neurosis of our age(60).

As the quotation makes clear, distinctively Jungian patients are not moderns, who correspond more to Freudian patients, but contemporaries(61).

The connection between this history of the psyche and Gnosticism is that Jung considers Gnostics, together with alchemists, the ancient counterpart to contemporaries and so to Jungian patients. Jung therefore sees his patients as the contemporary counterpart to ancient Gnostics. Like

Gnostics, they feel alienated from their roots and are seeking to overcome the alienation. As contemporaries, they feel alienated from something internal rather than external. They do not, like Gnostics, project their alienation onto the cosmos.

Jung's Theory Applied to the Poimandres

Understood psychologically, the Poimandres describes the development not of the world or even of man as a whole but of man's psyche. Its literal account of the development of the world must be made not merely human but psychological: not merely must the cosmic level be reduced to the human, which simply projects itself onto the cosmos, but the human level must in turn be reduced from the external to the internal, from the physical to the mental(62).

At the outset of the Poimandres there exists, or at least appears, only the immaterial godhead. Jung would say that it symbolizes the unconscious. As a symbol of the unconscious, it is primordial. Whatever its origin, if any, it is the source or agent of everything else and so, vis-à-vis everything else, is pre-existent. Having yet emanated nothing, it lacks nothing. It is whole, self-sufficient, perfect. It thus symbolizes the unconscious before the unconscious produces consciousness and thereby loses part of itself(63).

As a symbol of the wholeness of the unconscious, the godhead is androgynous rather than exclusively male or female(64). Ordinarily, for Jung, the initially androgynous godhead becomes a female god, whose bearing of a son symbolizes the emergence of consciousness out of the primordial unconscious(65). The fact that in the Poimandres the godhead remains androgynous even after the emergence of a female Nature, a male Word and Demiurge, and an androgynous Primal Man suggests an insufficiently independent, or differentiated, consciousness. That state foreshadows the regression to unconsciousness preached subsequently by the myth.

As a symbol of the unconscious, the godhead is at least partly an impersonal principle. Like most of the archetypes which compose the unconscious, its emanations are largely personalities.

The emergence of raw matter alongside the immaterial godhead symbolizes the beginning, but only the beginning, of the emergence of the ego out of the unconscious. Because the external world is the ego's initial object of consciousness, "ego consciousness" means consciousness of the external world. Inert matter itself scarcely symbolizes the ego, which requires a reflective, thinking entity conscious of itself as a subject vis-à-vis the external world. In contrast to raw matter, Nature is a living personality and thereby represents a later stage in the development of the ego. But it is still a collective rather than individual personality. Not until there exists an individual subject vis-à-vis not only the natural world but also humanity collectively is there truly an ego. It emerges only with the birth of individual human beings out of the union of Primal Man and Nature(66).

Man's ego is symbolized not by his soul but by the thinking part of his body, the unspecified center of his thoughts and actions in the natural world. Man's soul, as his link to the forgotten godhead, symbolizes the unconscious. As long as man remains unaware of the existence of his soul, he is an unrealized self. As long as his values are wholly material, he is merely an ego.

Because Jung's interpretation of myth is psychological, it collapses the literal distinction in the Poimandres between the outer world and man. Both matter and the body symbolize the development of the ego--raw matter symbolizing the beginning of the process and the thinking part of the body the end. Likewise both the immaterial godhead and man's soul symbolize man's unconsciousness, if also at opposite stages of development.

The ego, for Jung, emerges not just alongside the unconscious but also out of the unconscious, which initially exists alone. In the Poimandres the godhead, through its emanations, creates the material world out of matter, but

it is not clear whether the godhead creates matter itself. The godhead appears alone at first but may not exist alone at first. If matter originates in the godhead, the Poimandres is expressing the true relationship between the ego and the unconscious: the dependence of the ego on the unconscious. If, alternatively, matter is pre-existent and merely comes into contact with the godhead, the myth is perhaps expressing the dissociation of the unconscious from the ego--and is thereby foreshadowing the problems that that dissociation will spell.

The unconscious, for Jung, is naturally creative. It produces the ego spontaneously. Insofar as the godhead is an impersonal principle, its creation of the material world, if not of matter itself, is spontaneous, but insofar as the godhead is also a personality, its creation is willful. Still, the Jungian stress on the naturalness of creation abets the resolution of the key Gnostic paradox: why the godhead creates a world which it then seeks to undo.

Jung's theory does not consider the details of creation: what material entities get created, in what order, with what characteristics, and with what importance. Still, the overall manner of creation--the division of matter--symbolizes the development of the ego, which proceeds by division, or differentiation.

The emergence of the ego is, for Jung, a gradual process. The Poimandres, to be sure, has no parallel to the stage between conception and birth: the "uroboric" stage(67). No sooner does the godhead conceive an emanation than it emanates it. Moreover, the Poimandres contains none of the long chains of emanations found in some other Gnostic texts. Consistently or not, Jung would say that not only the transformation of raw matter into Nature but also the emanations of the Word, the Demiurge, and Primal Man, followed by the creation of the seven "post-primal" androgynes, symbolize the gradual transition from unconsciousness to ego(68).

The emergence of the ego is not only a gradual but also a difficult process. If on the one hand the unconscious creates spontaneously, on the other hand it clings

possessively to its progeny. The ego, for its part, wants to be independent of the unconscious yet simultaneously clings to it for security(69).

In the Poimandres the godhead freely and knowingly responds to matter by emanating parts of itself yet then strives to reclaim those parts from matter. In turn, matter, as Nature, yearns both to create and to be absorbed by the godhead. This mutually ambivalent relationship between the godhead and matter symbolizes well the relationship between the unconscious and the ego.

Once the ego become independent, it inevitably forgets, if not rejects, its roots. As Marie-Louise von Franz says:

... in every human being we meet with the same fact, namely, a pre-conscious totality in which everything is already contained, including consciousness, and at the same time something like an active tendency towards building up a separate consciousness, which, then, sometimes, in a Luciferian gesture, turns back to the pre-conscious totality and says: "I was not created by you, I made myself"(70).

As the symbol of an independent ego, material man is appropriately the first not only to be conscious of himself but also to forget his origin. Not Primal Man but only his human descendants identify their entire selves with their material sides and the entire world with the material world.

Like the emergence of the ego out of the unconscious, the forgetting of the unconscious by the ego is a gradual process. Parallel to the slow transition from primitive to modern man, the process is symbolized by the transition from Primal Man through the seven androgynes to ordinary human beings.

In the Poimandres non-Gnostics, who also possess souls, are not just ignorant of the true, divine nature of themselves and the world but also satisfied with the false, material nature of both. Their complacency makes them apt counterparts to moderns. Gnostics, as typified by the

narrator, have also forgotten the true nature of themselves and the world, but they are nevertheless dissatisfied with the existing nature of both. Their dissatisfaction makes them suitable counterparts to contemporaries.

If, in the Poimandres, ignorance alone is what ultimately keeps man tied to the material world, knowledge is what ultimately frees him from it. Because man is ignorant, that knowledge must come from outside him. Because the material world is ignorant, too, that knowledge must come from outside it as well. The knowledge can come from only the godhead. Man's dependence on the godhead to reveal itself to him symbolizes the dependence of the ego on the unconscious to reveal itself to it.

In most Gnostic myths the godhead reveals itself to man through an intermediary god, whom it begets. In the Poimandres, however, the godhead reveals itself directly. Because the unconscious, for Jung, is itself unknowable, it must use intermediaries to reveal itself. Those intermediaries are the symbols of the archetypes which compose it. As the ultimate source and subject of the revelation, the godhead symbolizes the unconscious as a whole. As the revealer of it, Poimandres symbolizes one of the archetypes to be considered later: the Wise Old Man.

In the Poimandres the Gnostic's response to the revelation, as typified by the narrator's, parallels the response of contemporary man: gratitude. For the revelation provides the fulfillment, projective or otherwise, which he has been seeking. His identification of himself with the revealed soul and godhead symbolizes his identification of himself with the unconscious and thereby parallels at least the inclination of contemporary man. Of contemporaries Jung can thus say:

I do not believe that I am going too far when I say that modern (=contemporary) man, in contrast to his nineteenth-century brother, turns to the psyche with very great expectations, and does so without

reference to any traditional creed but rather with a view to Gnostic experience(71).

The presumable response of the non-Gnostic to the revelation parallels that of modern man: fear. For the revelation, which applies to him as well as to the Gnostic, shatters his vaunted image of both himself and the world.

On the one hand Jung says that all myths reveal the existence and significance of the unconscious. On the other hand he says that no believers in myth, including Gnostics, are aware of its psychological meaning. For all of them, myth, as a projection, reveals primarily an external, not internal, reality. What, then, distinguishes Gnostics from other believers in myth? How are they distinctively concerned with cultivating the unconscious? What makes them more like contemporaries than like other ancients? What makes their myths different from those of other ancients?

Nothing in fact distinguishes Gnostic myths from those of non-Gnostics. Myths for both reveal the existence and significance of the unconscious. The real difference is between Gnostics and non-Gnostics themselves. Gnostics may be no more aware of the unconscious than non-Gnostics, but they, as symbolized by the narrator, feel unfulfilled and so, like contemporaries, are consciously seeking new myths to provide the fulfillment traditional ones once gave:

The psychological interest of the present time is an indication that modern (=contemporary) man expects something from the psyche which the outer world has not given him: doubtless something which our religion ought to contain, but no longer does contain, at least for modern man.... That there is a general interest in these matters cannot be denied I am not thinking merely of the interest taken in psychology as a science, or of the still narrower interest in the psychoanalysis of Freud, but of the widespread and ever-growing interest in all sorts of psychic phenomena, including spiritualism, astrology,

Theosophy, parapsychology, and so forth. The world has seen nothing like it since the end of the seventeenth century. We can compare it only to the flowering of Gnostic thought in the first and second centuries after Christ. The spiritual currents of our time have, in fact, a deep affinity with Gnosticism.... What is striking about these Gnostic systems is that they are based exclusively on the manifestations of the unconscious The passionate interest in these movements undoubtedly arises from psychic energy which can no longer be invested in obsolete religious forms(72).

Non-Gnostics feel no discontent. Those non-Gnostics who are nonbelievers are like moderns: they scorn the conscious need myth fulfills for believers. Those non-Gnostics who are believers are like ancients: their existing myths fulfill the conscious need they feel. Because Gnostics, other believers, and nonbelievers alike remain unaware of the psychological meaning of myth, the differences among them are over the conscious meaning of myth.

The Poimandres preaches man's total identification of himself with his newly discovered divinity. Because that identification symbolizes the Gnostic's identification with his unconscious, Jungian psychology would consider it as lopsided and as dangerous as the non-Gnostic's identification of himself with his ego consciousness. Jungian psychology would consider both attitudes unbalanced. It would say that the non-Gnostic, like modern man, suffers from an exaggerated persona: his ego identifies itself wholly with his conscious, public side. It would say that the Gnostic, whether or not contemporary man, suffers from an exaggerated, or "inflated," ego, which, conversely, identifies itself wholly with the rediscovered unconscious(73). The consequence of inflation is, minimally, excessive pride in the presumed uniqueness of one's unconscious; maximally, psychosis, or the outright dissolution of ego consciousness:

... the great psychic danger which is always connected with individuation, or the development of the self, lies in the identification of ego-consciousness with the self. This produces an inflation which threatens consciousness with dissolution(74).

Despite faddish interpretations the Jungian aim is in fact no more to reject ego consciousness for the unconscious than, like the modern aim, to reject the unconscious for ego consciousness. The aim is, rather, to balance the two. This point will prove decisive.

In the Poimandres knowledge itself is liberating: the revelation of the existence of a higher reality automatically diminishes the hold of the lower one. Recognizing matter for what it is, the Gnostic ceases to grant it the status he had till now, even when he had been discontented with it. The freedom from matter given him by the revelation symbolizes freedom from ego consciousness and parallels that given contemporary man by his revelation.

Myth, for Jung, not merely reveals the existence of the unconscious but also provides an encounter with it. The Gnostic revelation, he would say, is liberating because it not just informs the recipient of the existence of a deeper reality but also opens him up to it.

With the revelation the Gnostic is at last free, not to say obliged, to forsake the material world altogether. With his revelation contemporary man, however, is not likewise free, let alone obliged, to forsake ego consciousness. His doing so would spell inflation. This continuing difference will, again, prove central.

For Jung, the cultivation of the unconscious involves a break with the present state of consciousness and a return to the unconscious. But man returns to the unconscious for the purpose of raising it--better, its symbols--to consciousness, not for the purpose of regressing to unconsciousness:

Man's worst sin is unconsciousness, but it is indulged in with the greatest piety even by those who should serve mankind as teachers and examples. When shall we stop taking man for granted in this barbarous manner and in all seriousness seek ways and means to exorcize him, to rescue him from possession and unconsciousness, and make this the most vital task of civilization(75)?

As Jolande Jacobi says of the return to the unconscious:

Once the psyche reaches the midpoint of life, the process of development demands a return to the beginning, a descent into the dark, hot depths of the unconscious. To sojourn in these depths, to withstand their dangers, is a journey to hell and "death." But he who comes through safe and sound, who is "reborn," will return, full of knowledge and wisdom, equipped for the outward and inward demands of life(76).

Man should seek a re-unified state, as he possessed at birth, but now he should seek the integration of the unconscious with ego consciousness, not the restoration of sheer unconsciousness(77). He should now seek to make the unconscious conscious, not the reverse. As Jung says of therapy:

Accordingly, the therapeutic method of complex psychology consists on the one hand in making as fully conscious as possible the constellated unconscious contents, and on the other hand in synthetizing them with consciousness through the act of recognition(78).

To exactly the extent that, for Jung, man can never make the unconscious completely conscious--"... the psychic wholeness comprehended in the unity of consciousness is an ideal goal that has never yet been reached"(79)--he falls short of his goal.

Alas, the goal in the Poimandres is the opposite: reversion to the original state of man and the cosmos, not

the transformation of either. The goal is a return to the state prior to the emergence of both the material world and, as a separate entity, man himself. The goal is reversion to the state of a unified godhead: man's prescribed ascent culminates in his union with God. In Jungian terms, the goal is sheer unconsciousness, the state prior to ego consciousness. The state sought parallels that not of contemporary but of primitive man--and, even earlier, the uroboric state at birth. In shedding not simply his inert body but also his material values, man is shedding ego consciousness altogether. So enraptured, or inflated, is the narrator of the myth by his rediscovery of the unconscious that he abandons ego consciousness for it.

Accordingly, the Poimandres does not urge man to alter his soul or the godhead. It does not urge him to alter his body or the material world either. It most certainly does not urge him to fuse his soul with his body or the godhead with the material world. Rather, it urges him, which means his soul, to escape entirely from both his body and the material world and to restore both himself and the godhead to their pristine state. That state is one of unity, but the unity is of all divinity, not of divinity with matter. Indeed, because a psychological interpretation collapses the distinction between the outer world and man, the return of the human soul to the outer godhead symbolizes nothing. In two respects, then, the Poimandres preaches the opposite of Jung's psychological ideal: the return, first, is to the original state and, second, involves the rejection of the present one.

What for Jung is only a means to an end--return to the unconscious--is for the Poimandres equivalent to the end itself--return to the godhead. What for Jung is the end--the integration of the unconscious with ego consciousness--is for the Poimandres equivalent to the present predicament itself--the association of divinity with matter. Conversely, what for the Poimandres is the end--the severance of the link between divinity and matter--is in Jungian terms the predicament--the dissociation of the unconscious from ego consciousness.

To be sure, it is the ego which receives the revelation and which returns to the unconscious. In returning, the ego is therefore not abandoning itself, but it is abandoning ego, or ordinary, consciousness. The ego is abandoning its initial and, till now, sole object of consciousness: the external world. It is shifting its focus from the outer world to the inner one, even if it itself continues to do the focusing.

It is true that in the Poimandres, in contrast to many other Gnostic myths, creation is intentional. To that extent the Poimandres violates Jung's ideal less than other Gnostic myths do. Creation does, however, prove evil, and the aim remains to escape from it and to return to a state of sheer divinity(80).

It is true that Nature, despite her chronic dependence on the godhead, scarcely wants simply to revert to either divinity or raw matter. She also wants to be a second creator herself. Indeed, in many other Gnostic myths the ruler of the material world and the highest god are rivals. In at least her desire to maintain her independence Nature in the Poimandres fits the proper state of consciousness for Jung. The myth itself, however, opposes her desire and seeks to topple, not bolster, her--the opposite of the Jungian aim.

It is true that in at least the Hymn of the Pearl(81), among Gnostic myths, the final state of the psyche, as symbolized by the child, is different from the original one. The child not merely changes but matures: the robe he cast off at the beginning has grown by the end to accommodate his new size. His growth symbolizes the growth of his personality, which now ideally encompasses the raised unconscious as well as ego consciousness. In few, if any, other Gnostic myths, however, is there any permanent change in divinity, and the Poimandres itself hints of none.

It is true that in many Gnostic myths, including perhaps the Poimandres, matter originates out of divinity. One might, then, say that the Gnostic goal of reversion to the pristine state of the cosmos means the

reunification of divinity with matter rather than their severance--escape from the material world as the means somehow aside. But in fact matter is not originally part of divinity, which originally exists alone. Matter does emerge out of divinity, but it does not lie latent in divinity. Its emergence constitutes a paradox: that sheer divinity, which is both omniscient and omnipotent, produces matter. Even in Gnostic myths which espouse primordial dualism, and therefore the initial separation of divinity from matter, the paradox exists: that divinity, still omniscient and omnipotent, succumbs to matter.

For Jung and the Poimandres alike, myth has a three-stage plot. Stage one, for both, postulates a pre-existent monolith: for Jung, of unconsciousness; for the Poimandres, of either sheer divinity or divinity isolated from matter. Stage two, for both, marks the beginning of creation and thereby of division: for Jung, into ego consciousness and unconsciousness; for the Poimandres, into either matter and divinity or material world and divinity. Either immediately or eventually, the division becomes an opposition.

Stage three, for both, resolves the opposition, but in antithetical ways. For the Poimandres, there is a complete return to stage one, the time before the emergence of either matter or the material world. For Jung, however, there is, ideally, the establishment of a new state, one which completes rather than undoes the realization of consciousness begun in stage two. Jung's progressive ideal is thus at odds with the regressive one of the Poimandres(82).

Jung's Own Analysis of Gnosticism

So far, it has been assumed that Jung equates divinity with the unconscious and matter--better, the unspecified thinking part of man's material side--with the ego. Certainly in his essay on Gnosticism he makes these equations, though he singles out Primal Man rather than ordinary man as the symbol of the ego(83).

Jung first describes the primordial godhead:

For instance, Epiphanius quotes an excerpt from one of the Valentinian letters, which says: "In the beginning the Autopator contained in himself everything that is, in a state of unconsciousness (lit., 'not-knowing': ἀγνώσις)."... So the "Father" is not only unconscious and without the quality of being, but also nirdvandva, without opposites, lacking all qualities and therefore unknowable. This describes the state of the unconscious.... In him was ἔννοια, consciousness But the presence of ἔννοια does not prove that the Autopator himself is conscious, for the differentiation of consciousness results only from the syzygies and tetrads that follow afterwards, all of them symbolizing processes of conjunction and composition. ἔννοια must be thought of here as the latent possibility of consciousness(84).

Clearly, the godhead symbolizes the initial state of sheer unconsciousness.

Jung elsewhere uses the term "God" for this initial state, but more often he applies that term to the final state, the state of the integration of the unconscious with ego consciousness. The godhead, which for Jung is largely an impersonal principle, embraces the whole psyche because it is not yet divided, or differentiated, into opposites. God, who for Jung is a full-fledged personality, encompasses the whole psyche because he reconciles opposites within himself. He thereby symbolizes the ideal state of wholeness, selfhood, or "individuation":

... these (Gnostic) symbols (of God) have the character of "wholeness" and therefore presumably mean wholeness. As a rule they are "uniting" symbols, representing the conjunction of a single pair or double pair of opposites, the result being either a dyad or a quaternion. They arise from the collision between the conscious and the unconscious The circle and quaternity symbolism appears at this point

as a compensating principle of order, which depicts the union of warring opposites as already accomplished (T)his symbolism uses images or schemata which have always, in all the religions, expressed the universal "Ground," the Deity itself(85).

Jung identifies the "Anthropos" ("Primal Man" or "Original Man"), "Christ," and the "Son" with God. Exactly as in the Poimandres, the Anthropos begins as part of the unconscious godhead, emerges as an independent ego, eventually forgets his unconscious origin, must be reminded of it by the godhead, and then returns to it to form a unified self. Misleadingly identifying the Demiurge with the Anthropos, Jung says:

The primordial image of the quaternity coalesces, for the Gnostics, with the figure of the demiurge or Anthropos. He is, as it were, the victim of his own creative act, for, when he descended into Physis, he was caught in her embrace. The image of the anima mundi or Original Man latent in the dark of matter expresses the presence of a transconscious centre which, because of its quaternary character and its roundness, must be regarded as a symbol of wholeness(86).

As Jung says more clearly of Christ:

This Gnostic Christ ... symbolizes man's original unity and exalts it as the saving goal of his development. By "composing the unstable," by bringing order into chaos, by resolving disharmonies and centring upon the mid-point, thus setting a "boundary" to the multitude and focusing attention upon the cross, consciousness is reunited with the unconscious, the unconscious man is made one with his centre, ... and in this wise the goal of man's salvation and exaltation is reached(87).

Just as Jung associates the godhead with the unconscious and "God," "Anthropos," and "Christ" with

the self, so he ordinarily associates the Demiurge, together with the material side of man, with the ego. For example, he first compares the doctrine of the Sethian Gnostics, as described by Hippolytus, with that of the alchemists:

It expounds, in Hippolytus' words, a theory of "composition and mixture": the ray of light from above mingles with the dark waters below in the form of a minute spark. At the death of the individual, and also at his figurative death as a mystical experience, the two substances unmix themselves. This mystical experience is the divisio and separatio of the composite The separation or unmixing enables the alchemist to extract the anima or spiritus from the prima materia.... The result of the unmixing is that what was previously mixed up with the "other" is now drawn to "its own place" and to that which is "proper" or "akin" to it, ... "like iron to the magnet" In the same way, the spark or ray of light, "having received from the teaching and learning its proper place, hastens to the Logos, which comes from above in the form of a slave ... more (quickly) than iron (flies) to the magnet"(88).

Like the Logos, Christ, the savior sent by God the Father, "is the magnet that draws to itself those parts or substances in man that are of divine origin, the πατρικοὶ χαρακτήρες (signs of the Father), and carries them back to their heavenly birthplace"(89).

"This magnetic process," he then says,

revolutionizes the ego-oriented psyche by setting up, in contradistinction to the ego, another goal or centre The myth of the ignorant demiurge who imagined he was the highest divinity illustrates the perplexity of the ego when it can no longer hide from itself the knowledge that it has been dethroned by a supraordinate authority(90).

The toppling of the Demiurge by the true God symbolizes the toppling of the ego by the self as the center of consciousness:

Gnosticism long ago projected this state of affairs into the heavens, in the form of a metaphysical drama: ego-consciousness appearing as the vain demiurge, who fancies himself the sole creator of the world, and the self as the highest, unknowable God, whose emanation the demiurge is. The union of conscious and unconscious in the individuation process ... was projected in the form of a drama of redemption and, in some Gnostic systems, consisted in the demiurge's discovery and recognition of the highest God(91).

As the quotation suggests, the ego is in fact less replaced than supplemented by the self, which subsumes it under itself. The aim, of therapy and Gnosticism alike, is, again, the integration of ego consciousness with the unconscious, not the rejection of either one for the other:

When, in treating a case of neurosis, we try to supplement the inadequate attitude (or adaptedness) of the conscious mind by adding to it contents of the unconscious, our aim is to create a wider personality whose centre of gravity does not necessarily coincide with the ego, but which, on the contrary, as the patient's insights increase, may even thwart his ego-tendencies. Like a magnet, the new centre (=self) attracts to itself that which is proper to it, the "signs of the Father," i.e., everything that pertains to the original and unalterable character of the individual ground-plan (for realization of the self). All this is older than the ego and acts towards it as the "blessed, nonexistent God" of the Basilidians acted towards the archon of the Ogdoad, the demiurge ...(92).

As a magnet, Christ, for Jung, serves not to uproot the souls from their material state of ego consciousness and

restore them to their primordial state of sheer unconsciousness but, on the contrary, to integrate the two states. Even if the souls return to "their heavenly birthplace," they return transformed: having developed into egos through their sojourn on earth, they now become integrated wholes, or selves.

On the one hand Jung recognizes that the magnetized Gnostic soul is part of divinity and is therefore distinct from the material world in which it lies. What he overlooks is that the return of the soul to the godhead thereby symbolizes the abandonment of ego consciousness and reversion to sheer unconsciousness--hardly the goal of therapy.

On the other hand Jung states that the goal of therapy is the development of a "wider personality," in which the unconscious supplements, not supplants, the ego, even if the raised unconscious supplants the ego as the center of the psyche. What he overlooks here is that the soul is distinct from the matter in which it is embedded and that its escape from matter and return to the godhead therefore symbolize, again, the abandonment by the unconscious of ego consciousness, which the Demiurge and material man both symbolize, and reversion to sheer unconsciousness--hardly the enlargement of personality.

Despite Jung's acknowledgment that the souls lie trapped in matter he fails to distinguish the two. He equates the awakened souls as well as the threatened material entities with ego consciousness. Both may derive from the godhead, but they derive separately, and the return of the souls means the rejection of everything material.

As long as the Demiurge, together with the material side of man, symbolizes ego consciousness, the final Gnostic state spells the rejection of it. The Gnostic's recognition of his divinity entails his rejection of his materiality and its creator. What Von Franz says of those Gnostic myths which deem the Demiurge evil applies nearly as fully to the Poimandres:

In Gnosticism, there were several sects which believed that there was Elohim, a high God who was good and completely spiritual and who was not involved in creation, which was brought about by the evil Jahweh, whom they interpreted as being a Luciferian, devilish figure. This explained why creation is evil, so that, according to Gnostic teaching, Christ had to come down to redeem the people and lead their souls back to Elohim, to the highest and good God, who had never been involved in creation.... There you see that, in contrast to our (i.e., mainstream Christian) enormously positive evaluation of creation, i.e., consciousness, even in those times, there was this other evaluation that the passive one, the one who retired, the one who stayed out, is the positive figure, and the active one, the one who carried out creation, is a devilish, destructive agency.... This Gnostic idea is based on a feeling experience of (material) reality as being evil. Those who feel that creation and human life are a complete failure and should not have happened, that it is deplorable that there is such a thing as the reality in which we live, will attribute the predicate of evil to the creator of our world. Probably in this Gnostic myth there is a certain amount of Far Eastern influence; in Buddhistic teaching reality is looked on as being evil, and ego consciousness is evil. The aim of life is to escape from it(93).

Jung may be interpreting Gnosticism through alchemical eyes. For, as noted, he considers the Gnostic process of liberating the immaterial souls from matter the counterpart to the alchemical process of extracting gold from base metals. Where, however, gold is produced out of the metals, the souls are scarcely produced out of matter. They presently lie in it, but imprisoned in it. Far from originating in matter, they have fallen into it and await release.

By contrast, gold originates in the metals. It lies not imprisoned in them but latent in them. It awaits not

release but realization. Saying, then, that gold, like the souls, is produced by extraction is misleading. Gold is produced not by shedding but by transforming the metals.

Indeed, gold is produced by not simply the distillation of vapor out of the metals but the return of that vapor to the metals. Rather than escaping from them, the vapor is fused with them.

By contrast, the souls, once liberated from matter, flee from it. They return not to matter but to the immaterial godhead, their true origin. A severance, not a fusion, occurs.

For Jung, the base metals, like the thinking side of the Gnostic's body, symbolize ego consciousness. Similarly, the vapor, like the souls, symbolizes the unconscious. Where, however, the fusion of the vapor with the metals symbolizes the forging of the self, the reunion of the souls with the godhead symbolizes, or should symbolize, reversion to primordial unconsciousness.

The reunion of the Gnostic with the godhead does mean reunification, but of a single side of man with itself, not with another side. To say, alternatively, that not matter but the Gnostic soul symbolizes ego consciousness, which then gets reintegrated with the unconscious, is to leave matter unexplained.

The equation of the godhead with ego consciousness and unconsciousness combined proves no more helpful. If at the outset the godhead is, as perfection, a fully realized self, then psychologically creation is superfluous. Moreover, the restoration of the pristine state of perfection still involves the rejection of matter, which still goes unexplained. If, alternatively, the godhead is only unconscious at the outset and realizes itself through creation(94), then, contrary to the Poimandres, the end is different from the beginning. Indeed, if the godhead must, psychologically, create the world in order to realize itself, then creation is necessary rather than superfluous, beneficial rather than harmful, and so laudable rather than lamentable--the antithesis of the Gnostic view.

To say that the Poimandres, interpreted psychologically, violates rather than supports Jung's psychological ideal is scarcely to say that Jung cannot still interpret it. As stated earlier, Jung should say that, in psychological terms, the Poimandres evinces inflation, not individuation. He should say that it espouses the ego's rediscovery of the unconscious as an end in itself, not, as in the Jungian ideal, merely the means to an end. As Victor White says of Gnostic teachings:

It is not, I think, difficult for the psychologist to see in these very doctrines the expression, we may say, a rationalisation, of a familiar psychological condition: indeed the symptoms of that tricky phase of inflated introversion which is a commonplace in most deep analyses, and which indeed is often stabilised in certain paranoid psychoses. In analysis it is a critical juncture, for it is at once the moment of intensest inward vision, but also the moment of greatest danger when the very fascination of the power of that vision threatens to swallow consciousness and to alienate it from its environment.... Ego is identified with the newly activated function of inward vision, intoxicated, overwhelmed by it ... The subject is now indeed a gnostic, a Knowing One: one who sees that "Inner World of Man" which is hidden from Tom, Dick and Harry: nay (and here lies the danger) may fancy himself its lord and master in the very fact of consciously assimilating it; and in seeking to master and possess it he is in danger of becoming increasingly mastered and possessed by it(95).

By interpreting the Gnostic's permanent return to the godhead as inflation, Jung would be able to make sense of the key Gnostic paradox: why an omniscient and omnipotent God creates a world which he then seeks to destroy. Jung would be making not the creation but the dissolution of the world the mistake. Though he would admittedly thereby be evaluating the Poimandres by his

own world-affirming ideal, he would, on the basis of that ideal, be able to make sense of creation. The unconscious, symbolized by the godhead, would not be erring in creating the ego, symbolized by the material side of man. The unconscious would truly be both omniscient and omnipotent. It is the ego which would be neither: lacking both the knowledge and the will to resist the spell of the unconscious, it would be returning of its own accord to the unconscious, which, to be sure, would be beckoning it.

If in his essay on Gnosticism in general Jung equates differentiated matter with ego consciousness and the godhead with the unconscious, in his passing discussion of the Gnostic Hymn of the Pearl in particular he reverses himself. Matter, here in its raw rather than differentiated state, now symbolizes the unconscious and the godhead ego consciousness. The question is not whether for Jung the same symbols can have opposite meanings within the same myths but whether, even if they can, the reversal of their meanings solves the problem their opposites pose.

Jung begins by stressing that the Hymn of the Pearl obliges man to descend to the material world in order to realize his divine, immaterial soul:

We must surely go the way of the waters, which always tend downward, if we would raise up the treasure, the precious heritage of the father. In the Gnostic hymn to the soul, the son is sent forth by his parents to seek the pearl that fell from the King's crown. It lies at the bottom of a deep well, guarded by a dragon, in the land of the Egyptians--that land of fleshpots and drunkenness with all its material and spiritual riches. The son and heir sets out to fetch the jewel, but forgets himself and his task in the orgies of Egyptian worldliness, until a letter from his father reminds him what his duty is. He then sets out for the water and plunges into the dark depths of the well, where he finds the pearl on the bottom, and in the end offers it to the highest divinity(96).

Cautioning that "The descent into the depths always seems to precede the ascent"(97), Jung then describes a dream in which the dreamer, eager to climb a mountain, learns that he must first descend into the waters below: "Here again the dreamer, thirsting for the shining heights, had first to descend into the dark depths, and this proves to be the indispensable condition for climbing any higher"(98). This message

meets with violent resistance from the conscious mind, which knows "spirit" only as something to be found in the heights. "Spirit" always seems to come from above, while from below comes everything that is sordid and worthless. For people who think in this way, spirit means highest freedom, a soaring over the depths, deliverance from the prison of the chthonic world, and hence a refuge for all those timorous souls who do not want to become anything different. But water is earthy and tangible, it is also the fluid of the instinct-driven body, blood and the flowing of blood, the odour of the beast, carnality heavy with passion. The unconscious is the psyche that reaches down from the daylight of mentally and morally lucid consciousness into the nervous system that for ages has been known as the "sympathetic"(99).

Clearly, the descent to which Jung is referring is not, as in his essay on Gnosticism, the birth of the ego out of the unconscious but, on the contrary, the re-entry of the ego into the unconscious for the purpose of raising it to consciousness(100). The birth of the ego described in the essay on Gnosticism is now presupposed and becomes the starting point rather than the end point of the journey. Matter now not only already exists rather than emerges but symbolizes the unconscious rather than the ego, which is now symbolized by divinity(101).

Applied to the Poimandres, these new equations only reverse, not solve, the problems the original ones posed. First, the return of the newly independent ego to the unconscious should be for the purpose of raising it to

consciousness, but in the Poimandres, as in the Hymn of the Pearl, the descent of the savior is for the purpose of extricating the souls ensnared in matter. Rather than getting raised to consciousness, the unconscious therefore symbolically gets abandoned. As Jung's analysis of the Hymn of the Pearl makes clear, he conflates the pearl, which symbolizes the souls, with the matter in which it is trapped, so that the retrieval of the pearl means the retrieval of matter(102). In actuality, the pearl and matter are antagonists, so that the retrieval of the pearl means the rejection of matter. The return of the child to his parents is the equivalent of the reunion of ego consciousness with itself, not of the unconscious with ego consciousness.

Second, the return of the child in the Hymn may involve his transformation rather than his mere restoration, but in the Poimandres, as in other Gnostic myths, the return of Primal Man's descendants does not. The rejection of ego consciousness aside, the end cannot therefore represent the establishment of a new state of the psyche.

By this alternative interpretation the Poimandres compounds the psychological problems of the first interpretation. In the first interpretation man, living in ego consciousness, discovers the existence of the unconscious, out of which he came, which he once knew, which is true reality, and to which he must return. By this interpretation man returns permanently to the unconscious and thereby rejects ego consciousness.

In the second interpretation man likewise is living in ego consciousness and likewise discovers the existence of the unconscious. But in discovering the unconscious he is not discovering that he came out of it or that it is true reality. On the contrary, he discovers that he fell into it from elsewhere and that it is false reality. He does discover that he must return to the unconscious, but only in order to extricate the "pieces" of ego consciousness trapped in it. He does return permanently to ego consciousness, but exactly upon his rejection of the unconscious.

Where, by the first interpretation, the Gnostic should succumb to the unconscious, by this second one he should spurn it. Jung would clearly fault the second psychological state as severely as the first. It is the state of modern man: the state of the ego's identification with the persona.

Though Jung was working long before the Nag Hammadi discovery, familiarity with its contents would likely not have altered his views. Since he implicitly defines Gnosticism broadly, as radical dualism rather than as an exclusively Christian heresy, the discovery of above all non-Christian Gnostic texts would only have confirmed the appropriateness of his definition. Surely his skewed view of Gnosticism as resolving rather than exacerbating the dualism would not have changed. Other issues raised anew by Nag Hammadi--notably, that of the historical origin of Gnosticism--would not seem germane. The discovery of so many primary Gnostic texts might, however, have made Gnosticism more accessible and so have enabled Jung to use it more fully than he does.

Archetypes in the Poimandres

The Poimandres contains symbols of several archetypes. Nature symbolizes both the anima and the mother; God, in the guise of Poimandres, the Wise Old Man; and Primal Man, the hero.

As an anima symbol(103), Nature represents the female side of Man's personality. Fittingly, she is sexually alluring. She seduces, even bewitches, Man. Equally fittingly, she is also unstable and emotional.

The Poimandres itself denies that Man, like the godhead, possesses any of Nature's qualities. Jung could, however, say that she is in fact a projection of those same qualities within him. Indeed, the myth itself states that Man falls in love with not Nature herself but his own image projected onto her and thereby mistaken for her. Although the myth makes Nature the independent object of Man's projection and not the projection itself, Jung could claim

that she fits so well as the object of his projection because she and it are in fact one.

Nature symbolizes the mother(104) as well as the anima archetype. In her nourishing aspect she has produced Man, but in her devouring aspect, which here is dominant, she tries to keep Man from leaving. As the mother, she is, fittingly, identical with earth and matter.

The Poimandres itself denies that Nature is the mother of Man and urges him to forsake her for the godhead just because the godhead rather than she is his true parent. Jung could, however, claim that the attraction of Man to Nature in fact evinces a prior attachment.

The relationship between the anima and the mother archetypes is ambiguous. On the one hand Jung says that the mother archetype is an instance of the anima archetype: "The 'mother,' as the first incarnation of the anima archetype ..."(105). On the other hand he describes the appearance of the mother archetype in not only men but also women, for whom it can hardly be a version of the anima. Moreover, the mother, for both sexes, is identical with the primordial unconscious as a whole, not, like the anima, only a single archetype within it.

The archetype of the Wise Old Man(106) is a case of the self archetype, and Poimandres symbolizes it(107). As the embodiment of the godhead, Poimandres is surely old. As the revealer, he is certainly wise. As the Wise Old Man, Poimandres appears when the narrator is most troubled and most needs sagacity beyond his ken. In the fashion of the Wise Old Man, Poimandres may even have secretly spurred the narrator's discontent. For the myth itself neglects to explain how, prior to the revelation, the narrator knows enough to be discontented with his present state. As the Wise Old Man, Poimandres dispenses wisdom. That wisdom is, appropriately, self-knowledge as well as knowledge of the cosmos. Indeed, the two kinds of knowledge prove to be one: man is a microcosm. As the Wise Old Man, Poimandres offers both kinds of knowledge as a guide for living. To be able to offer this knowledge he must possess it himself, in which case he must be a fully realized self.

The message Poimandres preaches, however, is the rejection of Nature and therefore of the anima, not, as for Jung, the acceptance of that archetype as part of oneself. Jung should say that the myth thereby evinces psychological imbalance--not, as before, in rejecting ego consciousness for the unconscious but now in rejecting part of the unconscious itself.

Finally, Man symbolizes the hero archetype(108). The Poimandres as a whole constitutes a would-be hero myth of both halves of life. Man's birth through an emanation of his father symbolizes the birth of the ego out of the unconscious. His yearning to leave home symbolizes the yearning of the ego to become independent of the unconscious--the goal of the first half of life. His, or his descendants', subsequent entrapment in the material world symbolizes the severance of the ego from the unconscious.

Ideally, the hero eventually returns to his birthplace, wins over the power ruling it, and returns with that power to his present home. Symbolically, the ego returns to the unconscious, embraces it, and elevates its symbols to consciousness--the goal of the second half of life. If at the outset the hero symbolizes the ego, at the end he symbolizes the self.

In the Poimandres, however, Man's descendants scarcely return to the godhead in order to bring back to the material world additional befriended souls. They seek to flee the material world. In rejecting that world for their native land they are symbolically abandoning ego consciousness for the unconscious, not linking the two.

In addition to revealing the existence of the unconscious and providing an encounter with it, myth, for Jung, shows how to deal with it. Characters in myth serve as models to emulate. In the Poimandres, however, the chief character is a negative model, whose behavior is to be avoided. From the Gnostic viewpoint Primal Man should never have sought heroism. He should never have left the godhead--indeed, should never have been born. From the Jungian viewpoint Primal Man simply failed at the heroism he rightly sought: he never returned home.

From the Gnostic viewpoint Man's descendants should try to undo his heroic feat. From the Jungian viewpoint they should try to complete it.

Androgyny in the Poimandres

The perfect psychological state, for Jung, is one of not just completeness in general but androgyny in particular. Full realization of the self requires the acceptance of not only one's dominant gender, which is represented by the shadow archetype, but also its opposite, which is represented by the anima archetype in the male and the animus archetype in the female. As the embodiment of perfection, the chief god is typically androgynous: "It is a remarkable fact that perhaps the majority of cosmogonic gods are of a bisexual nature. The hermaphrodite means nothing less than a union of the strongest and most striking opposites"(109).

In equating the perfection of divinity with completion and completion with androgyny, the Poimandres, Jung would say, symbolizes the psychological ideal(110). The Poimandres not only deems both God and Primal Man androgynous but also deems the division of man into distinct genders his downfall. In practicing asceticism the Gnostic is declaring that he is free of sexual needs--that is, of the need for others--and has thereby regained his androgyny. The cycle from Man's androgyny to man's sexual division to the Gnostic's asceticism symbolizes the psychological history of mankind:

In the first place this (future) union refers back to a primitive state of mind, a twilight where differences and contrasts were either barely separated or completely merged. With increasing clarity of consciousness, however, the opposites draw more and more distinctly and irreconcilably apart. If, therefore, the hermaphrodite were only a product of primitive non-differentiation, we would have to expect that it would soon be eliminated with

increasing civilization. This is by no means the case; on the contrary, man's imagination has been preoccupied with this idea over and over again on the high and even the highest levels of culture (A)s we can see from medieval writings, the primordial idea has become a symbol of the creative union of opposites, a "uniting symbol" in the literal sense. In its functional significance the symbol no longer points back, but forward to a goal not yet reached(111).

The Gnostic rejection of the body is not inconsistent with the espousal of androgyny, for androgyny is an immaterial, not material, state--the apparently physical androgyny of the seven "post-primal" androgynes aside. Like sexuality in general, androgyny for Jung is a mental, or spiritual, state. Thus he continually berates Freud not only for overemphasizing sexuality but also for interpreting it entirely physically(112). If on the one hand Jung grants the existence of a Freudian-like personal unconscious composed partly of repressed sexual and other physical instincts, on the other hand he locates sexuality within the shadow, anima, and animus, which, as archetypes, "psychologize" instincts.

Jung does not, however, reduce--or elevate--sexuality to sheer spirituality. If he did, he would be eliminating the key difference between his psychological ideal and its Gnostic counterpart: acceptance of the body as part of the self.

Evil in the Poimandres

The ideal psychological state, for Jung, requires the acceptance of man's moral as well as sexual opposites. Man must accept the evil as well as the good side of his personality(113), just as the male must accept the female side of his personality and the female the male. Jung usually identifies the evil side of man with the shadow.

Most notably, he deems Satan, or the Antichrist, the projection of the shadow of Christ and then deems the two of them projections of, respectively, the shadow and the persona of God, their father:

If we see the traditional figure of Christ as a parallel to the psychic manifestation of the self, then the Antichrist would correspond to the shadow of the self, namely the dark half of the human totality Psychologically the case is clear, since the dogmatic figure is so sublime and spotless that everything else turns dark beside it. It is, in fact, so one-sidedly perfect that it demands a psychic complement to restore the balance. This inevitable opposition led very early to the doctrine of the two sons of God, of whom the elder was called Satanaël(114).

At times, Jung deems the shadow, as symbolized by Satan, the missing quarter of God, who consequently gets represented by only a Trinity. At other times, however, he deems the anima, as symbolized by the Virgin Mary, the missing quarter:

It (the Trinity) is of exclusively masculine character. The unconscious, however, transforms it into a quaternity, which is at the same time a unity, just as the three persons of the Trinity are one and the same God. The natural philosophers of antiquity represented the Trinity ... as the three ἀσώματα or "spirits," also called "volatilia," namely water, air, and fire. The fourth constituent, on the other hand, was τὸ σῶμα, the earth or the body. They symbolized the latter by the Virgin. In this way they added the feminine element to their physical Trinity The natural philosophers of the Middle Ages undoubtedly meant earth and woman by the fourth element. The principle of evil was not openly mentioned, but it appears in the poisonous quality of the prima materia and in other allusions(115).

Although predominantly good, the anima can be partly evil(116).

Jung continually praises Gnosticism for recognizing evil and damns mainstream Christianity for denying it:

In this respect, anyhow, the dualism of the Gnostic systems makes sense, because they at least try to do justice to the real meaning of evil. They have also done us the supreme service of having gone very thoroughly into the question of where evil comes from. Biblical tradition leaves us very much in the dark on this point, and it is only too obvious why the old theologians were in no particular hurry to enlighten us. In a monotheistic religion everything that goes against God can only be traced back to God himself.... That is the deeper reason why a highly influential personage like the devil cannot be accommodated properly in a trinitarian cosmos. It is difficult to make out in what relation he stands to the Trinity. As the adversary of Christ, he would have to take up an equivalent counterposition and be, like him, a "son of God." But that would lead straight back to certain Gnostic views according to which the devil, as Satanaël, is God's first son, Christ being the second(117).

Whether or not mainstream Christianity denies evil(118), Gnosticism in fact scarcely grants it the equivalent of Jungian recognition: incorporation in the godhead. Gnostic myths, including the Poimandres, do attribute the creation of either matter itself or the material world to the godhead, but, as noted, that attribution poses the central unresolved paradox: that the godhead, which is wholly immaterial and therefore good, willfully and knowingly produces either matter or the material world, both of which are incontestably evil. Far from conceding the evilness of divinity, Gnosticism denies it--and thereby faces the problem of accounting for evil(119). Mainstream Christianity may likewise deny any evilness in divinity, but it does not deem the material world evil and therefore faces a less acute problem.

Once again, Jung wrongly takes Gnosticism to be endorsing, not opposing, his psychological ideal. Once again, he should say that Gnosticism evinces psychological imbalance--as in the case of the denial of Nature, in rejecting part of the unconscious.

Yet Jung could say, alternatively, that Gnosticism actually accepts evil despite itself. For in attributing evil to the free and intentional act of an omniscient godhead, Gnosticism, Jung could say, acknowledges the partial evilness of that godhead: if evil derives from the godhead, the godhead must be partly evil(120). The failure of Gnosticism to explain evil, he could say, betrays its recognition of the real explanation.

Earlier, the Demiurge, as the symbol of the developing ego, was good, just ignorant of the existence of the unconscious, which the godhead symbolized:

Gnosticism long ago projected this state of affairs into the heavens, in the form of a metaphysical drama: ego-consciousness appearing as the vain demiurge, who fancies himself the sole creator of the world, and the self as the highest, unknowable God, whose emanation the demiurge is(121).

Indeed, to be ignorant of the unconscious the Demiurge must symbolize a fully developed ego, for otherwise the ego would not be sufficiently severed from the unconscious to be oblivious to it.

Now the Demiurge is evil. Though the Demiurge still symbolizes the ego and not, say, the shadow archetype(122), the assessment of the material world as evil makes its creator evil, too. Where Jung implicitly equates the Demiurge with the devil, Von Franz, as quoted, does so explicitly: "In Gnosticism ... there was Elohim, a high God who was good and completely spiritual and who was not involved in creation, which was brought about by the evil Jahweh, whom they interpreted as being a Luciferian, devilish figure"(123).

In most Gnostic myths the Demiurge, if not evil, still opposes God. But in severing the Demiurge from the

godhead, these myths, Jung should say, wrongly deny evilness in divinity itself. Conversely, in making the godhead the ultimate source of the Demiurge, the myths, Jung could say alternatively, belie their denial.

In the Poimandres the Demiurge, while still the creator of the evil material world, not only is good himself but also is the agent of the godhead. If, by considering the Demiurge outright good, the Poimandres, for Jung, wrongly denies the evilness of divinity even more strongly than other Gnostic myths do, by considering the Demiurge the agent of the godhead it rightly acknowledges that evilness more readily than other Gnostic myths do.

If Jung considers the anima as well as the shadow at least partly evil, Nature aptly symbolizes it. Like the Virgin Mary, she is both material and, as female, sexual, which means sexually incomplete. To satisfy herself sexually she ensnares immaterial Man. Yet Nature, as the personification of the material world, was created by the Demiurge and therefore ultimately by the godhead. Although the godhead itself is neither material nor sexually incomplete, its final responsibility for her creation reveals, Jung could say, its relationship to her: she is its evil side, projected onto something outside of it and thereby denied by it.

The difference between Jung's acceptance and the Gnostics' at least formal rejection both of evil alongside good and of physical sexuality alongside spiritual sexuality typifies the fundamental difference between his ideal and that of Gnosticism: his theory insists that one accept all of reality, psychological or metaphysical; Gnosticism demands that one reject half of it. Jung assumes that myth reveals that part of reality is evil but that all of it still ought to be accepted just because it is real. Gnosticism assumes that myth reveals that part of reality is evil and that that part of it ought to be rejected exactly because it is evil.

Footnotes

- 1 C. G. Jung, "The Concept of the Collective Unconscious," in his The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious, The Collected Works of C. G. Jung, eds. Sir Herbert Read and others, trs. R. F. C. Hull and others, IX, part 1, second ed. (Princeton: Princeton University, 1968), 42. See also "Instinct and the Unconscious," in his The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche, The Collected Works, VIII, second ed. (Princeton: Princeton University, 1969), 133; Analytical Psychology (New York: Vintage Books, 1970), 40.
- 2 See Jung, "The Relations Between the Ego and the Unconscious," in his Two Essays on Analytical Psychology, The Collected Works, VII, second ed. (Princeton: Princeton University, 1966), 128.
- 3 Jung, "Approaching the Unconscious," in Jung and others, Man and His Symbols (New York: Dell Laurel Editions, 1968), 58, 67.
- 4 Jung, "Instinct and the Unconscious," 138; "The Concept of the Collective Unconscious," 43. On the collective unconscious and archetypes see Jung, Analytical Psychology, Lecture Two; "The Relations Between the Ego and the Unconscious," 127-138; "The Concept of the Collective Unconscious," 42-53; "Instinct and the Unconscious," 129-138; "The Structure of the Psyche," in his The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche, 139-158; "On the Psychology of the Unconscious," in his Two Essays on Analytical Psychology, 64-79; "Approaching the Unconscious," 56-71; "The Psychology of the Child Archetype," in Jung and Carl Kerényi, Essays on a Science of Mythology, tr. R. F. C. Hull (Princeton: Princeton University, 1969), 70-81; "Psychological Aspects of the Mother Archetype," in his The Archetypes and

the Collective Unconscious, 75-80. See also Jolande Jacobi, The Psychology of C. G. Jung, tr. Ralph Manheim, seventh ed. (New Haven: Yale University, 1968), 5-51; Jacobi, Complex/Archetype/Symbol in the Psychology of C. G. Jung, tr. Ralph Manheim (Princeton: Princeton University, 1967), part I.

- 5 On the differences see Jacobi, Complex/Archetype/Symbol, part I.
- 6 Jung, "Psychological Aspects of the Mother Archetype," 79.
- 7 See Douglas Allen, Structure and Creativity in Religion (The Hague: Mouton, 1978), 211. On Eliade's use of the term "archetypes" see Eliade, Cosmos and History, tr. Willard R. Trask (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1959), viii-ix; Images and Symbols, tr. Philip Mairet (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1969), 35-38, 119-121; Patterns in Comparative Religion, tr. Rosemary Sheed (Cleveland: Meridian Books, 1963), passim, esp. 32-33, 58-59.
- 8 At times, however, Eliade does say that those patterns, while deriving from the experience of the sacred, get transmitted through a Jungian-like unconscious, which he calls the "transconscious." See Eliade, Images and Symbols, 12-16, 35-37, 119-121; Patterns in Comparative Religion, 454; The Sacred and the Profane, tr. Willard R. Trask (New York: Harvest Books, 1968), 209-213; Myths, Dreams, and Mysteries, tr. Philip Mairet (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1965), 128. On Eliade as Jungian see Mac Linscott Ricketts, "The Nature and Extent of Eliade's 'Jungianism'," Union Seminary Quarterly Review, 25 (Winter 1970), 211-234; Ricketts, "In Defence of Eliade," Religion, 3 (Spring 1973), 25-27; Allen, 145, 210-211; Guilford Dudley III, Religion on Trial (Philadelphia: Temple University, 1977), 63-65;

- G. Richard Welbon, "Some Remarks on the Work of Mircea Eliade," Acta Philosophica et Theologica, 2 (1964), 482-483; Wilson M. Hudson, "Eliade's Contribution to the Study of Myth," in Tire Shrinker to Dragster, ed. Hudson (Austin: Encino, 1968), 236-237.
- 9 Jung, "The Concept of the Collective Unconscious," 48.
- 10 See, for example, Jung, "The Shadow," in his Aion, The Collected Works, IX, part 2, second ed. (Princeton: Princeton University, 1968), 8.
- 11 See, for example, Jung, reply, in Richard I. Evans, Jung on Elementary Psychology, rev. ed. (New York: Dutton, 1976), 66.
- 12 See, for example, Jung, Analytical Psychology, 41; "The Structure of the Psyche," 148-149; "The Psychology of the Child Archetype," 71. More often, Jung applies the terms "mythological motifs" and "mythologems," which he uses interchangeably, to the symbols expressing archetypes rather than to archetypes themselves. Still other times he uses the terms neither for archetypes nor for symbols but for parts of myths--for example, the virgin birth portion of the Christ myth.
- 13 See Jung, "The Psychology of the Child Archetype," 72.
- 14 Ibid., 73-74.
- 15 Jung, reply, in Evans, 67.
- 16 See Erich Neumann, The Origins and History of Consciousness, tr. R. F. C. Hull (Princeton: Princeton University, 1970), xvi.

- 17 See Jung, Symbols of Transformation, The Collected Works, V, second ed. (Princeton: Princeton University, 1967), 259, 391. See also Neumann, 136, 149.
- 18 See Jung, Symbols of Transformation, 391-392.
- 19 See ibid., 337, 357. On hero myths of either kind see Jung, "The Psychology of the Child Archetype," 70-100; Symbols of Transformation, 171-444; Analytical Psychology, 117-123; Psychology and Alchemy, The Collected Works, XII, second ed. (Princeton: Princeton University, 1968), 333-339. See also Joseph L. Henderson, "Ancient Myths and Modern Man," in Jung and others, Man and His Symbols, 103-125; Marie-Louise von Franz, An Introduction to the Psychology of Fairy Tales (New York: Spring, 1970), 41-46; M. Esther Harding, Psychic Energy, second ed. (Princeton: Princeton University, 1963), ch. 9; Joseph Campbell, The Hero with a Thousand Faces, first ed. (New York: Pantheon, 1949), *passim*; Jolande Jacobi, The Way of Individuation, tr. R. F. C. Hull (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1967), 60-79; Jacobi, Complex/Archetype/Symbol, 182-187; Peter Homans, Jung in Context (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1979), 65-66.
- 20 Jung, Symbols of Transformation, 171.
- 21 See ibid., 353. See also Jacobi, The Way of Individuation, 64-65.
- 22 Jung, Memories, Dreams, Reflections, ed. Aniela Jaffé, trs. Richard and Clara Winston (New York: Vintage Books, 1962), 200. See also Jung, Alchemical Studies, The Collected Works, XIII (Princeton: Princeton University, 1968), 3.
- 23 Jung, Memories, Dreams, Reflections, 205.

- 24 See Jung, Psychology and Alchemy, passim; Alchemical Studies, passim; Mysterium Coniunctionis, The Collected Works, XIV, second ed. (Princeton: Princeton University, 1970), passim. See also Jung, "The Psychology of the Transference," in his The Practice of Psychotherapy, The Collected Works, XVI, first ed. (New York: Pantheon, 1954), 162-323; "The Fish in Alchemy," "The Alchemical Interpretation of the Fish," and "Background to the Psychology of Christian Alchemical Symbolism," in his Aion, chs. 10, 11, 12.
- 25 See Jung, "Gnostic Symbols of the Self," in his Aion, ch. 13. See also Jung, "Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious," in his The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious, 18; "Religion and Psychology: A Reply to Martin Buber," in his The Symbolic Life, The Collected Works, XVIII (Princeton: Princeton University, 1976), 663-670; "The Spiritual Problem of Modern Man," in his Civilization in Transition, The Collected Works, X, second ed. (Princeton: Princeton University, 1970), 83-84; reply, in Howard L. Philp, Jung and the Problem of Evil (London: Rockliff, 1958), 235-239; reply, in Evans, 67-70; Memories, Dreams, Reflections, 200-201, 205; Alchemical Studies, 3-4; Foreword to Victor White, God and the Unconscious (Cleveland: Meridian Books, 1961), 20-21; Foreword to Erich Neumann, Depth Psychology and a New Ethic, in his The Symbolic Life, 621-622; Foreword to Gilles Quispel, Tragic Christianity, in ibid., 651-653; "Address at the Presentation of the Jung Codex," in ibid., 671-672, 826-829. See also Jung's own Gnostic myth, "Seven Sermons to the Dead," in his Memories, Dreams, Reflections, 378-390.
- 26 Jung, Memories, Dreams, Reflections, 201. See also Jung, C. G. Jung Speaking, eds. William McGuire and R. F. C. Hull (Princeton: Princeton University, 1977), 350; Alchemical Studies, 3-4.

- 27 Jung, Alchemical Studies, 3. Jung gives an additional reason for the greater accessibility of alchemy: that "the Gnostic systems consist only in small part of immediate psychic experiences, the greater part being speculative and systematizing recensions" (*ibid.*). Cf. Jung, Letters, eds. Gerhard Adler and Aniela Jaffé, tr. R. F. C. Hull (Princeton: Princeton University, 1973), I, 553-554.
- 28 See Jung, "Psychology and Religion," in his Psychology and Religion: West and East, The Collected Works, XI, first ed. (New York: Pantheon, 1958), 98-102; Mysterium Coniunctionis, 290, 301, 346, 437; "Transformation Symbolism in the Mass," in his Psychology and Religion: West and East, 209.
- 29 Jung, "Psychology and Religion," 97. See also *ibid.*, 96; "Background to the Psychology of Christian Alchemical Symbolism," 173, 181; "The Structure and Dynamics of the Self," in his Aion, 232-233; Psychology and Alchemy, 24-25, 372; Alchemical Studies, 4, 147, 204, 205, 220. On the influence of Gnosticism on alchemy see H. J. Sheppard, "Gnosticism and Alchemy," Ambix, 6 (December 1957), 86-101.
- 30 On Jung's interpretation of alchemy see Walter Pagel, "Jung's Views on Alchemy," Isis, 39 (May 1948), 44-48; Philip Mairet, "Dr. Jung and the Alchemists," Fortnightly, 181 (January 1954), 55-61; Aniela Jaffé, From the Life and Work of C. G. Jung, tr. R. F. C. Hull (New York: Harper, 1971), ch. 2; Mircea Eliade, The Forge and the Crucible, tr. Stephen Corrin (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1971), 156-166, 195-198, 221-226; Luther H. Martin, Jr., "A History of the Psychological Interpretation of Alchemy," Ambix, 22 (March 1975), 16-20.
- 31 Jung, "Psychology and Religion: A Reply to Martin Buber," 664.

- 32 Jung, "The Structure and Dynamics of the Self," 223.
- 33 Ibid., 222. See also Jung, "The Spiritual Problem of Modern Man," 83-84; "Address at the Presentation of the Jung Codex," 672, 828-829; "On the Psychology of the Unconscious," 66, 77; Psychological Types, The Collected Works, VI (Princeton: Princeton University, 1971), 241-242. See also Hans Schaer, Religion and the Cure of Souls in Jung's Psychology, tr. R. F. C. Hull (New York: Pantheon, 1950), 165-166, 182-183.
- 34 Jung, Memories, Dreams, Reflections, 201. On alchemists as unconscious of the psychological meaning of their activities see Jung, Psychology and Alchemy, 244-245; "The Psychology of Transference," 208.
- 35 Jung, Psychological Types, 19.
- 36 Jung, "Gnostic Symbols of the Self," 184, 190.
- 37 Various interpreters consider Jung's affinity with Gnostics not only psychological but also metaphysical. Martin Buber (The Eclipse of God, trs. Maurice S. Friedman and others (New York: Harper, 1952), chs. 5, 9) deems Jung Gnostic on the grounds that the Gnostic elevation of man to god is no different from what he deems Jung's atheistic reduction of god to man. Conversely, Stephan A. Hoeller (The Gnostic Jung and the Seven Sermons to the Dead (Wheaton, Ill.: Theosophical Publishing, 1982), *passim*) considers Jung Gnostic on the grounds that the Theosophical tradition in which Jung purportedly believes includes Gnosticism, along with every other instance of mysticism. Thomas J. J. Altizer ("Science and Gnosis in Jung's Psychology," Centennial Review, 3 (Summer 1959), 304-320) labels Jung Gnostic on the grounds that Jung rejects rational, scientific knowledge of the external world

for mystical knowledge of the unknown self. Maurice Friedman (To Deny Our Nothingness (New York: Dell, 1967), ch. 9) calls Jung a distinctively modern Gnostic: like ancient Gnostics, espousing salvation by knowledge, rejection of the external world for the inner world of the self, and the divinity of the self; unlike ancient Gnostics, substituting the self alone for the union of it with an external deity. In response to metaphysical assessments like these, Jung continually insists that he is only a psychologist: see "Religion and Psychology: A Reply to Martin Buber," 663-670; Foreword to White, God and the Unconscious, 20-21; reply, in Philp, 235-239; Memories, Dreams, Reflections, 348; Letters, II, 570-573, 583-584. See also James W. Heisig, Imago Dei (Cranbury, N.J.: Bucknell University, 1979), 185n98.

- 38 Jung explicitly distinguishes the first three stages: see the references in n. 41 and 49. See also Neumann, *passim*. The distinction between modern and contemporary is only implicit, and Jung uses the term "modern" for both.
- 39 See, for example, Jung, Analytical Psychology, 6-7; Memories, Dreams, Reflections, 348-349; "The Stages of Life," in his The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche, 387-391. See also Neumann, 5-127; M. Esther Harding, The 'I' and the 'Not-I' (New York: Pantheon, 1965), chs. 1-3; Gerhard Adler, Studies in Analytical Psychology (New York: Capricorn Books, 1969), 120-136.
- 40 See Jung, Analytical Psychology, 8-9.
- 41 On primitive man see Jung, "Archaic Man," in his Civilization in Transition, 50-73. Although Jung refers to primitive man throughout his writings, this essay is his sole work on primitive man alone. See also Jung, "Approaching the Unconscious," 6-8; "The

- Psychology of the Child Archetype," 72-73. See also Adler, 127-129; Schaer, 103-106; Harding, The 'I' and the 'Not-I', 38-40; Harding, Psychic Energy, 332-333; Antonio Moreno, Jung, Gods, and Modern Man (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame, 1970), 9-14.
- 42 On projection see Jung, Analytical Psychology, 153-154. See also Harding, Psychic Energy, 331-334.
- 43 See Jung, "Archaic Man," 55-68.
- 44 Ibid., 63-65.
- 45 On participation mystique see the references in n. 41 and Heisig, 206n40.
- 46 See, for example, Jung, "The Spiritual Problem of Modern Man," 79.
- 47 Jung devotes no single work to ancient man, whom he discusses throughout his writings.
- 48 Jung, "The Spiritual Problem of Modern Man," 79.
- 49 On modern man see Jung, "Psychology and Religion," 5-105. See also Jung, The Undiscovered Self (Boston: Little, Brown, 1957), *passim*. On the change from ancient to modern man see Adler, ch. 7.
- 50 See, for example, Jung, "Psychology and Religion," 83; "Approaching the Unconscious," 85.
- 51 Jung, Memories, Dreams, Reflections, 300.
- 52 See, for example, Jung, "Approaching the Unconscious," 86.
- 53 See Jung, Flying Saucers, tr. R. F. C. Hull (New York: Signet Books, 1969), *passim*. Jung deems flying

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saucers distinctively modern because they are technological rather than, like religion, supernatural phenomena and therefore fit modern man's scientific self-image.

- 54 Jung, "Psychology and Religion," 83.
- 55 Ibid., 16, 31-32.
- 56 On contemporary man see Jung, "The Spiritual Problem of Modern Man," 74-94. Despite the title this essay is Jung's chief writing on contemporary, not modern, man. See also Jung, "Psychotherapists or the Clergy," in his Psychology and Religion: West and East, 327-347. For a parallel distinction between contemporary and modern man see Homans, 185-186.
- 57 See, for example, Jung, The Undiscovered Self, 122-124; Flying Saucers, 115.
- 58 Jung, "The Spiritual Problem of Modern Man," 80-83.
- 59 Ibid., 74-76.
- 60 Jung, "The Aims of Psychotherapy," in his The Practice of Psychotherapy, 41. See also Jung, "Approaching the Unconscious," 76-78, 84; Memories, Dreams, Reflections, 140, 143-144, 250-253, 340; "Psychotherapists or the Clergy," 330-331, 335-338; "Problems of Modern Psychotherapy," in his The Practice of Psychotherapy, 70; "Basic Postulates of Analytical Psychology," in his The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche, 356. See also Schaer, 166-193; Aniela Jaffé, The Myth of Meaning, tr. R. F. C. Hull (New York: Penguin, 1975), 146-148.
- 61 See Anthony Storr, C. G. Jung (New York: Viking, 1973), 76-78.

- 62 For Jungian interpretations of Gnosticism see Gilles Quispel, "C. G. Jung und die Gnosis," Eranos-Jahrbücher, 37 (1968), 277-298; Quispel, Gnosis als Weltreligion, first ed. (Zurich: Origo, 1951), passim; Quispel, "Gnosis and Psychology," in The Rediscovery of Gnosticism, ed. Bentley Layton, I (Leiden: Brill, 1980), 17-31; Quispel, "Gnostic Man: The Doctrine of Basilides," in Papers from the Eranos Yearbooks, ed. Joseph Campbell, tr. Ralph Manheim, VI (Princeton: Princeton University, 1968), 235-246, in which, to be sure, Quispel deems Basilides' experience more mystical than psychological; Victor White, "Some Notes on Gnosticism," Spring (1949), 40-56; White, God and the Unconscious, ch. 11; Marie-Louise von Franz, Patterns of Creativity Mirrored in Creation Myths (New York: Spring, 1972), 75-76, 124-130, 139-140, 195-197; Luther H. Martin, "Jung as Gnostic," in Essays on Jung and the Study of Religion, eds. Martin and James Goss (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1985), ch. 4. For a brief quasi-Jungian interpretation of Gnosticism see F. C. Burkitt, Church and Gnosis (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1932), 43ff. On this interpretation see C. H. Dodd, The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1953), 107nl.
- 63 See Neumann, 5-9.
- 64 See ibid., 13, 18.
- 65 See Jung, Symbols of Transformation, part II. See also Neumann, passim, esp. 125; Neumann, The Great Mother, tr. Ralph Manheim (Princeton: Princeton University, 1972).
- 66 To be sure, Jung himself interprets both the Demiurge and at times Primal Man as symbols of a full-fledged ego. See above, pp. 123-128.

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- 67 See Neumann, The Origins and History of Consciousness, 5-38.
- 68 See Von Franz, 190-213.
- 69 See Jung, Symbols of Transformation, 171-305, esp. 235-236, 271, 297-298, 303-304, 355-356. See also Neumann, The Origins and History of Consciousness, 39-191, esp. 114-115.
- 70 Von Franz, 73.
- 71 Jung, "The Spiritual Problem of Modern Man," 84.
- 72 Ibid., 83-84.
- 73 On inflation see Jung, "The Relations Between the Ego and the Unconscious," 139-147. See also Jaffé, The Myth of Meaning, 81-82; Jacobi, The Way of Individuation, 57.
- 74 Jung, "Concerning Rebirth," in his The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious, 145.
- 75 Jung, "The Phenomenology of the Spirit in Fairytales," in his The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious, 253-254. See also Jung, reply, in Philp, 10-14.
- 76 Jacobi, Complex/Archetype/Symbol in the Psychology of C. G. Jung, 186. See also ibid., 183-185. See also Jung, Symbols of Transformation, 347-348.
- 77 Thus if Jung praises the introverted East, in contrast to the extraverted West, for its attention to the unconscious, he faults it for one-sidedly seeking to return to the unconscious altogether rather than to raise it to consciousness: see Psychology and Religion: West and East, part II, esp. 493.

- 78 Jung, "Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious," 40.
- 79 Jung, "On the Nature of the Psyche," in his The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche, 175.
- 80 David Cox (Jung and St. Paul (London: Longmans, Green, 1959), 126-127) denies that Jung is Gnostic on exactly this ground: that where for Jung the "move" from unconsciousness to even ego consciousness is positive, for Gnosticism the "move" from "pre-creation" to even pre-fallen creation is negative.
- 81 On the Hymn of the Pearl see Hans Jonas, The Gnostic Religion, second ed. (Boston: Beacon, 1963), ch. 5.
- 82 Jung's progressive ideal fits Theosophy far better than Gnosticism, so that Hoeller should not argue that Jung is a Theosophist because he is a Gnostic.
- 83 For these same equations see White, "Some Notes on Gnosticism," 44-51; White, God and the Unconscious, 209-219; Cox, Jung and St. Paul, 126-127; Von Franz, Patterns of Creativity Mirrored in Creation Myths, 75-76. On the godhead as a symbol of the unconscious see Jung, Mysterium Coniunctionis, 462. See also Neumann, The Origins and History of Consciousness, 118-119. See also Jung's "Seven Sermons to the Dead," which by one interpretation describes the emergence of ego consciousness out of the unconscious, its forgetting of the unconscious, and its consequent need to reintegrate itself with the unconscious. On the "Seven Sermons" see Heisig, 31-33; Heisig, "The VII Sermones: Play and Theory," Spring (1972), 206-218; Judith Hubback, "VII Sermones ad mortuos," Journal of Analytical Psychology, 11 (July 1966), 95-111; June Singer, Boundaries of the Soul (Garden City, N.Y.:

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Doubleday, 1972), 328-334; Robert S. Steele, Freud and Jung (Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982), 287-290.

- 84 Jung, "Gnostic Symbols of the Self," 190-191.
- 85 Ibid., 194-195.
- 86 Ibid., 197-198.
- 87 Jung, "Transformation Symbolism in the Mass," 292.
- 88 Jung, "Gnostic Symbols of the Self," 187.
- 89 Ibid., 185-186.
- 90 Ibid., 189.
- 91 Jung, Foreword to Neumann, Depth Psychology and a New Ethic, 621-622.
- 92 Jung, "Gnostic Symbols of the Self," 189-190.
- 93 Von Franz, Patterns of Creativity Mirrored in Creation Myths, 75-76.
- 94 Jung interprets God this way in "Answer to Job," in his Psychology and Religion: West and East, 357-470.
- 95 White, God and the Unconscious, 210-211.
- 96 Jung, "Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious," 18.
- 97 Ibid., 19.
- 98 Ibid.
- 99 Ibid.

- 100 As Jung says, "Water is the commonest symbol for the unconscious" (ibid., 18).
- 101 Of the drowning of the Egyptians at the Red Sea Jung says, similarly, that they symbolize the ego which, oblivious to the unconscious to which it descends, is overwhelmed by it: see Mysterium Coniunctionis, 199-200. The child himself in the Hymn of the Pearl nearly succumbs for the same reason.
- 102 See, similarly, Jung's parallel interpretation of a patient's dream of descent to the sea to find buried treasure, which, however, is part of the sea rather than something distinct buried in it: see Psychology and Alchemy, 117-120. See also Jung, Symbols of Transformation, 330-331. See also Neumann's interpretation of the hero's liberation of the captive or the treasure from the archetypal dragon: both the captive and the treasure are part of the unconscious world from which they are liberated. See The Origins and History of Consciousness, 195-219.
- 103 On the anima archetype see Jung, "The Relations Between the Ego and the Unconscious," 188-211; "Concerning the Archetypes, with Special Reference to the Anima Concept," in his The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious, 54-72; "The Syzygy: Anima and Animus," in his Aion, ch. 3; "Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious," 24-32; "Commentary on 'The Secret Flower'," in his Alchemical Studies, 38-43. See also Emma Jung, Animus and Anima, trs. Cary F. Baynes and Hildegard Nagel (New York: Spring, 1957), 45-94.
- 104 On the mother archetype see Jung, "Psychological Aspects of the Mother Archetype," 75-110; Symbols of Transformation, 207-444. See also Neumann, The Great Mother, passim; Neumann, The Origins and History of Consciousness, 39-101, 152-169.

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- 105 Jung, Symbols of Transformation, 330.
- 106 On the archetype of the Wise Old Man see Jung, "The Phenomenology of the Spirit in Fairytales," 207-254; "Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious," 34-37.
- 107 Jung himself labels Poimandres a symbol of the Wise Old Man: see "Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious," 37; Mysterium Coniunctionis, 233.
- 108 On the hero archetype see the references in n. 19. Jung himself deems the myth of the birth, fall, and liberation of Primal Man, as outlined by Wilhelm Bousset and Richard Reitzenstein, a symbol of the progression from sheer unconsciousness to ego consciousness to selfhood: see Psychology and Alchemy, 202, 430; Alchemical Studies, 171, 284; Mysterium Coniunctionis, 356; "The Psychology of the Transference," 216, 245, 270. On Man as a symbol of the self see Jung, "A Psychological Approach to the Dogma of the Trinity," in his Psychology and Religion: West and East, 185.
- 109 Jung, "The Psychology of the Child Archetype," 92. See also June Singer, Androgyny (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1976), ch. II.
- 110 On the preaching of androgyny by Gnosticism see Jung, "The Psychology of the Child Archetype," 92-96; "Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious," 59, 70; Mysterium Coniunctionis, 373; Flying Saucers, 108.
- 111 Jung, "The Psychology of the Child Archetype," 92-93.
- 112 See, for example, Jung, Memories, Dreams, Reflections, 168; Mysterium Coniunctionis, passim. See also Barbara Hannah, C. G. Jung (New York: Putnam, 1976), 100-102.

- 113 On evil see Jung, "Answer to Job," 359-470; "A Psychological Approach to the Dogma of the Trinity," 109-200; "Christ, a Symbol of the Self," in his Aion, ch. 5. See also Philp, *passim*; Carl Kerényi and others, Evil, trs. Ralph Manheim and Hildegard Nagel (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University, 1967), *passim*; John A. Sanford, Evil (New York: Crossroad, 1981), *passim*; Victor White, Soul and Psyche (London: Collins, 1960), chs. 6, 9; Eleanor Bertine, Jung's Contribution to Our Time, ed. Elizabeth C. Rohrbach (New York: Putnam, 1967), chs. 3, 14; Jaffé, The Myth of Meaning, chs. 7-10; Moreno, 85-101, 145-160; Raymond Hostie, Religion and the Psychology of Jung, tr. G. R. Lamb (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1957), 188-209; Avis M. Dry, The Psychology of Jung (New York: Wiley, 1961), 203-206; Cox, 271-284; Heisig, Imago Dei, 54-59, 76-78.
- 114 Jung, "Christ, a Symbol of the Self," 42-43. See also Jung, "A Psychological Approach to the Dogma of the Trinity," 177. See also Rivkah S. Kluger, Satan in the Old Testament, tr. Hildegard Nagel (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University, 1967), *passim*. Where in the quotation here Christ represents only part of the self, elsewhere he represents the whole of it. Jung admits this inconsistency: see "A Psychological Approach to the Dogma of the Trinity," 156. See also Jung, Symbols of Transformation, 368. See also Heisig, Imago Dei, 63-66, 75-76.
- 115 Jung, "Psychology and Religion," 62-63. See also Jung, "A Psychological Approach to the Dogma of the Trinity," 170-171; Psychology and Alchemy, 150-151. See also Philp, 70-72, 79-80, 216, 219; Sanford, 120-121, 139-140; White, Soul and Psyche, 113-114; Moreno, 89-90, 117; Dry, 204-205; Heisig, Imago Dei, 64-68. At still other times Jung deems the inferior function the missing quarter: see Psychology and Alchemy, 151. See also Philp, 72-74; Sanford, 120, 139; White, Soul and Psyche, 105-106.

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- 116 See, for example, Jung, Psychology and Alchemy, 150-151; "Concerning Rebirth," 123. Both Sanford (121, 139-140) and Dry (205) imply that Jung considers the anima at least partly evil.
- 117 Jung, "A Psychological Approach to the Dogma of the Trinity," 169-170. See also Jung, "Christ, a Symbol of the Self," 41-43; reply, in Philp, 235-239; Flying Saucers, 61-62; "The Historical Significance of the Fish," in his Aion, 109-110; "The Alchemical Interpretation of the Fish," 269; "Address at the Presentation of the Jung Codex," 672, 828-829.
- 118 See Philp, *passim*; Sanford, chs. 4, 6, 9; White, Soul and Psyche, ch. 9; Moreno, ch. 5; Hostie, 188-198.
- 119 Sanford (72-73, 121) faults Gnosticism exactly for rejecting matter as evil and thereby, psychologically, denying the shadow. Conversely, Quispel ("C. G. Jung und die Gnosis," 288-289, 293-294) faults Jung for claiming that Gnosticism accepts any evil in divinity. Citing Jung's interpretation of Basilides in his "Seven Sermons to the Dead," Quispel says that where for Basilides the godhead is wholly good, for Jung it is both evil and good. Where Basilides identifies the god Abraxas with the Demiurge rather than with the highest god precisely because Abraxas is evil as well as good, Jung, for the same reason, identifies Abraxas with the highest god. Similarly, Philp (82-83) contrasts the exclusive goodness of the Gnostic godhead to Jung's mixed one.
- 120 One could still fault Jung for failing to distinguish between divinity as the cause of evil and divinity as evil itself. For further logical criticisms see Philp, *passim*.
- 121 Jung, Foreword to Neumann, Depth Psychology and a New Ethic, 621-622. See also Jung, "Gnostic Symbols of the Self," 189-190.

- 122 At least once Jung does implicitly equate the Demiurge with the shadow of Christ: see "The Fish in Alchemy," 150.
- 123 Von Franz, Patterns of Creativity Mirrored in Creation Myths, 75-76.

Conclusion

All myths, says Eliade, preach rejection of the present, when the sacred is distant, and return to the past, when the sacred was near. Most myths, for Eliade, preach return to the time just after creation, when the sacred most fully pervaded the profane world. Some myths, however, preach return to the time before creation, when the sacred alone existed. Where, then, most myths are world-affirming, some, including the Poimandres, are world-denying.

On the one hand Eliade undeniably grants the existence of world-denying myths. On the other hand his theory, which purports to apply to all myths, applies in fact to only world-affirming ones. For it stresses the "sacralizing," not the rejection, of the profane world by the sacred. Hierophanies constitute the manifestation, not the entrapment, of the sacred in the profane world. Myths describe the joyful, not lamentable, creation of the profane world by gods, the agents of the sacred. Myths justify as well as explain creation, and do so by pronouncing it irreversible. The acts of the gods described in myths become models for man. Eliade's recognition of the existence of world-denying myths does not thereby make his theory applicable to them.

To say that Eliade's theory is wholly world-affirming is not to say that Eliade himself is. It is not to say that Eliade himself "affirms" the world. It is to say only that he assumes that myths do and that he, as theorist, must explain, not necessarily endorse, their doing so.

To save his theory Eliade could perhaps argue that world-denying myths like the Poimandres are really world-

affirming. Certainly he could interpret the creation of the material world by, ultimately, the highest god as the willful creation of the profane world by the sacred. He could not, however, thereby make the material world good. For the myth itself considers it evil and seeks its dissolution. Creation constitutes not the sacralization of the profane but the fall of the sacred. Creation is not a blessing but a mistake. The fact that an omniscient and omnipotent God is ultimately responsible makes creation not good but inexplicable.

Eliade could perhaps better encompass the Poimandres within his theory by arguing not that world-denying myths are really world-affirming but the opposite: that world-affirming myths are at least partly world-denying. Eliade could argue that the yearning in world-denying myths to return wholly to the sacred is only an extreme version of the yearning in world-affirming myths to return to it partly. All myths, he could say, espouse rejection of the fallen present and return to the pre-fallen past. That return requires the dissolution of everything in between and therefore amounts to escape from the profane present.

For Eliade, the sacred is thus not only higher than the profane but also antithetical to it. The sacred and the profane are defined as opposites. Their linkage is paradoxical. They can only mix, never fuse: in manifesting itself in the profane, the sacred remains sacred and the profane profane. Though created by the sacred, the profane world is wholly profane.

The desire in the Poimandres to return to sheer sacredness Eliade could interpret as only an extreme version of the universal desire to infuse the profane with the sacred. He could even argue that the fervor with which all myths preach envelopment in the sacred evinces a universal desire to live in nothing but sacredness. The Poimandres and other world-denying myths would thereby differ from seemingly world-affirming ones in only their preaching of the possibility, not the desirability, of man's returning to sheer sacredness.

The desire in the Poimandres to forsake the profane world altogether Eliade could likewise interpret as only a

bolder version of the universal desire to forsake the present, fallen state of the profane world. He could even argue that the zeal with which all myths urge escape from the present profane world evinces a universal desire to escape from the profane world altogether. The Poimandres and other world-denying myths would thereby differ from seemingly world-affirming ones in only their preaching of the possibility, not the desirability, of man's abandoning the profane world altogether.

The desire in the Poimandres to return permanently to the sacred Eliade could similarly interpret as only a stronger version of the universal desire to return regularly to it. He could even argue that the frequency with which, through myth, man does return to the sacred evinces a universal desire to return to it once and for all. The Poimandres and other world-denying myths would, again, thereby differ from seemingly world-affirming ones in only their preaching of the possibility, not the desirability, of man's returning permanently to the sacred.

The desire in the Poimandres to return to the time before creation Eliade could interpret as well as only a radical version of the universal desire to return to the time just after creation. He could even argue that the invariable fallenness of creation makes the desire to escape from its fallen state virtually a desire to escape from creation itself. Once again, then, the Poimandres and other world-denying myths would differ from seemingly world-affirming ones in only their preaching of the possibility, not the desirability, of man's escaping from creation altogether.

Were Eliade somehow able to argue that the Poimandres is really, like most other myths, world-affirming, he would be not merely altering but outright reversing its particularistic, Gnostic meaning. The difference a theoretical approach to the myth would make would thereby be extraordinary. Conversely, were Eliade able to argue even that all other myths are really, like the Poimandres, world-denying, the difference for the myth would still be extraordinary. For he would still be

"universalizing" its otherwise distinctively Gnostic meaning. Its yearning to reject the everyday secular world for a perfect, sacred one would be not idiosyncratic but panhuman.

But just as it is doubtful that Eliade can transform the Poimandres into a world-affirming myth, so it is doubtful that he can transform world-affirming myths into world-denying ones. For even if all myths preach rejection of the present state of the created world, world-affirming myths deem creation itself good. The pristine time to which they spur man to return remains the pre-fallen time of creation, not the time before creation. They urge man to forsake only the present, fallen state of the profane world, not the profane world itself. Moreover, they urge him to forsake even that present state only temporarily, and to do so as only a means to an end. The end is return to the present, profane state, a state simply renewed by contact with its pre-fallen counterpart.

Above all, there is simply no evidence that world-affirming myths espouse acceptance of the created world as only a consolation for man's inability to escape from it. Whether or not, according to world-affirming myths, man can return wholly to the sacred, the myths do not direct him to do so. In short, Eliade can no more subsume world-affirming myths under world-denying ones than vice versa. The utility of his theory for the Poimandres is therefore most limited.

For Jung, as for Eliade, all myths--better, all myths of the second half of life--preach rejection of the present, when the unconscious is distant, and return to the past, when the unconscious was near. Like Eliade, Jung divides myths, or at least these myths, into world-denying and world-affirming varieties: into those which preach return as the end itself and those which preach return as only a means, the end being return in turn to the present. The psychological equivalent of world-denying myths preach the permanent return of the ego to the unconscious. The psychological counterpart to world-affirming myths preach only its temporary return, the end being its return in turn to ordinary, or ego, consciousness to form the self.

If Jung is like Eliade in granting the existence of world-denying as well as world-affirming myths, he is unlike Eliade in two decisive ways. On the one hand he endorses, not merely presents, world-affirming myths, which conform to his own psychological ideal. On the other hand he is able to interpret, not merely acknowledge, world-denying ones. Where Eliade merely presents the world-affirming ideal of myths themselves, Jung evaluates myths by his own world-affirming ideal. "World affirmation" evinces psychological health; "world denial," imbalance. But where Eliade's theory, however nonevaluative, applies to only world-affirming myths, Jung's, though evaluative, applies also to world-denying ones. Even if Jung, unlike Eliade, disapproves of world-denying myths, he, unlike Eliade as well, can still make sense of them.

Jung differs from Eliade in a third respect: he actually interprets world-denying Gnostic myths as world-affirming ones. Where, as noted, Eliade might consider doing so in order to encompass the Poimandres within his theory, Jung actually does so. Gnostic myths, he claims, describe both the creation of the ego out of the unconscious--the aim of the first half of life--and the creation of the self out of the integration of the ego with the unconscious--the aim of the second half of life. The aim here is not the rejection but the enlargement of ego consciousness--the equivalent of world affirmation.

As argued, the Poimandres in fact preaches the equivalent of world denial, not affirmation. It preaches the wholesale rejection of the created world and therefore, symbolically, of ego consciousness. It preaches return to the godhead, and so to unconsciousness, as the end, not the means.

Jung could interpret the creation of the material world, or even of matter itself, as the natural emergence of the ego out of the unconscious. He could likewise interpret the Gnostic's return to the godhead as initially the equally natural, not to say proper, return of the fully formed ego to the unconscious. But he could not, or should

not, interpret that return as other than permanent and so as other than the outright rejection of ego consciousness for the unconscious. Reversing the psychological equations, as Jung himself does at least once, would not alter the fact: that he could, or should, not interpret the return as other than the equally lopsided rejection of the unconscious for ego consciousness.

Even if, as suggested, Jung were to argue that the creation of the material world by the godhead reveals the acceptance rather than the rejection of that world, Gnosticism itself says otherwise. Gnosticism not only rejects the material world, and therefore ego consciousness, but deems its divine origin paradoxical. God and creation are irreconcilable. No integration of them, and so of the parts of the psyche, can take place.

The difference between Jung's theory and Eliade's is that Jung can still explain why the Gnostic rejects the material world altogether. Jung's theory is not, like Eliade's, confined to the psychological equivalent of world-affirming myths. It encompasses world-denying ones as well. Jung's ideal is world-affirming, but his theory is not. No more than Eliade can he really interpret the Poimandres as a world-affirming myth, but unlike Eliade he can still interpret it as a world-denying one.

Jung can, or should, interpret world-denying myths as expressing one kind of psychological imbalance: "inflation," or the ego's identification of itself with the newly rediscovered unconscious. Psychological health involves neither sheer unconsciousness nor sheer ego consciousness but instead a balance of the two. The ego's return to the unconscious should therefore be a means to the end, not the end itself. The end should be the return to ego consciousness in turn to form the enlarged consciousness of the whole self.

In interpreting the Poimandres as "inflationary" Jung would be explaining the key aspect of the myth left unexplained by a particularistic interpretation: why God intentionally creates what he subsequently opposes. Taken as a Gnostic myth, the Poimandres makes God omniscient

yet mistaken, perhaps because his emotion overrides his intellect. Jung would be deeming not the creation but the dissolution of the material world the psychological mistake, which he would be attributing to not an omniscient creator but an innocent creation: the ego. He would be saying that the ego, symbolized by the worldly side of man, is so severed from its unconscious roots that it understandably, if unfortunately, succumbs to the allure of the unconscious, symbolized by both man's soul and the godhead. The unconscious, which is truly omniscient, does not err in begetting the ego. The ego errs in lapsing back into unconsciousness. The unconscious does not reject ego consciousness. The ego itself rejects it.

Jung would here be judging but not denying the Gnostic ideal. He would be claiming not, as he in fact does, that Gnosticism really preaches acceptance of the world but only that it ought to do so. He would therefore be providing an actual interpretation of the Poimandres, even if one based on a contrary ideal.

Were Jung able to interpret the Poimandres as world-affirming, he, like Eliade, would be outright reversing its particularistic, Gnostic meaning. But even in rightly interpreting the myth as inflated, or world-denying, he would still be transforming its Gnostic meaning. For he would still be interpreting it psychologically rather than metaphysically. The myth would cease to concern the external world and would concern instead the world of man's mind.

To link the Poimandres and other world-denying myths to world-affirming ones Jung could perhaps, like Eliade, argue alternatively not that world-denying myths are really world-affirming but the opposite: that world-affirming myths are at least partly world-denying. Like Eliade, he could argue that all myths, at least of the second half of life, espouse a break with the present state and a return to an earlier one. Like Eliade, he could argue that world-denying myths, in espousing the permanent rejection of the world, are merely carrying that break to its finale: they are espousing the permanent rejection of ego consciousness.

But Jung, just like Eliade, would thereby be effacing several decisive differences between world-denying and world-affirming myths: the difference between returning to the unconscious permanently and returning to it only temporarily, the difference between returning to the unconscious as the end and returning to it as only a means, and the difference between returning to the unconscious in order to abandon ego consciousness and returning to it in order to enlarge ego consciousness.

Even if neither Jung nor Eliade can justifiably link the Poimandres to other myths by reversing either its meaning or theirs, both still "universalize" its particularistic, Gnostic subject. For both, the subject of myth ceases to be the specifically Gnostic realities of immateriality and matter and becomes the ultimate and everyday realities experienced by all. Eliade and Jung translate specifically Gnostic terms into universal ones, of which the Gnostic ones become simply a version. Even if, moreover, few myths preach the complete rejection of everyday reality for ultimate reality, all do preach contact with ultimate reality. If the reaction of the Poimandres to that contact separates it from most other myths, the reaction is still to a universal experience.

The theories of Eliade and Jung transform not only the subject but also the function of the Poimandres. The myth ceases to be merely an explanation of the origin of everyday reality either from or through ultimate reality. It also becomes a means of reaching that reality. The myth becomes not merely a statement but also an activity. It becomes not merely "expressive" but also "instrumental." It not merely tells man what to do but also enables him to do it.

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