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Secondary Gods and Divine
Mediators:

Studies in the Development of
the Demiurge in the Platonic,
Gnostic and Hermetic Traditions

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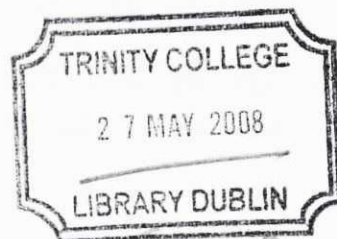
**Secondary Gods and Divine Mediators:
Studies in the Development of the Demiurge in the Platonic,
Gnostic and Hermetic Traditions**

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**Submitted to the University of Dublin, October 2007, in fulfillment
of the requirements for admission to the degree of Doctor in
Philosophy (PhD).**



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Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis “Secondary Gods and divine Mediators: Studies in the Development of the Demiurge in the Platonic, Gnostic and Hermetic Traditions” has not previously been submitted for any degree at the University of Dublin or any other university, and that it is entirely my own work. I also agree that the Trinity College Dublin Library may lend or copy the thesis upon request. This permission covers only single copies made for study purposes, subject to normal conditions of acknowledgement.

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Summary

“Secondary Gods and Divine Mediators: Studies in the Development of the Demiurge in the Platonic, Gnostic and Hermetic traditions” analyses the concept of the Craftsman-god of Plato’s *Timaeus* and explores the adoption and adaptation of this generative model by these three interrelated traditions. Although not proposing that the history of ideas is some sort of “conveyor-belt” a certain degree of systematisation can be achieved.

Methodology: The procedure adopted has been the investigation of five “mainstream” thinkers from the first to third centuries A.D. in addition to Valentinus and Hermetism. The choice of such a comparatively wide range of thinkers was necessary in order to take into account the scope of refinements made to the concept of the Demiurge. Indeed, the main issue raised by the methodology has been the selection criteria. Philosophical achievement was not felt to be as important as the evidence of the relevant tradition demonstrated by the thinker. This led to the inclusion of Maximus of Tyre. Investigation of traditions outside the philosophical mainstream has not been discounted, where it was felt that this could lead to a more accurate analysis of the demiurgic model; the lack of attention paid to thinkers such as Valentinus was considered to be one of the weaknesses of previous studies.

However, limits do need to be drawn and the study confined itself to Christian Gnosticism, primarily Valentinianism, which is the Gnostic system most heavily influenced by Platonism. *The Chaldaean Oracles* have not been analysed, in favour of a more detailed focus on Gnosticism and Hermetism, two traditions related so closely that the secondary literature does not always draw a firm distinction between the two. Since the scope of the study is from the first to third centuries A.D. the Old Academy has not been of primary importance. For each figure, a representative range of texts have been analysed and due attention has been paid to textual matters or the question of reliability or bias where such matters could impinge upon the metaphysical interpretation. This has been of particular importance when analysing fragments (Numenius) or translations (Origen). The thesis surveys the Demiurge from his introduction in the *Timaeus*, until his decline in the face of the alternative model of “procession” and “return” propounded by Plotinus.

Findings: The major finding of this study has been to show that the concept of the Demiurge underpins many of the central questions of metaphysics: the origin

of evil, the issue of a temporal or continuous generation of the cosmos (or both), the nature of causality and interaction between a higher, suprasensible principle and a lower material one. Its utility has been to trace the ancestry of several Platonic and Gnostic hypostases and to demonstrate that they originate in either comments made by Plato in the *Timaeus*, attempts to identify these entities with counterparts in other traditions, or are introduced to solve problems identified in the scheme of the *Timaeus* itself. Philo's Logos-Cutter and the Gnostic Sophia appear related to a certain degree. Origen's Son-Logos christianises his Jewish predecessors' ideas, but all three notions of a lower ontological entity which is responsible for world-generation in a sense owe their origin to the Numenian Second God, who in turn can be viewed as a refinement of the "Young Gods" of the *Timaeus*. The World-Soul can be seen as the ancestor of the Numenian Third God or the cause of the difficulties with the introduction of the Holy Spirit into the highly Platonised metaphysical system of Origen.

An attempt to overly systematise the development of the demiurgic concept would be fallacious. For one, there is no direct line of succession- the *Timaeus* was interpreted by four separate traditions to suit their own particular world-view. However, this study does demonstrate cross-fertilisation between the various traditions and demonstrates that multiple models or variations of world-generation may be denoted by the term Demiurge, ranging from versions close to those of the *Timaeus* to Biblical accounts set within a Platonic context. The study has also shown that certain Gnostic thinkers (notably Valentinus) have been misunderstood, due to the hostility of the Church Fathers, often the sole source of their doctrines. Valentinus' account is in fact a highly philosophical one, although it does make considerable use of the mythological framework favoured by Gnosticism.

Acknowledgements

Over the course of the past three and a half years, I have acquired various debts which I wish to acknowledge. In the first place, I would like to thank my supervisor at Trinity, Professor John Dillon as well as my academic advisor at Fribourg, Professor Dominic O'Meara for guiding me through this thesis and for their advice and assistance, which went far beyond the call of duty. I am grateful to the Board of Trinity College, Dublin, for the award of a Postgraduate Studentship, which I held from 2003-2004 and again from 2005-2006. I am also grateful to the Eidgenössische Stipendiumkommission für ausländische Studierende for a Swiss Confederation Scholarship which permitted me to conduct research in the congenial surroundings of the University of Fribourg from 2004-2005, as well as to the Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences for the award of a Government of Ireland Scholarship. Additionally, the Department of Classics at Trinity and the École doctorale de la Suisse Romande kindly funded attendance at a conference in Switzerland to present my research, while the Hellenic Society of the University of London generously funded my attendance at a conference on Plutarch's *Quaestiones Convivales*. I would also like to thank Professor Jens Halfwassen of the University of Heidelberg for having kindly given me a large number of his publications regarding the Demiurge.

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Chapter 1: Plato and the Demiurge

Introduction

According to a malicious story which seems to have originated with the satirist Timon of Phlius (c. 325-235BC), Plato was so desperate to learn Pythagorean metaphysics that he paid “many pieces of silver” (apparently a hundred *minae*) for a book of little worth, which he then attempted to pass off as his own. This anecdote illustrates the importance in which the *Timaeus* was held in antiquity (even if non-Platonists regarded it as “worthless”, they still saw it as important enough to attack). Even at the height of the Renaissance, Raphael could envisage Plato in The School of Athens, carrying the “Timeo” under his arm and pointing with his upraised index-finger to the sky, indicating his contribution to metaphysics.

To a certain extent, the *Timaeus* had a disproportionate influence upon subsequent Platonism, partly due to the perception that it was Plato’s only “physical” dialogue, but more importantly because in the medieval period (until the thirteenth century) the tenets of Plato were known, mainly from a Latin version of the first two-thirds of the dialogue by Chalcidius and the *Consolatio* of Boethius as well as an exegesis of Cicero’s *Somnium Scipionis* by Macrobius, both of which drew heavily upon the *Timaeus*. Indeed, the only individual of note to dispute the authenticity of the work was the German philosopher, Schelling, in *Philosophie und Religion (Werke v. 36)* because he disliked its theism. However, we may rest assured that the theism of the dialogue is indeed Platonic; Schelling later recanted his “heresy” (*Werke vii 37i*) in deference to Boeckh.¹ In spite of this, comparatively little was published on the *Timaeus* in the early twentieth century. The most notable exceptions were the commentaries by A. E. Taylor (1929) and F.M. Cornford (1937).

The *Timaeus* is, perhaps, most noted as the text which introduces the Demiurge. When the Demiurge finally appears, he is, to quote Dillon, “a bizarre figure, introduced in a bizarre manner”.² The term *δημιουργός* is itself surprising – one might expect such a character to be rather grandly titled *Nous* or *Logos*. At Athens, the craftsman was either a slave or if free, one who acquired a certain stigma as a result of his proximity to slaves. Plato himself excludes the *δημιουργός* from

¹ Taylor, A. E. (1928), 1.

² Dillon, J. M. (1997), 27.

political participation (*Republic*) and citizenship (*Laws*) as does Aristotle (*Politics*). Vlastos rightly calls this terminology the “triumph of the philosophical imagination over ingrained social prejudice”.³ He views the δημιουργός as the stereotypical Platonic artist imposing pre-existing form on matter, not inventing new form.

The dialogue first uses the term δημιουργός (“Craftsman”) at 28 A6, although there it seems to me that it does not signify “the Demiurge” and whatever it is that he represents, but rather a generic craftsman, or as Cornford so accurately translates “the maker of anything”. Admittedly, Plato has previously used δημιουργός to represent the God (*Rep.* 530a and *Soph.* 265b) but there the context was different. In the *Cratylus* (389a-b), the good δημιουργός, when constructing a new shuttle takes as his model, not the broken shuttle or an unbroken shuttle, but the Form of Shuttle. The δημιουργός is then subsequently introduced as the cosmic Creator, by sleight of hand in the Platonic tradition of converting illustrative analogy into fact without an intervening stage. A similar technique was employed at *Rep.* II 375a-376b when the guard dog analogy was suddenly adopted as the defining requirement for the Auxiliary class.

Pre-Timaeon References to the Demiurge

The term “δημιουργός” is not introduced for the first time at *Timaeus* 28A6. At *Gorgias* 455 A2, rhetoric is a πειθοῦς δημιουργός, while at *Symposium* 188D, it is prophecy (μαντική) that is considered to be a δημιουργός. The *Republic* paves the way for the introduction of the Demiurge in the *Timaeus* – at 507 C6-8, reference is made to the artificer of the eyes, while at *Republic* 530 A 5-7 “νομιζεῖν μὲν ὡς οἶον τε κάλλιστα τὰ τοιαῦτα ἔργα συστήσασθαι, οὕτω ζυνεστάναι τῷ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ δημιουργῷ αὐτὸν τε καὶ τὰ ἐν αὐτῷ.” “He will be willing to concede that the artisan of heaven fashioned it and all that it contains in the best possible manner for such a fabric.”

At *Charmides* 174E, Temperance (σωφροσύνη) is said to be the producer (δημιουργός) of health, while at *Euthyphro* 292D, the δημιουργός is said to produce an effect neither good nor bad, though the word is clearly being used in a generic sense here and not to refer to the divine Craftsman. However, at *Statesman* 270A, we have a discussion of the role of the Demiurge in imposing order upon disorderly motion, and it seems that here at least Plato is beginning to move towards (or at the

³ Vlastos, G. (1975), 26.

very least express openly) a view approximating that of the Demiurge of the *Timaeus*.⁴ Again at *Statesman* 273 B, disorderly motion is presented as attempting to follow as closely as it can the instructions of its Demiurge and father. Interestingly, Auguste Diès translates δημιουργός as “auteur” in his 1935 Budé edition, rather than “Craftsman” or “Demiurge”, thereby regarding the word as used in a generic sense.

The Demiurge of the *Timaeus*

Although, any discussion of the Demiurge begins with the *Timaeus*, it should be noted that this thesis is not an attempt to trace divergent readings of the *Timaeus*, merely the concept of the Demiurge. Only about half the text of the *Timaeus* actually deals with this. 21-32B consists of a Prelude (27c-29d) and a discussion of basic metaphysical concepts, such as the Principles (29b-31b) and Body (31b-34c) of the World and Composition (34a-36c) and Functions (36e-40d) of the World-Soul. Other key components of the *Timaeus* which became important subsequently in delineating the concept of the Demiurge are the arrangement of the four elements in the cosmos by the Demiurge (32D), the guarantee of an everlasting world (41B), the retirement of the Demiurge at 42D and the secondary production on the part of the “Young Gods” at 43A. Also important for subsequent Platonists is the discussion of Necessity (47e-53c), as well the Platonic notion of space (Receptacle) at 49B. In fact, the relevant section of the *Timaeus* ends at 57C-E with the generation of unmixed and primary bodies, while the dialogue goes on to deal with other physical matters, most notably the mechanisms by which the senses function.

Plato describes the actual mechanics of demiurgy. Faced with precosmic chaos, the Demiurge produces three essences –the Same, Intermediate and Different, which he inserts or wraps around the body of the world, shaping it using all the available matter. The exact process used by the Demiurge does not seem to have been particularly important to the heirs of Plato, but two elements of this account were. Firstly, the notion that the world is created along rational (i.e. mathematical) lines and

⁴“ἀλλ’ ὅπερ ἄρτι ἐρρήθη καὶ μόνον λοιπόν, τοτὲ μὲν ὑπ’ ἄλλης συμποδηγεῖσθαι θείας αἰτίας, τὸ ζῆν πάλιν ἐπικτώμενον καὶ λαμβάνοντα ἀθανασίαν ἐπισκευαστήν παρὰ τοῦ δημιουργοῦ, τοτὲ δ’ ὅταν ἀνεθῆ, δι’ ἑαυτοῦ αὐτὸν ἰέναι, κατὰ καιρὸν ἀφεθέντα τοιοῦτον ὥστε ἀνάπαλιν πορεύεσθαι πολλὰς πεπλόδων μυριάδας διὰ δὴ τὸ μέγιστον ὄν καὶ ἰσορροπώτατον ἐπὶ μικροτάτων βαῖνον ποδὸς ἰέναι.”

“But, as I said just now, the only solution which remains, is that the universe is conducted by an extrinsic and divine action and acquiring the faculty of life anew, receives also *from its Demiurge* a restored immortality and that at another time it is left to itself and it moves according to its own proper motion and left to itself it moves backwards at this time through thousands of revolutions, because its enormous mass turns in perfect equilibrium upon an extremely small pivot.”

secondly the retirement of the Demiurge and his handing over of creation to the Young Gods leads to the development of various intermediary demiurgic figures in subsequent traditions, or even more strikingly the actual demotion of the Demiurge himself. The antagonism between the Demiurge and the First Principle in Gnosticism can be seen in part to result from Plato's distinction between the Form of Good and the Demiurge.

However at *Symposium* 305B8-C2, Plato blurs the distinction between a Demiurge and a Creator: "You know that creation (ποίησις) is more than just a single thing. For of anything whatever that passes from non-being into being, the care of the whole is always creation, thus the production of all the arts are kinds of creation and their craftsmen (δημιουργοί) are all creators (ποιηταί)." Again at *Sophist* 219B4-6 "when anyone brings into being anything that previously had no being, then we say that he who brings it into being produces (ποιεῖν) it and that which is brought into being is produced (ποιεῖσθαι). Here it seems that Plato draws no distinction between merely ordering and actually creating. However, the issue is a problematic one; both Origen and Philo certainly have the Judaeo-Christian notion of creation in mind, but are much less explicit concerning the issue of *creatio ex nihilo*.

Plato, I think, draws no distinction between the two because the idea of the Demiurge creating *ex nihilo* or even ordering according to his own whims (rather than according to the pre-existent Forms) would be for him unconscionable. The Greeks did not mention the idea of *creatio ex nihilo* even in jest. The Demiurge moulds the world using geometric patterns; with the isosceles triangle he forms a cube, which becomes the atom of earth and out of the scalene triangle, the tetrahedron (fire), octahedron (air), icosahedron (water), and the dodecahedra used to adorn the universe (*Tim.* 55C4-6), which appears to be the origin of Ether. Reale counters the view that the Demiurge replicates irrelevant features of his model, but regarded this as an actualisation of "true measure".⁵ For Reale, producing only one universe and generating time as an image of the unit of eternity are both mechanisms by which the Demiurge unifies reality.

A major question for the heirs of Plato was the precise nature of the relationship between the Demiurge and the Forms. A related point is the consideration of what types of things do Forms exist. From the *Timaeus*, it would

⁵ Reale.G. (1997), 161.

appear that the noetic realm contains (περιέχον 31A4, περιλαβόν 30C8) biological Forms. Ostenfeld suggests that the Demiurge may be an all-embracing Form containing the various sub-Forms.⁶ For Aristotle, the Forms are the final cause, while the Demiurge is the efficient cause. Is this sufficient to identify the Demiurge with the Form of the Good? I think not, although in defence of this position, one might cite *Tim.* 37 A 1: “(the Demiurge) is the best of the intelligible and eternal things” or 29 E3: “he wanted everything to be most like himself” or the reference to the Forms as gods at 37C6. However, as Ostenfeld points out, Plato never mentions the Form of the Good in the *Timaeus*, although he acknowledges the possibility at 46C8.⁷ In addition, the Good of the *Republic* is not a creative intelligence, so would it really be legitimate to equate the Demiurge with it? .⁸ Ostenfeld rejects the notion that the Forms in the *Timaeus* should be equated with the thoughts of God. This to my mind is quite right, since this doctrine is most likely a Middle Platonic refinement. The Forms are not in anything else (*Timaeus* 52A) and they are apart from sense-perception (*Crat.* 386E). This leads to the problem of how they can interact upon matter. They must function as some sort of mathematical ratio (a problem if Forms are non-spatial). The introduction of the concept that the Forms were the thoughts of God not only resolved this problem, it reduced the number of principles from three to two. For Plato, the Form-sensible interaction is resolved by a “model-copy” relationship, though he does acknowledge the difficulty when he states that sensibles “partake” in some very puzzling way (ἀπορώτατά πη) of the intelligible and are very difficult to apprehend (*Tim.* 51A7-B1).

Another inheritance shared by the Platonists discussed here is the *Timaeus*’ proemium. When Timaeus states at 28C that to find the father and maker of all men is difficult and when he is found, that to reveal him is impossible; he is referring to the limits of human knowledge and Plato’s awareness that this is just a “likely story”, to account for appearances, the most up-to-date scientific research of the day, though Plato himself is aware that this will be superseded at some point in the future. This was adopted by Plutarch and Maximus of Tyre as a convenient response to evade a detailed discussion of certain (technical) aspects of demiurgy, when it no longer suited them.

⁶ Ostenfeld, E.,(1997), 170.

⁷ Ostenfeld, E. (1997)., 172.

⁸ *Republic* 379B, 517C, 506 rather muddy the waters, as does 507C and 530A, for which see my discussion above.

The proemium can be subdivided into five parts-in 27D-28D2, Plato outlines the fundamental principles which underpin the *Timaeus*, while 28B2-29 A3 applies them to the cosmos. ⁹This results in three conclusions – the cosmos has been produced, it has a cause, the precise nature of which is difficult to explain and the maker modeled it following an eternal model. Our understanding of this proemium’s significance is hampered by the lack of research dealing with pre-Socratic proemia and so we can only analyse it here in terms of its influence upon the subsequent tradition.¹⁰ It is worth pointing out, in light of what we said above, that it is customary in philosophical proemia to express an awareness of the limits of human knowledge ; it suffices to cite *Alcmaeon* 24 B1 “both concerning things that are unclear and concerning what is mortal the gods have clarity, but for humans it is given to making conjectures” (Runia’s trans. 105) and Metrodorus of Chios 70B1: “none of us knows anything, not even whether we know or do not know” .

It is well-known that Plato regards the Demiurge as imposing order upon disorder, a position shared by Maximus and Plutarch, though disputed by the Gnostic and Hermetic traditions. But what exactly is this order and how might it be viewed as an improvement? The Demiurge’s work can be seen in terms of an improvement of the world’s intelligibility; creating immanent standards (39E3-4) as a reflection of the standards of the phenomenal realm. This explains the Demiurge’s replication of qualities possessed by his model which might seem to be irrelevant in his production. In order for the created world to serve as a standard (Mohr suggests that it may be an immanent standard of animality)¹¹, he must invest it with permanence (through the introduction of the standard of time 36E) and uniqueness (only one world created). This is the real reason why (for Plato), the Demiurge improves matter, since it has heightened intelligibility (by being ordered as the sensible realm) rather than by imposing order (quite a right-wing view).

However, this is a feature not seized upon by the thinkers considered here- all of them tend to view creation or demiurgy in terms of this order/disorder framework. While Middle Platonists (including in this instance Philo under this label) tend to regard the Demiurge as responsible for order; the main objection that Gnostics tend to have against him is that he is responsible in some way for the breakdown of the

⁹ Runia, D., (1997), 102.

¹⁰ Mohr, R. D. (1989), 301.

¹¹ Ibid.

natural ontological order by either entrapping Man (as a fragmented and enmattered part of the Godhead) or through his ignorance of the order in his assumption that he is the highest principle.

In contrast to the Empedoclean entities Love and Strife, which are responsible for the production of the world or the ordering divine mind of Anaxagoras, Plato introduces a different type of cosmology. For Plato's Demiurge, order is not good *per se*, or rather it is not part of his ultimate purpose, since even some sort of order (ἵχνη, traces) existed in the precosmos. The Demiurge only orders in a manner which furthers his objectives: increased intelligibility, seen for example in his formation of the elements, ordered on geometric principles. It is not the order which is important for Plato, but the rationality underpinning it.

At *Timaeus* 48E. Plato turns to an examination of cosmology from below, and introduces Necessity (Plato's erratic cause ἡ πλανωμένη αἰτία). He also introduces the Receptacle (ὑποδοχή) which he calls mother (μήτηρ) or nurse and also refers to it as space (χώρα) or place (τόπος). Plato's errant cause is a thorn in the side of the Demiurge, for example, he would prefer that humans could live longer and be intelligent, but when presented with a choice, he opts for intelligence over longevity. Necessity has no place in this form in Philo's and Origen's accounts with their belief in an omnipotent creator, but it does find a place in Philo's system as part of the recalcitrance of matter. As for Plato's Receptacle, it becomes ὕλη "matter", with the beginning of a distinction between matter and space. In Gnosticism and Hermetism, the negative role of Necessity seems to become confounded with the role of the Demiurge.

Another hangover from Plato's *Timaeus* is the hierarchy of divinities. Is the Demiurge identical with the Idea of the Good? The Demiurge of the *Timaeus* never creates the Forms, rather the soul and the κόσμος αἰσθητός. In the *Politeia*, for example, God is the creator (φυτουργός) of the Idea of the Bed, meaning that the Demiurge could in no way be identical with the principle of the One and the Good, although this *Politeia* reference is not particularly helpful in determining the precise ontological status of the Demiurge, since the metaphysical value of the Idea of the Bed must surely differ from the abstract ideas such as Justice or Beauty (or more importantly the Good¹²). Halfwassen points out that since the Demiurge is soul at

¹² Halfwassen, J. (2000), 48.

Timaeus 36 D8, and the highest principle is something other than soul, this indicates that a creator god could not be identical with a transcendent Principle which is above both Being and soul. Halfwassen also raises the point that the Demiurge could be identical with the totality of the Forms; if these are the thoughts of God in Middle Platonism, then this would certainly be the case. This would make the Demiurge more than just the efficient cause but also the *causa finalis et causa exemplaris*. Aristotle in his *Metaphysics* 988a7ff asserts that Plato propounded two principles, the material principle (ἀνάγκη *Tim.* 47Eff.) and the Form-principle (νοῦς). This perception forms the basis of the dualistic attitudes of Middle Platonism exemplified by Plutarch (especially with the disappearance of the Forms as a principle in their own right).

It might be felt (and with a certain degree of reason, I might add) that not enough attention has been paid to the role of soul in world-creation and its interaction with the sensible realm. Such a topic would be extensive enough to form the basis for a monograph in its own right. Although the Demiurge does produce (or distills) soul and then inserts it into matter (assuming that one accepts the demiurgic myth), Plato never concerns himself excessively with the interaction of soul upon matter. It has also been less of concern amongst the thinkers assembled here, though Origen does consider the matter and Plutarch in the *De Iside et Osiride* appears to touch upon it. In my defense, I have focused upon the issues which most exercised the interest of “the heirs of Plato” to borrow Dillon’s phrase, which I examine here –issues such as the causality of the Demiurge and the functioning of secondary gods and divine mediators within their metaphysical systems. On the issue of soul, Plato was more concerned with the role it played upon Time and Eternity than upon matter, but this issue is largely ignored by the Middle Platonic period, though it did influence the Neoplatonic theory of soul.

The Old Academy

I have focused on the first to third centuries A.D. However, this does not mean to imply a lack of interest in the dialogue amongst the immediate heirs of Plato. The most important of these is his nephew, Speusippus, who attempted to deconstruct the myth of the Demiurge, when faced with Aristotelian criticism. A good deal of Speusippus’ doctrines can be gleaned from Aristotle’s criticism of them as well as

from fragments preserved by Iamblichus in *De communi mathematica scientia*. Speusippus regarded everything as the derivation of two principles: a One and an indefinite Dyad.¹³ He gets himself into considerable trouble, however, in his attempt to explain the existence of the variety of created being from only two principles.

To counter this, he claims that the One imposes form on the Dyad in order to produce Number, which then acting as a principle itself imposes its own form on matter to produce the next level of being and so on. Speusippus' situation was not helped by his decision to jettison or "modify" the theory of Forms.¹⁴ The great difficulty with this theory is defining of what things Forms exist. For Speusippus, Forms were only capable of manifesting themselves in the World-Soul, but not at any higher level.¹⁵ Essentially, as a result of his attempts to break down this mythological framework, all Speusippus is left with is a One which transcends the cosmos and a World-Soul, which takes over the role of the Demiurge to a certain extent.

Xenocrates, the head of the Academy after Speusippus, also merits investigation as his influence on mainstream Platonic thought was more considerable, although the situation here is somewhat different, as it is less the case that he advanced Platonic thought, but rather systematised it. He seems to have reacted in response to Speusippus' innovations and attempted to return to what he viewed as the "original" doctrine of Plato. Essentially, he too regarded the myth of the Demiurge as merely introduced "for the purposes of exposition" and regarded the World-Soul as the product of his two principles: a Monad and Dyad. He also modified the Theory of Forms, equating them with Number. Unfortunately, the loss of all his works limits our knowledge of his doctrines, although information can be gleaned from Aristotle (particularly his *Metaphysics*), as well as the *Metaphysics* of Theophrastus and the writings of Plutarch.

The need to demarcate more strongly the First Principle and the demiurgic one was influenced by the Aristotelian concept of an Intellect (Nous) as the First Principle, but characterised as a self-thinking unmoved mover, whose sole "inner life" consists of contemplating itself, which prevents it from intervening in the world. Speusippus, to be sure, resisted this. However, Xenocrates did adopt such a conception and he, unlike Speusippus, had much greater influence upon the course of

¹³ Dillon, J. (2003), 40.

¹⁴ Aristotle testifies to this at Met. M9, 1085b36ff. (=Fr. 35 Tarán). For a full discussion, see Dillon, J. (2003), 48.

¹⁵ Dillon, J. (2003), 49.

Middle Platonism. This is problematic, as the Demiurge is normally equated with Intellect. As Xenophon regarded the First Principle as an Intellect, this could be combined with the Aristotelian notion of a more “passive” intellect.¹⁶ Xenophon’s Intellect is still actively concerned with the world as he regards it as containing the form-numbers. Evidence for this can be adduced from the comments of Sicilian Alcimus: “Each one of the Forms is eternal, a though and moreover impervious to change”.¹⁷ This testimony can be taken as accurate; Alcimus was a contemporary and had no particular reason to distort the truth in this case. The only intellect which could think Forms in an unchanging and eternal manner is that of God. These Forms are then projected onto the World-Soul. One might cite in this context Plutarch’s *De Proc. An.* 1012E, according to which Xenocrates identified the “indivisible being” of *Tim.* 35A with the Dyad. The third form, Number, (the total of the form numbers) with the addition of mobility and motivity (arising from the mixing in of Sameness and Difference) results in Soul. This entity “has the ontological capacity of creating individuals, of separating them from one another, and of grouping them in genera and species, as well as the epistemological capacity of identifying them and distinguishing between them.”¹⁸

Evidently, this is a deconstruction of the myth of the Demiurge, with the Monad and Dyad producing Number and Soul, and with Soul carrying out the Demiurge’s activities with regard to the physical realm. By conceding (to some extent) to the Aristotelian conception of Intellect, Xenocrates can be viewed as beginning the trend in Middle Platonism to assign demiurgic functions to a sub-noetic level, a stance which led to the convergence in later Platonism of the First Principle with the Unmoved Mover of Arist. *Metaphysics* Λ.

The Myth of the Demiurge

From the outset, the Demiurge was the subject of debate; most notably whether the “myth” should be taken literally or not. The field was divided between the literalists (Aristotle, Plutarch) and the majority of Platonists, who regarded the demiurgic myth as something of an embarrassment. A cursory glance at modern secondary literature on the topic is sufficient to reveal that a parallel situation has

¹⁶ I mean *passive* here in the sense of not engaging in discursive thinking or becoming involved with the cosmos.

¹⁷ Ap. DL, III13. Cf. Dillon, J. (1986), 121.

¹⁸ Dillon, J (1986)

occurred amongst modern commentators. The case for a non-literal interpretation has been persuasively argued by Tarán. Most forcible is Plato's own statement that the account which he presents is no more than a "likely story". Tarán mentions that the manner of telling the myth is systematic, rather than chronological, although I find this to be a particularly weak argument.¹⁹ It seems to be rather like commenting that because a historian chooses to focus on events in relation to their significance rather than chronologically that these events could not have taken place.

The second argument advanced by Tarán appears more persuasive. He contends that the very structure of the myth is implausible. Plato chooses to dwell on the body of the universe, prior to dealing with the soul, even though soul is both ontologically superior and temporally prior. However, at *Tim.* 35 A, Plato declares that soul is intermediate between Forms and body. If soul is an intermediate, this would imply that it must have been brought into existence later than the two extremes it functions as an intermediate for.

For Tarán, it is legitimate for Plato to alter the presentation of the creation myth in a temporal sense, provided that it is not used to mask contradictions which would occur if he was forced to follow the chronological order. Otherwise, this would indicate that he never intended the myth of the Demiurge to be taken literally. *Timaeus* 31 B – 35 A indicates that soul and body are contemporaneous and that the use of the terms "prior" and "older" to refer to the relationship of soul to body is ontological and not chronological.²⁰ Against this could be advanced the view that Plato tends to be vague concerning the role of soul in administering the body – in the *Phaedo* (80A), where he discusses the rule of the body by the soul or *Laws* X, where it is the source of all physical motion, he avoids explaining the underlying mechanism.²¹ If soul is intermediate between the Forms and precosmic chaos, this would imply that the soul is the cause of the disorderly motion. If we take the myth literally, it implies that the Demiurge must also be a soul, according to Tarán (why not a Mind?), since it is prior to body and intermediate between the sensibles and the Forms. The Demiurge cannot also be "prior" to the precosmic chaos, since this would imply that he had created it.

¹⁹ Tarán, L. (1972), 373.

²⁰ Tarán, L. (1972), 375.

²¹ Dillon, J. (forthcoming) – "How does the Soul direct the Body after all?" *Traces of a Dispute on Mind-Body Relations in the Old Academy.*

Once again, the problem created here could be solved by drawing attention to Plato's view that the world, formed as it was, in his opinion, from a variety of triangles, does not constitute a "solid" in the true sense of the word, and so there should be no problem in terms of the relation of soul upon body, although this does not really resolve the situation regarding why the Demiurge suddenly decided to order the precosmic chaos. To some extent, this could be viewed as a fallacious argument - according to Tarán's view, the contradictions are deliberately placed there by Plato, not because he found it difficult to reveal the father and maker of the universe to all men, but because he did not wish the concept of a temporal creation on the part of his mythical Demiurge to be taken literally. Tarán identifies a further problem with the view that the Demiurge generated the self-motion of soul (which seems to be contradictory, since souls are by their very nature self-moving. This leads to the problem of whether the Demiurge started the self-motion of the World-Soul or else attached it to the body of the cosmos, produced subsequently, and that after this insertion the soul commenced its self-motion. Tarán rejects Hackforth's argument that the mythology of *Timaeus* 27D5 -28C3 was deliberately arranged in order to deceive the reader; for Tarán, it is rather the case that Plato chose the form of a myth, rather than that of a causal analysis.

Tarán also points out that Plato does not openly claim in the *Timaeus* that soul is the cause of all motion (as self-motion) so there is no attempt to contradict the reader in Plato's assertion of precosmic chaos; for Tarán, this precosmic chaos exemplifies the "necessary" cause, just as the Demiurge represents the intelligent cause²²; further evidence that the myth should not be taken literally. Tarán bolsters his case by pointing to two indications that the *Timaeus* should be viewed as a myth; firstly Plato has already stated that no account of the material world can ever be regarded as unchanging truth, and secondly his adoption of the form of a cosmology.²³ This locates Plato's myth of the Demiurge within the context of evolutionary cosmologies on the one hand and the mechanistic and haphazard explanation of the atomists. Plato, the argument goes, is attempting to propound the image of rational design; the precosmic chaos of the Receptacle is simply an account of what the universe would be like without the rational order represented by the Demiurge. Solmsen suggests that Plato himself warns us not to take the myth literally

²² Tarán, L. (1972), 379.

²³ Tarán, L. (1972), 396.

when he writes “τὸν εἰκότα μῦθον ἀποδεχομένους πρέπει τούτου μηδὲν ἔτι πέρα ζητεῖν” (29D2-3).²⁴

Aristotle, though he interprets the myth literally, as referring to an actual creation in time, does not take the figure of the Demiurge seriously. Most notably in this regard, one may cite *De Caelo* I.10, 279b 17 -31, where Aristotle, criticising Plato’s position that the universe can be both “generated” and everlasting, completely ignores the Demiurge. Furthermore, Plato does not use any of the techniques which he employs in other works to indicate an expository nature, according to Vlastos. The myth itself occurs within the framework of another myth (the war between Athens and Atlantis), so one is already preconditioned to approach the myth of the Demiurge in an allegorical context.

Arguments in favour of a literal interpretation have been staunchly advanced by Vallejo. Against Tarán’s position that soul must be the cause of motion in the precosmic chaos, he alludes to the role played by heterogeneity.²⁵ In the Receptacle, like is attracted to like and this accounts for precosmic motion (in addition to the winnowing motion of the Receptacle). Plato does not actually state in the *Timaeus* that either soul or demiurgic activity is the ultimate cause of motion and the explanation in terms of physical heterogeneity here seems to downplay any difficulty concerning soul’s role in the motion of the universe; if it were the ἀρχή of motion, it would have to be coeval with the universe.

Against the argument that a literal creation could not have taken place on account of the immutability of God is to be found in *Timaeus*’ statement at 42E 5-6 “ἔμενεν ἐν τῷ ἑαυτοῦ κατὰ τρόπον ἦθει” – Plato is able to draw a distinction between a change in God’s actions and an alteration to his μορφή.

To a certain extent, the prejudice against the myth (in modern scholarship) has resulted from a Hegelian view that myth is used to convey thought that is still underdeveloped. Since such a charge could hardly be leveled at Plato, this has led to the assumption that he could surely not have expected or even wished to be taken literally. For Hegel, only once the conception was fully formed could it be stated without the support of a mythical framework.²⁶ Evidently, a similar problem

²⁴ Tarán, L. (1972), 400, n. 41.

²⁵ Reale, G. (1997), 151 ff.

²⁶ Reale, G. (1997), 151.

presented itself to Plato's first interpreters; for them, quite frankly, the Demiurge was an embarrassment.

Interpretations of the Timaeus

How should the *Timaeus* be interpreted? There are other issues at stake, rather than merely the question of whether the myth should be taken literally. The notion of a temporal creation is problematic from within the Greek philosophical tradition. The idea that God would suddenly create at a point in time raises the question of what he has been doing previously. It seems that the myth can be deconstructed to produce a number of important philosophical insights: 1) The created realm is dependant upon a higher one, which it instantiates in a limited and approximate way. 2) The higher realm contains "the beautiful model" according to which the world has been ordered. 3) The world is not perfect, not as the result of any malevolent supernatural or divine being, but because an element of compromise is needed in the instantiation of the Forms in the material realm. 4) The sensible cosmos can never achieve a state of perfection. It does not even exist, but is always in a state of "coming-to-be". The changes and vicissitudes are caused by the errant cause (Necessity), which has to be externally ordered by Reason.

How, then, can the Demiurge be interpreted? Clearly, if there is no temporal creation, then there can never have been a stage when the Demiurge engaged in the activity envisaged in the *Timaeus*. The standard interpretation has been to assert that Plato is merely presenting an image of what the cosmos would be like if devoid of the influence of Reason. What is important is that it is not a mere mechanistic principle, and is Plato's reaction to earlier philosophers, whom he had criticised for not explaining the causality of the physical processes which they posited to explain world-generation (*Phaedo* 96A ff.). The Demiurge can then be described (in Aristotelian terms) as the efficient cause. He is envisaged as the artificer of the World-Soul, but since this stage hardly took place and the functions which would be left for the Demiurge to engage in, if the creational process is discounted, are those of the World-Soul, one can envisage a situation where Plato's metaphysics could in fact have no requirement for a Demiurge and the task of functioning as a conduit between the suprasensible and material realms is effectively carried out by the World-Soul. In the *Phaedrus*, the soul is the source of all motion and in Book X of the *Laws*, regulation of the cosmos is carried out by the rational World-Soul, therefore this

would appear to be a logical interpretation (if not *the* logical interpretation) of the *Timaeus* myth. The Demiurge is no more than the “Cause of the Mixture” (*Philebus* 23Dff.)

The dramatic setting of the dialogue the day after the *Republic*, which dealt with the search for justice in the city and individual soul and which is summarised in the opening of the *Timaeus* (17A-20C) helps to reinforce the notion that the dialogue deals with the continued regulation and governance of the cosmos, rather than once-off creation. Even some of those responding to both the *Timaeus* and the Biblical account of creation (such as Philo and Origen) still retain this element of continual world-generation. The Gnostics evidently adopt the opposite approach, though in part this is because they are profoundly influenced by the actual mythology of the *Timaeus*, and have less reason to deconstruct it. (It suits their beliefs better, if regarded as literal).

Another point is what in the *Timaeus*, if anything, suggests a hierarchy of levels of being? What is primarily suggested is two worlds, or metaphysical realms, that of being and of becoming. A hierarchy amongst suprasensible entities is suggested by the distinction between the Demiurge and the Young gods; he is immortal, while they are merely everlasting at his pleasure. What he produces will not be dissolved, unlike the Young Gods, who produce the mortal component of man. This further suggests world-generation is the result of collaboration between entities at various ontological levels, with very strictly delineated roles, an interpretation drawn upon by Gnosticism, but also by the Philonic Logos-Cutter. The distinction in the quality of the production of the Demiurge and the Young Gods stresses the hierarchy, as well as the ambivalent nature of man as containing elements with two ontological ranks (soul and body). Though Plato does not envisage it in these terms, it can be seen as the ancestor of the belief in a higher divine element in Man, which has become entrapped in matter.

The nature of the “beautiful model” raises this issue also; the gaze of the Demiurge is on the Eternal (29A), but he himself does not appear to produce this model, leading to the ambiguity concerning his relationship to the Forms. Such ambiguity provided fertile ground for Middle Platonic speculations regarding God and the Forms. Most important in this regard is the problem of whether, if the Demiurge is good, he can be identified with the Form of the Good. As he is Intellect, and the Forms are contemplated by Intellect, this cannot be the case. The Middle

Platonic response to regard the Forms as the contents of the divine Mind is the most economical clarification of their relationship (as it reduces the number of Principles posited). Numenius also attempts to resolve this situation by effectively expanding the suprasensible realm, explaining the Demiurge's ancestry.

Legacy of the *Timaeus*

Perhaps surprisingly, despite the heated debate amongst Platonists in general concerning the status of the demiurgic myth, this does not seem to have been an issue with the philosophers and traditions investigated here from the first to third centuries A.D. Plutarch, for example, was prepared to accept that a literal interpretation had been intended by Plato, a position he adopts principally for his own purposes. After all, he viewed the myths of other cultures as revealing the truths of Greek philosophy; an interest which prompted his *De Iside et Osiride*. Later figures such as Philo and Origen were less concerned with exposing the Demiurge as a myth than with drawing upon the imagery it presented as a means for expounding Biblical truth and reconciling it with Greek philosophy (or Greek philosophy with it, depending upon one's position). Gnosticism and Hermetism both regarded the Demiurge as a real figure and, given what we know of both these traditions, were unlikely to be perplexed by the mythological context in which he is introduced.

The same could be said for Numenius, for whom the Demiurge forms an important component of his metaphysics. This leaves Maximus of Tyre, who seems to have seen no pressing need to investigate the matter in what was intended as an introductory series of lectures to Plato. If the status of the demiurgic myth could be shelved by Plato's less immediate interpreters, the same did not apply for the status of the Demiurge himself. Though Jonas has warned against the "conveyor-belt" approach of Gnosticism, this could be viewed as one of continual ontological decline (although to a certain degree such a view is rather naïve and simplistic –Philo after all did raise the status of the Creator by making him an architect, rather than a craftsman).

I have identified the following main areas where the influence of the Demiurge of the *Timaeus* may be most strongly discerned:

- 1) the relation of the Demiurge to the First Principle,
- 2) the actual causality of the Demiurge and his interaction with matter,
- 3) the ontological status of the Forms,

4) the question of the origin of evil and

5) other factors which limit the influence of the Demiurge (such as Providence, Necessity or other entities).

However, it is not always practical to deal with each of these aspects in the precise order outlined above.

Indeed, this schema is perhaps somewhat misleading since it implies a degree of systematisation in theorising about the Demiurge, which could not be said to be present in each of the instances examined. Most notable in this regard are the Gnostic and Hermetic traditions, inclusion of which requires some justification, since it would seem to stray beyond the boundaries of philosophy or classical philology into the realm of heresiology or comparative religion. However, the increase of our knowledge of Gnosticism and Hermetism has been one of the most exciting twentieth century developments in this area. While the Nag Hammadi Library was discovered in 1945, it was only as recently as 1977 that publication commenced. Even the great works of Festugière (1950) and Jonas (1958 and 1963) were unable to wholly take into account the Nag Hammadi corpus, and it has fallen to a new generation of Gnostic scholars such as Petrément to consider the full impact of these works. Indeed, academic prejudice and a quasi-religious disdain for heretical texts considerably undermined research into this area and the only thoroughly “modern” studies of Gnosticism with implications for Platonism have been Petrément’s *A Separate God* (1991) and the 1998 study edited by Van den Broek and Hanegraaf: *Gnosis and Hermetism: From Antiquity Until Modern Times*.

The same phenomenon can be observed with *Corpus Hermeticum*, which dropped out of the ambit of classical scholarship after Casaubon discovered that it was not as old as it claimed to be. This changed when a Coptic version found at Nag Hammadi forced a reappraisal. To a certain extent, justifying the Gnostic and Hermetic traditions as a serious subject of academic study would appear to be a moot point after John Dillon’s *The Middle Platonists* (1977), which rehabilitated the “Platonic Underworld”, the intellectual milieu of several Gnostic thinkers, as a legitimate subject for research. I have concentrated almost exclusively on Valentinus in my survey of Gnosticism, since he represents the Gnostic branch with the greatest concentration of Platonic elements.

A further contribution of the *Timaeus* has been to our conceptualization of time. Plato regards time as coming into being with the universe, although since he

dismissed precosmic events, this indicates that he never envisaged a period when creation did not exist (although evidently Plato never claims that the Demiurge introduced temporal succession to the world). Time for Plato refers to the celestial motions by which we can measure time. I introduce this point here because it raises the question of why the Demiurge should choose to create at a particular point. As Plato says of the Demiurge: “καὶ ὁ μὲν δὴ ἅπαντα ταῦτα διατάξας ἔμενε ἐν τῷ ἑαυτοῦ κατὰ τρόπον ἦθει” (*Timaeus* 41A ff). As Proclus observed, for the Demiurge to always maintain a constant state in relation to the world, He must always create.

This is precisely the position adopted by subsequent philosophers; exemplified equally by Philo and Origen’s views concerning continual temporal creation and the location of the Ideal realm of the Forms within the Son-Logos, as well as Plutarch’s assertion that the Demiurge is continually engaged in geometry. In the Gnostic and Hermetic traditions, the situation is reversed; God is not involved in continual demiurgic activity, rather creation is spawned by the Demiurge (who is not immutable and so there is no metaphysical reason why he cannot create on an *ad hoc* basis) and Man, who represents the pinnacle of creation, is a once-off production, generated inadvertently as the result of a flaw within the Godhead itself. Indeed, there the divine is continually attempting to undo creation, rather than to further it. Numenius falls in between both extremes – the splitting of the Second and Third gods by matter seems to be a non-recurrent event, but the contemplation of the Intelligibles by the First God, followed by a similar contemplation on the part of the Second God, which appears to fulfill some sort of demiurgic function, seems to be a continuous event.

Timaeus 41A3 ff could be viewed as responsible for these divergent approaches regarding the continuity of the Demiurge’s activity. However, Proclus’ comment reveals more about subsequent interpretation than about Plato’s own viewpoint. Although at *Republic* 381 B-C, God is unchangeable, this refers to nature not activity. God could create (or not) as seems good to Him, provided that this does not change his nature as God. However, this would not solve the problem of why God would allow precosmic chaos to exist before rectifying the situation (since it implies a change in God’s ἦθος). (Again, this problem could be rectified by simply viewing the demiurgic myth as expository).

For those living within the Judaeo-Christian tradition, it seems perfectly possible for an omnipotent deity to create whenever He wishes. One might expect such a position to be advanced by Philo and Origen, although it appears that their training in Greek philosophy was too extensive for this to be the case. Plato's Demiurge, in any case, was a different type of entity. As soul, he was subordinate to the Forms. At 27E3-4, the Demiurge's role is that of Nous, contained only in soul 30B3 "νοῦν δ' ἄν χωρὶς ψυχῆς ἀδύνατον παραγενέσθαι τῷ." ²⁷ At *Euthyphro* 10A -11A, we are informed that "the holy is loved by the gods because it is holy, it is not holy because it is loved by the gods". Plato mentions θεῖαι ἀνάγκαι at *Laws* 818A7, which bind the gods. With the "Middle Platonic" period and the doctrine (thought by some, but probably incorrectly, to have been first advanced by Philo of Alexandria) of the Forms as the thoughts of God, we have the emergence of a Demiurge free to create his own values, although this position is eroded in Gnosticism and Hermetism, with the development of a Demiurgic figure in opposition to or ignorant of, the supreme principle.

Methodology

Gretchen Reydams-Schil's 1999 work *Demiurge and Providence* presents a similar investigation to mine. However, she is primarily concerned with the Stoic contribution to the Platonist debate regarding the reading of the *Timaeus*, while I have focused more on the development of the concept of the Demiurge as a divine mediator. This has led to very little overlap: Philo of Alexandria and Plutarch are the only two thinkers considered by both studies. A further investigation on the influence of the *Timaeus* upon Philo after Runia's magisterial monograph might seem to require a greater degree of justification. However, an analysis of the development of the demiurgic concept in Middle Platonism could not be said to be complete without an analysis of the originality (or lack thereof) of Philo's contribution. This is more evidently the case in a study of demiurgy in the Christian, Gnostic and Hermetic traditions, since Philo can to a certain extent be viewed as a link between these "Biblical" or "pseudo-Biblical" traditions and mainstream Greek philosophy.

In tracing the development of this concept, I must stress that perceived philosophical pedigree has not been a criterion for investigation. This explains the perhaps surprising inclusion of Maximus of Tyre. Although he deals with the topic in

²⁷ Tarán, L. (1972), 396.

a superficial manner, he does provide good evidence for the understanding of “demiurgy” in Middle Platonism. This also explains the inclusion of Plutarch or Philo. The situation regarding Origen has been investigated, but excluded from the current thesis for formal reasons, although I hope to return to him on a future occasion. The *Chaldaean Oracles*, though replete with a satisfying complex system of divine mediators, such as Teletarchs, Connectors and Iynges, have not been included, precisely because, although figures such as Porphyry or Damascius regarded them as carrying the same authority as Plato’s *Timaeus*, their significance is felt to a greater extent on these later Neoplatonists than upon the period in question, contrasting with the situation regarding Gnosticism.

It suffices to note some points of interest regarding the Chaldean Oracles. Firstly, the Chaldean supreme god resembles the Numenian First God in so far as he is a self-contemplating intellect. Secondly, while the tortuous ontological scheme parallels the same phenomenon in Gnosticism, these divine mediators are evocative of the Platonic world of the Forms. For example, the Iynges resemble the thoughts of God. Despite the points of Middle Platonic re-evaluation of Plato’s metaphysics illustrated by the Chaldean Oracles, it has seemed preferable to focus rather on the Gnostic and Hermetic traditions.

In brief, the combination of thinkers analysed here represents the various traditions which attempted to make the *Timaeus* or the concepts expressed therein their own. Not only can one observe an attempt in subsequent thinkers to explain or to resolve the philosophical issues raised by the dialogue, which can occasionally sit uncomfortably with the desire to reconcile it with a particular tradition or allegiance, one also observes the emergence of certain trends throughout its progression. The separation of the demiurgic function from the role of the highest principle, beginning with Numenius (although it can be traced right back to the “Young Gods” of the *Timaeus*), leads to the emergence of an increasingly elaborate chain of entities insulating the highest principle from the Demiurge. In a sense, both the Christian tradition and Platonism bring this development to an end. For Christianity, multiple creators could easily be accommodated by the framework of the Trinity, while the Neoplatonic notion of automatic emanation by the One effectively broke away from the concept of the Demiurge altogether.

Chapter 2: Plutarch and the Demiurge of Egyptian Mythology

Introduction

Even if Plutarch cannot be regarded as a significant original philosopher, he merits consideration for the evidence he provides on the development of Middle Platonism.²⁸ Plutarch's philosophical œuvre is essentially Platonic, even if influenced by Peripateticism and by (a reaction against) Stoicism. Unfortunately for our purposes, No. 66 in the *Catalogue of Lamprias* Περὶ τοῦ γεγονέναι κατὰ Πλάτωνα τοῦ κόσμου has not survived. This leaves *De anima procreatione in Timaeo*, and *Quaestiones Platonicae* as the only extant exegetical works of Plutarch. In his surviving corpus, Plutarch quotes or refers to Plato in 650 passages, most frequently the *Timaeus*. In *Platonicae Quaestiones*, Questions II, IV, VII and VIII deal with sections of the *Timaeus*, with the interpretations of questions II and IV being expanded in *De animae procreatione*.²⁹ I have considered *De Iside* before turning to other writings, which might be considered more technical, because it is portrayed by Plutarch as a *demiurgic* myth, and in this sense is related to the *Timaeus* or the Valentinian myth of Sophia.

Another factor was a desire to be able to draw a comparison more clearly with Philo, who also has to deal with a creative religious myth (that of the *Pentateuch*). There is, however, an important distinction between both cases. In recounting the myth of Isis and Osiris, the philosophical doctrines are expounded, at times, in a confusing manner, as various details of the myth have to be included. Yet Plutarch was under no compulsion to use this myth in order to expound philosophy; he does so, because it evidently interests him, and he presumably viewed it as containing philosophical truth (to some degree), and therefore the *De Iside* cannot be simply dismissed. In the case of Philo, as a pious Jew, he sought to explain the *Pentateuch* in philosophical language, though he perceived it as embodying truth and could not simply ignore it, as Plutarch could with the Isis myth.

A final motivation for giving the *De Iside* a more prominent position than the *De An. Proc.* is that it deals with First Principles, which are not really the concern of the *De An. Proc.* which rather considers the existence of a pre-existent disorderly soul. There no real distinction appears to be drawn between First Principle and

²⁸ Dillon, J. M. (1977), 185.

²⁹ Hershbell, J. P. C. (1992), 235.

Demiurge. As so many of Plutarch's technical philosophical works have perished, one is justified in seeking out evidence for his cosmological theories where one can, even if, as in this case, it is necessary to analyse mythical narrative to do it.

It is important to remember that Plutarch as an exegete works on the assumption that Plato's works express parts of the same system (as opposed to a "developmental" theory) and that passages and specific phraseology in Plato should be taken literally.³⁰ Therefore, his attempts to manipulate the text, an allegation made by Cherniss³¹, can also be regarded as rendering certain passages consistent with what Plato states elsewhere. Plutarch takes the demiurgic myth literally, as opposed to attempts by others within Platonism (such as Xenocrates) to deconstruct the myth to its constituent activities. Certain aspects of the myth are particularly important, especially the concept that the Demiurge is not in any way responsible for evil. Plutarch draws distinctions between the Demiurge and the First Principle in the *De Iside*, where immanent Osiris can be seen as approximating a Logos-type figure (ironic in terms of Plutarch's opposition to the Stoics). In the history of the demiurgic concept, Plutarch represents (unlike the other philosophers) less an attempt to develop it than to resolve some of the problems bequeathed by Plato and to extend its application.

Plutarch's Religious Development

Plutarch is typical of the Middle Platonist movement, according to which the τέλος of life is assimilation to God, not to nature. This is the justification for Plutarch's attempts to understand the essence of God and becomes apparent from *De sera* 550Dff:

“Consider first that God, as Plato says (*Theaet.* 176E 9), offers himself to all as a pattern of every excellence, thus rendering human virtue, which is in some sense an assimilation to himself, accessible to all who can “follow God”. Indeed, this was the origin of the change whereby universal nature, disordered before, became a “cosmos”: it came to resemble after a fashion and to participate in the form and excellence of God. The same philosopher says further that Nature kindled vision in us so that the soul beholding the heavenly motions and wondering at the sight, should grow to accept and cherish all that moves in stateliness and order and thus came to hate discordant and errant passions and to shun the aimless and haphazard as the source of all vice and jarring error, for man is fitted to derive from god no greater blessing than to

³⁰ Opsomer, J. (2004), 138.

³¹ Cherniss, H (1976), *Plutarch's Moralia XIII, Part 1, 999C – 1032F*, 137-8.

become settled in virtue through copying and aspiring to the beauty and the goodness that are his.” (trans. De Lacy & Einarson)

Plutarch's later works were viewed by nineteenth century German academics as a return to his youthful scepticism.³² Plutarch's religious ideas are also characterised by his reaction against Stoicism, by his dualism and by his Pythagorean leanings. His Neopythagoreanism is apparent from *De esu carnium* where he proposes the doctrine that animals contain reincarnated human souls as a deterrent against eating flesh. In *De Sollertia Animalium*, his father, Autobulus, speaks in defence of Pythagoreanism, and from *Quaestiones Conviviales* 1.2 (615D-619D), concerning a family dispute, it appears that Plutarch was ideologically closer to his father than to his brothers. Ziegler proposed that his Pythagorean sympathies were inherited from his father, while Dillon argues that he was influenced by a Pythagoreanised Platonism imported by his teacher, Ammonius, from Alexandria. *De E apud Delphos* reveals Plutarch's early interest in Pythagorean number theory.

For Dillon, Plutarch is “orthodox”, as exhibited by Ammonius' speech (*De E* 391 E -394C), *De Iside and Osiris*, *De Genio Socratis*, whereby Plutarch's view that the τέλος of life was assimilation to God can be viewed as the culmination of Middle Platonic thought, post-Eudorus.

Brenk points out that certain scholars (such as Dörrie) viewed Plutarch's doctrines as a departure from their own conception of *Schulplatonismus*- specifically the idea that God created the soul as part of himself and out of himself (*Quaestiones Platonicae* 1009 b-c), which vitiates the role of three principles (God, Forms, Matter), though the *Dreiprinzipienlehre* is more a popular doxographical doctrine than a litmus test of Platonic orthodoxy.³³ Dörrie further objects to Plutarch's positing of God as *paradeigma* (*De Sera* 550d), to his placing of God among the Intelligibles (*Q. P.* 1002b) and the posthumous ascent of the soul, which separates the psyche and the nous (*De facie* 944E).

In reaction to Dörrie's view, *De Sera* 550d (quoted above) only serves to strengthen Dillon's position, since it emphasises the τέλος as assimilation to God. Furthermore, God is the *paradeigma* in Plato's *Theaetetus* 176 E of πάντα καλά. At *Rep.* X 613a-b, human *arete* is described as assimilation (ἑξομοίωσις) to God. Plutarch also avoids use of the terms τὸ καλὸν and τὸ ἀγαθόν, which would

³² Brenk, F. H. (1987), 256.

³³ Brenk, F. H. (1987), 258.

explicitly locate Plato's main Forms in God - instead he prefers to use plurals. Plutarch also identifies God with the Form of the Good and Beautiful (*De facie* 944E), an identification which emerges very early on in Platonism. In fact, on a literal level, Plutarch maintained the distinction between the Forms, νοῦς and the Demiurge and resisted the prevailing intellectual trend to unite these elements. Admittedly, at certain times, Plutarch fuses God and the Forms.³⁴ In this sense, it seems that Plutarch may be closer to the true Platonic interpretation than many other “orthodox” Platonists.

The Demiurge and the Forms

As R. M. Jones commented “Plutarch usually treats the Forms and God as independent entities and never calls the Forms the thoughts of God.”³⁵ Jones points out that this misinterpretation of Plato's thought already existed by the time of the *Didaskolikos* of Alcinous³⁶:

“The Idea, considered with reference to God, is his thought with reference to us, the first intelligible, with reference to matter, the measure; with reference to the sensible world, the pattern; with reference to itself, essence. If God is reason (νοῦς) or an intellectual being (νοέρον), he has thoughts and these are eternal and unchanging”. (Jones' translation).

However, the notion can certainly be found in Philo of Alexandria, although he was probably not the inventor, but may have borrowed the concept from Eudorus of Alexandria, and the original idea may go back to Plato's pupils, in particular Xenocrates. It seems that this interpretation may have crept into Platonic thought under the influence of the Aristotelian concept that God only engages in thought and thinks both himself and the νοήτων.

The same can also be posited for one of Plutarch's other great “heresies”, his positing of temporal creation. Some scholars, such as Whittaker, have suggested that Plato in fact believed in a literal creation of the world in the *Timaeus*, but that, influenced by Aristotle's criticisms, Platonists such as Xenocrates reinterpreted the more embarrassing passages in favour of atemporal creation.³⁷ In this case it would seem that Plutarch is closer to Plato's original thought, although he is frequently criticised for attempting to distort Plato's words in order to enlist the philosopher's support for his own ideas.

³⁴ Jones, R. M. (1926), 325. This occurs in *Quaestiones Platonicae* and *De Iside and Osiride*.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid. 322.

³⁷ Whittaker, J. (1969).

In *De facie*, it is apparent that the Demiurge and the Forms are not identical. The Forms are the *paradeigmata* which he imitates (1023d). At 1026 E-F, Plutarch adapts the *Politikos* myth, postulating at certain periods the world is rolled backward by the World-Soul and that by contemplating the intelligible principles reapprehends them. The Intelligibles are therefore not just abstract concepts, but the principles which underpin visible reality.

Plutarch against the Stoics

Something of Plutarch's views on demiurgic causality can be gleaned from his writings against the Stoics, where his dualistic tendencies may be observed coming into conflict with the monistic causality of the Stoics. Unfortunately, in this regard, six out of the nine polemics against the Stoics mentioned by the Lamprias Catalogue are no longer extant: *Against Chrysippus on Justice*, *Against the Stoics on Common Experience*, *Selections and refutations of Stoics and Epicureans*, *Against Chrysippus on the First Consequent*, and *Against the Stoics, on What is in our Control*. This leaves just *On Stoic Self-Contradictions*, *Against the Stoics on Common Conceptions* and a *σύνοψις* of *That the Stoics talk more paradoxically than the Poets*.

Evidently, these texts must be read in terms of Plutarch's reaction against Stoicism. As Hershbell notes, since the nineteenth century, Plutarch's interaction with the Stoics has been read in three different ways: as a determined opponent, as an eclectic borrowing from both the Stoa and the Academy, or as a Stoic despite his better judgement.³⁸ In *De Stoicorum Repugnantiis*, Plutarch sets out to undermine Stoic thinkers, particularly Chrysippus, by pointing out gross inconsistencies in their philosophy, and this can shed some light on Plutarch's own views concerning demiurgic causality.

At ch. 30 Plutarch attacks Chrysippus on the “promoted indifferents” which are beneath virtue to concern itself with. However, these “promoted indifferents” are shown not to be good, since they can be put to evil use. Yet, as Plutarch shows, the Stoic god is powerless. Virtue alone is beneficial, though it is bestowed not by god, but is the object of free choice. This means that god cannot benefit man in the only matter that counts (1048D). Chrysippus also argues for the Platonic notion of the divine choice of the best (Ch. 31), but then, as Plutarch points out, this divine choice from the Stoic point of view is not particularly beneficial, since they view humanity

³⁸ Hershbell, J. P. (1992), 3342.

as in a wretched and miserable state. Plutarch also attacks the Chrysippean notion that god is cruel and responsible in some way for the sufferings of man.

“ἡμεῖς νεογνῶν καὶ τυφλῶν ὄντων τῶν σκυλιακίων ὑφαιροῦμεν τὰ πολλὰ φειδόμενοι τῆς κυνός· ὁ δὲ Ζεὺς οὐ μόνον ἕσασ καὶ περιιδῶν ἐν ἡλικίᾳ γενομένος ἀλλὰ καὶ φύσας αὐτὸς καὶ αὐξήσας ἀποτυμπανίζει φθορᾶς καὶ ὀλέθρου μηχανώμενος προφάσεις δέον αἰτίας καὶ ἀρχὰς γενέσεως μὴ παρασχεῖν.”

“We out of consideration for the bitch make away with the majority of her puppies when they are newly born and blind, but Zeus after he has not merely from inadvertence let men grow up, but has himself created then and caused them to grow then tortures them to death, contriving pretexts for their ruin and destruction whereas he ought to have disallowed the causes and origins of their coming to be.”

Plutarch is opposed to the view that god can be responsible for evil and at 1049F attacks Chrysippus' stance on this matter: “Τὸ ῥάστον εἶπας, αἰτίασασθαι θεός” -“You’ve made the easiest plea, to blame the gods”.

Plutarch attacks the notion that the Demiurge could be responsible for evil, in contrast to the Chrysippean notion that evils are dispersed according to the will of Zeus, either for the purpose of punishment, or in the course of other arrangements, as is the case in cities (*De Stoic. Rep.* 1051). In the same passage, he attacks Chrysippus' insensitivity for comparing the evil things which happen to the virtuous man to a few husks which get lost in a well-run household. Plutarch here favours a more inclusive form of divine Providence. Chrysippus' reasoning here is based on the role of Necessity in the sensible world. Even Plato (*Timaeus* 47E5 - 48A2) and the author of *De Placitis* at 885A recognise the limits placed on the Demiurge by Necessity. However, for Plutarch, if Necessity controls events to such a large degree, than many events lie beyond the control of the Demiurge and the world is not completely ordered in conformity with his reason. This would absolve him from guilt for the existence of evil in the world, although, as Plutarch illustrates, Chrysippus vitiates this by claiming that even vice is the creation of the Demiurge “for nothing, even the slightest, can come into being other than with the assent of universal nature and its reason”.³⁹

At *De Stoic. Rep.* 1050E, Plutarch attacks this statement and responds with a spirited defence of the Demiurge:

³⁹ *De Stoic. Repugn.* 1050E.

“ἡ μὲν γὰρ κακία πάντως ἀνέγκλητός ἐστι κατὰ τὸν τοῦ Χρυσίππου λόγον· ὁ δὲ Ζεὺς ἐγκλητέος εἴτ' ἄχρηστον οὔσαν τὴν κακίαν πεποίηκεν εἴτε ποιήσας οὐκ ἀχρήστως κολάζει”.(1051A)

“For while vice according to the reasoning of Chrysippus is entirely free from blame, Zeus must be blamed whether he has created vice which is without use or having created it not without use chastises it.”

Of course, Plutarch's comments concerning Chrysippus' doctrines and his quotes are sometimes distorted to further his case. Nevertheless, by reading his anti-Stoic polemics one can gain a negative view of Plutarch's metaphysics – a definition of his views on demiurgic causality, defined in terms of what it is not. The passage quoted above helps to justify Plutarch's own dualistic tendencies, which necessarily limit the freedom of operation of his Demiurge. Nor does Plutarch opt for the Christian response to the existence of evil – that while God is good, evil exists because of the free will of mankind. Plutarch at *De Stoic. Rep.* 1051 D notes that declaring that the Demiurge is responsible for the appointment of evil men to positions of power is tantamount to accusing a king for having appointed evil officials and turning a blind eye to the abuse of his virtuous subjects. Given this context it seems apparent therefore that a dualistic philosophy was the obvious means for Plutarch to extract himself from the difficulty created by the problem of evil.

Certain aspects of the problem of evil are touched upon in *De Communibus Notitiis adversus Stoicos*. But first use of this text requires a brief justification. Its Plutarchean pedigree has been challenged, but the arguments stated by Weissenberger⁴⁰ were successfully refuted by Kolfhaus⁴¹ and so it is a legitimate source for Plutarch's views. In any case, many of the arguments overlap with those used in *De Stoicorum Repugnantis*.

At 1065E – 1066A, Plutarch again levels at the Stoics the charge of making the Demiurge responsible for evil:

“ὁ δὲ πατρῶος καὶ ὑπατος καὶ θεμίστιος Ζεὺς καὶ ἀριστοτέχας, κατὰ Πίνδαρον, οὐ δράμα δήπου μέγα καὶ ποικίλον καὶ πολυπαθὲς δημιουργῶν τὸν κόσμον ἀλλὰ θεῶν καὶ ἀνθρώπων ἀστὺ κοινόν συννομησομένων μετὰ δίκης καὶ ἀρετῆς ὁμολογουμένως καὶ μακαρίως, τί πρὸς τὸ κάλλιστον τοῦτο καὶ σεμνότατον τέλος ἔδειτο ληστῶν καὶ ἀνδροφόνων καὶ πατροκτόνων καὶ τυράννων; οὐ γὰρ ἠδὲ τῷ θεῷ καὶ κομψὸν ἢ κακία γέγονεν ἐπεισόδιον, οὐδὲ δ' εὐτραπελίαν ἢ ἀδικία καὶ γέλωτα καὶ βωμολοχίαν προστέτριπται τοῖς πράγμασιν, ὑφ' ὧν οὐδ' ὄναρ ἰδεῖν ἔστι τῆς ὑμνουμένης ὁμολογίας”.

⁴⁰ Weissenberger, *Die Sprache Plutarchs* ii pp. 51-53.

⁴¹ Kolfhaus, *Plutarchi De. Comm. Not.*

“But Zeus the paternal and supreme and righteous and, as Pindar calls him, **the Demiurge**, fashioned the universe not, I take it, as a grand, intricate and sensational drama, but as a town common to gods and men who should live lawful partners in right and virtue concordantly and blissfully and for the attainment of this most fair and most majestic goal what need had he of pirates and murderers and parricides and tyrants? For it is not as a clever interlude pleasant to the divinity that vice has come to be nor is it by way of drollery and jest and ribaldry that human affairs have been sullied by injustice, vice and injustice making it impossible to see even a phantom of the concord they harp upon.”.

Here again, Plutarch views the Demiurge as essentially good, having created the world with the best aim in mind. He even goes further, regarding vice as unessential to the Demiurge’s plan (in contrast to the Stoics’ as they are presented in *De Stoic. Rep.*, who regard vice as necessary for the existence of evil):

“οὐ γὰρ ἢ γε ὕλη τὸ κακὸν ἐξ ἑαυτῆς παρέσχηκεν”.

“For matter has not of itself brought forth what is evil” (1076C)

Plutarch then goes on to argue here that matter is ἄποιος (“without quality”) – its motions coming directly from the moving principle. This is not very far from the view of matter outlined in Plato’s *Timaeus*, but it is a long way from the attempts to insulate God from matter exhibited by later thinkers such as Philo. However at 1085B –C he does touch on the relationship of this Demiurge to matter. Plutarch’s problem here is with the Stoic concept of the Demiurge, as rationality permeating matter.

For Plutarch, the Demiurge, as a principle, should be pure (καθαρόν) and incomposite (ἀσύνθετον), precisely what matter is, since it is without quality, but according to Plutarch’s reading of the Stoic position, the Demiurge’s interaction with matter would mean that he is only a participant in a principle, not a principle himself (as he is for Plutarch). At 1085C Plutarch further elaborates his grievance against the Stoic position – since matter and rationality are both separate, then the Demiurge is not pure Reason, but only has it on deposit as a kind of trustee (ταμίης), leaving him as neither λόγος or ὕλη, not a principle, but a participant in two opposed principles, and hence a compound. Plutarch here presents a serious criticism of the Stoic position, and though he is engaged in dialectic, the passage can be viewed as evidence of the Platonic attempt to insulate the Demiurge from matter, but simultaneously explain his interaction upon it:

“Στοιχείου γε μὴν καὶ ἀρχῆς ἔννοια κοινὴ πᾶσιν ὡς ἔπος εἰπεῖν ἀνθρώποις ἐμπέφυκεν, ὡς ἀπλοῦν καὶ ἄκρατον εἶναι καὶ ἀσύνθετον”.

οὐ γὰρ στοιχεῖον οὐδ' ἀρχὴ τὸ μεμιγμένον ἀλλ' ἐξ ὧν μέμικται. καὶ μὴν οὗτοι τὸν θεὸν ἀρχὴν ὄντα σῶμα νοερὸν καὶ νοῦν ἐν ὕλῃ ποιοῦντες οὐ καθαρὸν οὐδὲ ἀπλοῦν οὐδ' ἀσύνθετον ἀλλ' ἐξ ἑτέρου καὶ διὰ ἕτερον ἀποφαίνουσιν. ἡ δὲ ὕλη καθ' αὐτὴν ἄλογος οὔσα καὶ ἄποιος τὸ ἀπλοῦν ἔχει καὶ τὸ ἀρχοειδές· ὁ θεὸς δέ, εἴπερ οὐκ ἔστιν ἀσώματος οὐδ' ἄυλος, ὡς ἀρχῆς μετέσχηκε τῆς ὕλης. εἰ μὲν γὰρ ἐν καὶ ταῦτόν ἡ ὕλη καὶ ὁ λόγος, οὐκ εἶ τὴν ὕλην ἄλογον ἀποδεδώκασιν· εἰ δὲ ἕτερα, καὶ ἀμφοτέρων ταμίαις ἂν τις ὁ θεὸς εἶη καὶ οὐχ ἀπλοῦν ἀλλὰ σύνθετον πρᾶγμα τῷ νοερῷ τὸ σωματικὸν ἐκ τῆς ὕλης προσειληφώς.”(*De Communibus Notitiis*, 1085 B-C)

“Well anyway, of element or principle there has been bred in practically all men a common conception, that it is simple and unmixed and incomposite, for element or principle is not what has resulted from mixing but the ingredients of the mixture. Yet these Stoics by making god, while a principle, an intellectual body, that is intelligence in matter, make him out to be not pure or simple or incomposite but from something else and because of something else. Matter, however, being in itself without rationality and without quality, has simplicity and so the characteristic of a principle; but god, if in fact he is not incorporeal and not immaterial, has got a share of matter as a participant in a principle. For, if matter and rationality are one and the same thing, the Stoics have done ill in defining matter to be without rationality; and, if they are different things, god would also have both on deposit as a kind of trustee and would be not a simple but a composite object with corporeality from matter added to intellectuality.” (trans. Cherniss)

Plutarch’s writings against the Stoics also contain some interesting insights on the longevity of the Demiurge. Chrysippus argues that only Zeus and the universe are not subject to destruction, but the other gods are, also denying the other gods self-sufficiency. Cherniss regards the name “Zeus” at *De Stoic. Rep.s* 1052B to be a synonym for the universe.⁴² However, I think that when Plutarch refers to Zeus here, he is thinking of the Demiurge, as was the case with 1065E above. Let us consider the passage:

“τροφῇ τε οἱ μὲν ἄλλοι θεοὶ χρῶνται παραπλησίως, συνεχόμενοι δι'αὐτήν· ὁ δὲ Ζεὺς καὶ ὁ κόσμος καθ' ἕτερον τρόπον <συνέχονται τῶν κατὰ περιόδους τινὰς εἰς πῦρ> ἀναλισκομένων καὶ ἐκ πυρὸς γιγνομένων”.

“The other gods use nourishment in a similar manner, being sustained through it. But Zeus (the Demiurge) and the universe <sustain themselves> differently <from those that periodically> are absorbed <into the universe> and come to be out of fire.”

I think that Zeus here is not the universe *per se*, but the rational force pervading and governing the universe. At *De Stoicorum Repugnantis* 1052C Plutarch

⁴² Cherniss, H. (1976), 392.

quotes from the first book of Chrysippus' *On Providence*, pointing out that Zeus continues growing until everything has been consumed in his growth. I think that what Plutarch means here is that the Demiurge (in his reading of Chrysippus' system) continues creating the world of becoming until he runs out of matter, which is the reason for periodic collapse or ἐκπύρωσις. Again, it must be noted that Plutarch is expounding a Stoic position, not his own.

Sambursky claims: "Here the Stoics hit upon an important physical law which applies to closed systems that are not subject to any interference".⁴³ Cherniss argues that Sambursky was unaware of Bréhier's discovery of Chrysippus' imitation of the *Timaeus* 33C8 – D3, and I think that this is what is going on here. The destructibility of the "lesser gods" is in fact justifiable in Platonic terms, although Plutarch here expresses opposition to it- though possibly solely for the purposes of polemic. After all, the Young Gods of the *Timaeus* are not immortal, merely everlasting at the pleasure of the Demiurge.

At 1052D, Plutarch counters the Stoic doctrine of the self-sufficiency of the universe, justified on the basis that nourishment is provided by the interchange of different parts with each other.⁴⁴ Plutarch is not as impressed as Sambursky, arguing that since the universe is nourished by its own decay, while the gods are nourished by the universe, they expand while the universe contracts. This is interesting; Plutarch refutes a Stoicised Platonic theory by using an argument from *Timaeus* 33c7-8, the passage immediately preceding that utilised by Chrysippus. The *Timaeus* passage runs "αὐτὸ γὰρ ἑαυτῷ τροφήν τὴν ἑαυτοῦ φθίσειν παρέχον" and Plutarch's argument is "μόνον μὴ αὐξεσθαι τὴν αὐτοῦ φθίσειν ἔχοντα". It seems here that demiurgic activity is not solely noetic action to regulate pre-existent matter, but in fact the energy required by this activity eventually uses up the available store of matter, as if only a limited supply is available and the Demiurge is incapable of producing any more.

Essentially, Plutarch's objection to the Stoic conception of divinity can be reduced, as has been done by Babut, to three main problems.⁴⁵ Firstly, the Stoic divinity is perishable as he is constrained by the destiny of the cosmos. In the second place, he is confused with material realities. Finally, he is deprived of all power of

⁴³ Sambursky - *Physics of the Stoics* quoted by Cherniss, 567.

⁴⁴ As expressed at *SVF*. ii.frag. 604.

⁴⁵ Babut, D. (1969), 454.

initiative, whereas for Plutarch, as a Platonist, these problems can be solved if the Demiurge is located in the suprasensible world and separated from matter:

“ἀλλ' ὁ μὲν [θεὸς] ἄνω που περὶ τὴν ἀεὶ κατὰ ταῦτ' ὡσαύτως φύσιν ἔχουσαν ἰδρυμένος ἐν βάθροισι ἀγίοις, ἣ φησι ὁ Πλάτων “εὐθεία περαίνει κατὰ φύσιν περιπορευόμενος.” *Ad princ. iner.* 781F)

“On the contrary, somewhere up above, in contact with that nature, which in accordance with the same principles, remains always as it is, established, as Plato says, upon pedestals of holiness, proceeding in accordance with nature in his straight course, he reaches his goal.

Having considered Plutarch's reaction against the Stoa, it is now time to consider Plutarch's response to the problems created by the Stoic position on demiurgy. The Stoics, because of their notion of inert and insensible matter, are forced to posit that a benevolent divinity is the sole cause of evil.⁴⁶ Plutarch saw the need for a third term between matter and the Demiurge to justify the Stoic position, a problem not shared by Plato, because of his views on the recalcitrance of matter. I think that an attempt to find a solution to this problem is itself partly responsible for Plutarch's dualism:

“εἰ γὰρ οὐδὲν ἀναιτίως πέφυκε γενέσθαι, αἰτίαν δὲ κακοῦ τὰγαθον οὐκ ἂν παράσχοι, δεῖ γένεσιν ἰδίαν καὶ ἀρχὴν ὡσπερ ἀγαθοῦ καὶ κακοῦ τὴν φύσιν ἔχειν.” (*De Iside* 369D)

“If, as is the case, it is impossible that something comes to be without cause and if the good is not able to give birth to evil, it is necessary that there is in nature a separate origin and principle for evil as there is for good.”

De Iside et Osiride

In the *De Iside*, Plutarch attempts to resolve this problem and outlines his conception of demiurgic causality under the guise of Egyptian mythology, with Osiris representing the Demiurge. The work reveals a belief in a universal providence, within the context of which the conflict between good and evil takes place; a conflict in which the Demiurge himself adopts a rather passive role. The third term that Plutarch requires between matter and the Demiurge here are daimons. Isis and Osiris are themselves great daimons, but perfectly good, by virtue of which they become gods. Thus, the dualism of Plutarch is a conflict between two principles, not between two gods. At 369D, Plutarch excludes the idea of a god of evil:

⁴⁶ *De. Stoic. Repug.* 1048.

“καὶ δοκεῖ τοῦτο τοῖς πλείστοις καὶ σοφωτάτοις· νομίζουσι γὰρ οἱ μὲν θεοὺς εἶναι δύο καθάπερ ἀντιτέχνους, τὸν μὲν ἀγαθῶν, τὸν δὲ φαύλων δημιουργόν· οἱ δὲ τὸν μὲν ἀμείονα θεόν, τὸν δ' ἕτερον δαίμονα καλοῦσιν”.

“Such is the opinion of the greatest and the most wise, some believing in the existence of two gods who are rivals, one the **Demiurge** of Good, the other the **Demiurge** of evil; the others call **God** the better of the two and the other one **daimon**.”

In practice Plutarch links the concept of a god of evil with Iranian thought (369D), while he himself prefers to shun this idea. At 369C-D, strong Zoroastrian echoes can be observed:

“Life and the cosmos, on the contrary - if not the whole of the cosmos, at least the earthly one below the moon, which is heterogeneous, variegated and subject to all manner of changes - are compounded of two opposed principles and of two antithetic powers, one of which leads by a straight path to the right, while the other reverses and bends back.” (trans. J. M. Dillon).

Interestingly here, Plutarch considers the possibility that the evil principle only has jurisdiction “below the moon”, rather like the Valentinian Demiurge. It seems here that the positive *δυναμῖς* is also like a benevolent sublunar Demiurge, but I think that possibly he has jurisdiction over the cosmos as a whole, but only in the sublunar region is he forced to enter into conflict with the evil principle, hence the reason for “all manner of changes”.

Typhon is an evil daimon in conflict with the Demiurge and even he appears to be the only daimon entirely evil, while the others are “more or less good”. (360E). The great daimons serve as intermediaries between the supreme *Λόγος* and the “Powers” or between the “Powers” and men.⁴⁷ These “Powers” are lesser entities, which on the ontological scale rank just above men. This positing of daimons, rather like Plato's positing of the Younger Gods helps to free the Demiurge from bearing any responsibility for the existence of evil. However, in *De Defectu*, the daimons assist the Demiurge by preserving cosmic order as an additional regulatory power.⁴⁸

However, the problem with this aspect of the demonology is vitiated by the active role of Isis, who also regulates the disorder of the sublunar world and attempts to preserve it. The role played by Isis is essential in Plutarch's understanding of the Demiurge, since she plays a much more active part in the preservation of the world than her husband. As Frankfort comments: “Isis, the devoted, but subservient consort

⁴⁷ Illustrated also in the *De Defectu Oraculorum*, where *δαίμονες* convey oracles from the gods to men.

⁴⁸ Cherniss, H. (1976), 100.

of Osiris, became the vehicle of Plutarch's philosophy, his peculiar amalgam of Platonic and Stoic views" (though Francfort's study is not the most nuanced).⁴⁹ Additionally, the demonology helps to regulate theological problems, such as the existence of cults. However, these are relatively minor matters when compared to the attempt to solve the problem of evil and need not concern us here.

At 373C, Plutarch deals with the creation of the world:

"Before this world became manifest and was brought to completion by Logos, Matter, being shown by its nature to be incomplete of itself, brought forth the first creation."

This first creation is merely the "wraith and phantasm" of the created world that is generated later. As Dillon comments, it seems indicative of Isis' desire for the order of the world, rather than a production of Seth-Typhon.⁵⁰ Read in terms of Plato's *Timaeus*, this would seem to indicate the suprasensible *paradeigma* used by the Demiurge. Since it is produced by matter, it indicates that while Plutarchean matter may be, in itself, inert, before the creation of the world, a maleficent soul already exists - perhaps illustrated here by the conception of the elder Horus in the womb.

The nature of Plutarchean demiurgy can only be understood in terms of Isis (*De Iside* 372E):

"Ἡ γὰρ Ἴσις ἐστὶ μὲν τὸ τῆς φύσεως θῆλυ καὶ δεκτικὸν ἀπάσης γενέσεως, καθὸ τιθήνη καὶ πανδεχῆς ὑπὸ τοῦ Πλάτωνος, ὑπὸ δὲ τῶν πολλῶν μυριώνυμος κέκληται διὰ τὸ πάσας ὑπὸ τοῦ λόγου τρεπομένη μορφὰς δέχεσθαι καὶ ιδέας."

"Isis is the female principle of nature, that which receives all generation, from which arise the names "nurse" and "universal receptacle", which Plato gives here and also "myrionym" ("with a thousand names") , because under the influence of reason she undergoes change and adopts every sort of form and appearance".

As is evident here, Isis is the Receptacle of the *Timaeus*, although she also adopts the role of matter to some extent, as can be seen from 372E_{ff}, where she is explicitly identified with matter. This is a rather radical shift from *Timaeus* 49A_f and 51A, where the receptacle is defined as the place *in which* creation occurs, rather than the material *out of which* it occurs. However, Plutarch is not the first Platonist to

⁴⁹ Frankfort, *The Problem of Similarity in ancient Near Eastern religions*, 1951, 22.

⁵⁰ Dillon, J. M. (1977), 204.

equate the Platonic Receptacle with Aristotelian matter.⁵¹ While the Receptacle is more usually regarded as place or space, support can be found for Plutarch's perception of it as matter. Plato uses terms such as ἐκμαγεῖλον (impression), κινούμενον (moving), διασχηματιζόμενον (shaping), τυπωθέντα (being struck), which are difficult to reconcile with the notion of space and seem to allude to a feature such as plasticity.

Another problem: Isis is neither passive receptacle nor inert matter, but she is capable of choosing between good and evil, though naturally inclining to what is best. Far from being recalcitrant, she actively seeks ordering by the Demiurge (evidently Osiris), although she also assists in demiurgy by sowing effluxes in herself. All this suggests an active receptacle; perhaps overactive, since it is difficult to see what remains for the Demiurge to do, other than perhaps communicating the *paradeigma* to Isis, who then plays a role in ordering herself (not actually a question of creation, similar to the situation in the *Timaeus*).

In a more implicit manner, Isis serves a role somewhat similar to Philo's Logos-cutter. As Plutarch comments at 352 D: “καθαροῦ γάρ, ἧ φησιν ὁ Πλάτων, οὐ θεμιτὸν ἄπτεσθαι μὴ καθαρῶ” (“The pure, as Plato says, should not touch the impure”).⁵² This would help to elucidate the passivity of the Demiurge, as part of an increasing tendency after Plato to move to a more transcendent First Principle. This tendency is motivated by a variety of factors including the desire to insulate the First Principle from matter/responsibility for the creation of evil or attempts to clarify the nature of the relationship between the First Principle, the demiurgic one and the Ideas. Another explanation is the attempt to explain the movement from unity to multiplicity by positing an increasing number of intermediary stages.

Isis also contains elements shared by Philonic/ Gnostic Sophia. At 351 E, Plutarch refers to her as divine wisdom, although the words he chooses are *eidêsis* and *phronêsis*, not Sophia.⁵³ Dillon views her as a fusion of the positive aspect of

⁵¹ For example compare Alcinous' *Handbook of Platonism*, where in Chapter 8.2 on matter, Alcinous misreads the *Timaeus* : “Plato calls this [matter] a “mould” (*Ti.* 50c), “all-receiver” (51a), “nurse” (49a, 52d, 88d), “mother” (50d,51a) and “space” (52a-d) and a substratum “tangible by non-sensation” and graspable (only) “by a bastard reasoning” (52b). He declares that it has the characteristic of receiving the whole realm of generation by performing the role of a nurse in sustaining it and receiving all the forms, while of itself remaining without shape or quality of its own. For nothing would be readily adapted to (receiving) a variety of imprints and shapes unless it were itself devoid of qualities and without participation in these forms which it must itself receive.” (trans. J. M. Dillon).

⁵² Admittedly, there Plutarch is discussing the rationale behind the abstinence of Egyptian priests, but given its location, I feel that it sheds some light on the situation here.

⁵³ Dillon, J. M. (1977), 204.

matter with the World-Soul connected with the Pythagorean old Academic Dyad and the Philonian Sophia.⁵⁴ I think that the origin of Plutarchean Isis can be found somewhere in this syncretistic mix.

Isis certainly comes across as an imperfect entity requiring completion by the divine Λόγος, and in this context Isis and the Younger Horus neatly parallel the Gnostic pairing of Sophia and the Demiurge. Froidefond argues that Isis is not actually the incomplete Gnostic entity, but rather the Aristotelian *être en puissance*.⁵⁵ He further claims that Isis cannot be identified with a disorderly World-Soul. It seems to me that Isis' search for Osiris indicates the World-Soul's awareness of its own imperfect nature and its desire to be guided by God towards the model of the Good, even if, in fact, it is difficult to see any justification within the framework of the myth for Isis' portrayal as a fallen entity. The identification of World-Soul/active receptacle seems most plausible, given Isis' management of matter. Isis' search for Osiris can also be read in terms of the *Politicus* myth, in which God periodically rolls back the world to a vision of the Good.

Part of Isis' imperfection may stem from her close contact with matter (De Iside 373 B-C):

“Ἡ...γένεσις Ἀπόλλωνος αἰνίττεται τὸ πρὶν ἐκφανῆ γενέσθαι τόνδε τὸν κόσμον καὶ συντελεσθῆναι τῷ λόγῳ τὴν ὕλην, φύσαι γλιχομένην, ἀφ’ αὐτῆς ἀτελῆ τὴν πρώτην γένεσιν ἐξενεγκεῖν.”
“This birth of Apollo (from Isis and Osiris) reveals that before our world appeared and was produced by reason, matter, impatient to produce, spontaneously gave birth before term to this first creation.”

At 372 E-F, Plutarch explains how his view of demiurgic causality works:

“Ἐχει δὲ σύμφυτον ἔρωτα τοῦ πρώτου καὶ κυριωτάτου πάντων, ὃ τὰγαθῷ ταῦτόν ἐστι, κακείνο ποθεῖ καὶ διώκει· τὴν δ’ ἐκ τοῦ κακοῦ φεύγει καὶ διωθῆται μοῖραν, ἀμφοῖν μὲν οὔσα χώρα καὶ ὕλη, ῥέπουσα δ’ αἰεὶ πρὸς τὸ βέλτιον ἐξ ἑαυτῆς καὶ παρέχουσα γεννᾶν ἐκείνῳ καὶ κατασπείρειν εἰς ἑαυτὴν ἀπορροίας καὶ ὁμοίτητος, αἷς χαίρει καὶ γέγηθε κυῖσκομένη καὶ ὑποπιμπλαμένη τῶν γένεσεων· εἰκὼν γάρ ἐστιν οὐσίας <ἡ> ἐν ὕλῃ γένεσις καὶ μίμημα τοῦ ὄντος τὸ γινόμενον.”

‘She (Isis) loves with an innate love the First Being and the lord of the universe, who is none other than the Good, she desires him and searches for him while she flees that which is in the domain of evil. If she is the receptacle and matter of both, she never ceases from a spontaneous movement of

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Froidefond, C. (1988), 119.

approaching the Principle of Good, it is to him that she offers herself so that he can procreate in her and sow in her the emanations which carry his likeness. She rejoices and she exults because of this fertilisation and insemination of the seeds of generation. Because the generation in matter is an image of the essence and becomes an imitation of That Which Is (= Real Being).”

This text seems to posit a creation from below - matter desires form and so the Demiurge obliges, rather than the Forms becoming enmattered or order being imposed on matter from above. Matter or Isis desires to be ordered according to the Forms, so that she herself can participate in the Intelligible. This dynamic receptacle, on a superficial level at least, implies the advance of Aristotelian matter towards the Forms.⁵⁶ Although Isis’ functions are in part identical to those of Timaeus’ receptacle as an active recipient, her role goes beyond that: she not only receives and nourishes the seeds of creation, but she strengthens them (συνίστησι 375C). She divides this seminal reason (διανέμουςαν 377B) and rehabilitates cosmic harmony (συναρμόπτειν πάλιν 373A), whenever it is threatened by disorder and φθορά.⁵⁷

Isis in this context differs from Aristotelian matter. As 373B -C makes clear, sensible matter to every degree is penetrated and ordered by the Forms - this development of the “matérialisme de l'idée” is hailed by Froidefond as the “phase ultime de l'évolution de la pensée de Platon”.⁵⁸ In spite of this management of the sensible world, Froidefond is unhappy with identifying Isis with the World-Soul of the *Timaeus*, because by relaying to the sensible λόγοι σπερματικοί in a sort of continuous action, she takes over the role of the Demiurge. However, I think that while Isis cannot be exclusively identified with the Timaeian World-Soul, she does act as its replacement in Plutarch. The situation of combined matter/World-Soul, is also generated, as Plutarch regards the World-Soul as present in matter. Froidefond outlines the mediating powers that exist between transcendent Λόγος and the σπερματικός - immanent Λόγος, the demiurgic World-Soul and the regulatory World-Soul.⁵⁹ Part of the problem in interpreting Sophia's role is that she combines elements of all three.

The description at 373B - C quoted above describes the ordering of Isis in terms of physical insemination. In reality, the imagery is contradicted by passages of

⁵⁶ Froidefond, C. (1988) 116.

⁵⁷ Froidefond, C. (1988) 116.

⁵⁸ Froidefond, C. (1988), 116.

⁵⁹ Froidefond, C. (1988), 117.

the *De Iside* which reveal the weakness and passivity of the Osirian Demiurge. This emerges in the description of Osiris' dead body, in the loss of his phallus (358B) and in the weakness of Harpocrates (358E). In this context, it is worth citing *Quaestiones Conviviales* VIII, question 1, where Plutarch discusses the nature of divine filiation. At 717E-F he states:

“τοῦ δὲ θεοῦ δέδια μὴ δόξη τῷ ἀφθάρτῳ μάχεσθαι τὸ γεννῶν οὐχ ἦπτον ἢ τὸ γεννώμενον· μεταβολὴ γὰρ τίς καὶ πάθος.”

‘However, the incorruptibility of the divine, I fear, seems incompatible with the deed of insemination, as well as being engendered, since it is a form of change and of vicissitude.’

At the *Life of Numa* IV.3, Plutarch points out that the link between man and God is not physical (one of substance), but noetic (man is related to God by his desire to pursue the Good:

“καὶ που λόγον ἔχει τὸν θεόν, οὐ φίλιππον οὐδὲ φίλοριν, ἀλλὰ φιλάνθρωπον ὄντα, τοῖς διαφερόντως ἀγαθοῖς ἐθέλειν συνεῖναι, καὶ μὴ δυσχεραίνειν μηδὲ ἀτιμάζειν ἀνδρὸς ὀσίου καὶ σώφρονος ὁμιλίαν. ὡς δὲ καὶ σώματος ἀνθρωπίνου καὶ ὥρας ἐστὶ τις θεῷ καὶ δαίμονι κοινωνία καὶ χάρις, ἔργον ἤδη καὶ τοῦτο πεισθῆναι.”

“And there is some reason in supposing that Deity, who is not a lover of horses or birds, but a lover of men, should be willing to consort with men of superlative goodness and should not dislike or disdain the company of a wise and holy man. But that an immortal god should take pleasure in a mortal body and its beauty, this, surely, is hard to believe.”

At 718A Plutarch comments further on the nature of demiurgic activity:

“ Ἀναθαρρῶ δὲ πάλιν αὐτοῦ Πλάτωνος ἀκουῶν πατέρα καὶ ποιητὴν τοῦ τε κόσμου καὶ τῶν ἄλλων γεννητῶν τὸν ἀγέννητον καὶ αἰδίων θεὸν ὀνομάζοντος, οὐ διὰ σπέρματος δήπου γενομένων, ἄλλη δὲ δυνάμει τοῦ θεοῦ τῇ ὑλῇ γόνιμον ἀρχήν, ὑφ' ἧς ἔπαθεν καὶ μετέβαλεν, ἐκτεκόντος...καὶ οὐδὲν οἶομαι δεινόν, εἰ μὴ πλησίαζων ὁ θεὸς ὡσπερ ἄνθρωπος, ἀλλ' ἐτέραις τισὶν ἀφαῖς δι' ἐτέρων καὶ ψαύσει τρέπει καὶ ὑποπίμπλησι θειοτέρας γονῆς τὸ θνητόν.”

“And again I find confirmation in Plato himself, whom I understand to call the uncreated and eternal God, the father and maker of the universe and of all the other creatures as well. I do not suppose that they were created by means of insemination. It is by *another power* that God introduced into matter a generative principle which submitted it to vicissitude and change... And I see nothing strange in the fact that God does not mate like a man, but uses *other contacts and attachments*, to change by other means mortal nature and to produce an offspring more divine.”

I think that it is perfectly legitimate to read into Plutarch's comments on divine filiation some indication of how the Demiurge operates.

In the *Life of Numa*, he rejects the notion of a human-divine union that is even partly physical, although here he seems prepared to consider the idea that a god can

impregnate a woman, although a man cannot impregnate a goddess.⁶⁰ However, this is expressed as an Egyptian belief, not the view of Plutarch's spokesman, Tyndarus. For Plutarch only the soul can enjoy ὁμοίως θεῶ. This seems to be underlined by the loss of Osiris' phallus in *De Iside* - it seems that demiurgy exists only as a noetic activity and not by a physical insemination, as the imagery of *De Iside* 373 would lead one to believe.

This raises the question of what exactly the other contacts and attachments are, by which the Demiurge regulates the phenomenal realm. From *Quaestiones Conviviales*, VIII.2 it would appear that by engaging in geometry, the Demiurge inculcates the generative principle in matter, but should he ever cease from geometric activity, matter would return to disorder. In the *De Iside*, the quasi-material principle represented in the person of Isis, by its orientation towards the Good, appears to play a role in regulating itself. At *Quaestiones Conviviales* 718B, Plutarch claims that Apis was created by the contact of the moon.⁶¹ From these divergent comments, it seems to me that Plutarch uses the phrase “other contacts and attachments” as a sort of escape route, but is himself not very clear on the exact nature of the demiurgic image which he is propounding. Another point that can be added is that the phrase “εἰ μὴ πλησίαζων ὁ θεὸς ὡσπερ ἄνθρωπος” might be interpreted more loosely as “God does not fabricate like a man”, although of course πλησίαζω is used of sexual relations. However, perhaps it is not stretching the bounds of possibility to suggest that Plutarch is here questioning the entire demiurgic imagery, aware of its value for exposition, but equally aware that God does not toil at creation like a craftsman. Unfortunately, Plutarch does not go into further detail about this other power or the other contacts and attachments, and there, I am afraid, the matter will have to rest.

At 373A, Plutarch elaborates on the role played by the Good in the ordering of matter:

“Τὸ γὰρ ὄν καὶ νοητὸν καὶ ἀγαθὸν φθορᾶς καὶ μεταβολῆς κρείττον ἐστίν· ἃς δ' ἀπ' αὐτοῦ τὸ αἰσθητὸν καὶ σωματικὸν εἰκόνας ἐκμάττεται, καὶ λόγους καὶ εἶδη καὶ ὁμοιότητος ἀναλαμβάνει,

⁶⁰ In the *Life of Numa* IV.4, Plutarch denies that man can respond to the ordering force of divinity in a similar manner: “ἀγνοοῦσι δὲ ὅτι τὸ μιγνύμενον ᾧ μίγνυται τὴν ἴσην ἀνταποδίδωσι κοινωνίαν”. “But they lose sight of the fact that intercourse is a reciprocal matter, and that both parties to it enter into a like communion”.

⁶¹ “ἀλλ' Αἰγύπτιοι τὸν τ' Ἄπιον οὕτω λοχευεσθαί φασιν ἐπαφῆ τῆς σελήνης”. However, this is explicitly stated to be an Egyptian position, and it is unclear what, if any, philosophical sense can be read into engendering by the contact of the moon.

καθάπερ ἐν κηρῷ σφραγίδες οὐκ αἰεὶ διαμένουσιν ἀλλὰ καταλαμβάνει τὸ ἄτακτον αὐτάς καὶ παραχῶδες ἐνταῦθα τῆς ἄνω χώρας ἀπεληλαμένον καὶ μαχόμενον πρὸς τὸν Ὁρον.”

“For Being, the Intelligible and the Good is superior to corruption and change, but the images stamped under its impression in sensible and corporeal matter, the principles, the forms and the resemblances which matter receives from the Good are of the same sort as the impressions of a seal in wax and do not last forever; they fall to the power of the principle of disorder and of confusion, which the Good chases from on high and represses here below, when it combats Horus.”

Here, the same dualistic attitude is expressed. But here the Demiurge is given a much more active role than is frequently the case in Plutarch - he is involved in the continual creation of the world of Becoming, which would soon collapse under the power of the forces of disorder were it not for his benevolence and continual care. Isis also here adopts a much more passive role, since she is compared to wax which is merely stamped with an impression: no mention is made of her capacity to respond to the Good in a manner that prompts creation. The dualism is weaker here - there is no question of the Demiurge being overcome by disorder, although in the myth, Osiris is overcome by Seth-Typhon and indeed would have no prospect of triumphing were it not for Isis.

In this passage he is beyond the reach of disorder; it is only his creations which can be subjected to it. One possible explanation for the change in focus is that Plutarch here ceases to use myth and explains Isis and Osiris in philosophical terms. However, I think that what Plutarch is describing is the becoming world in a state of flux and the reason that the Demiurge has a more active role is that he must continually transmit images from the intelligible world to matter (the Plutarchean version of creation) in order to prevent cosmic collapse in the face of the Principle of Disorder.

The Demiurge and the receptacle-matter give birth to the sensible world (373A-B):

“Ὁν ἡ Ἴσις εἰκόνα τοῦ νοητοῦ κόσμου αἰσθητὸν ὄντα γεννᾷ. Διὸ καὶ δίκην φεύγειν λέγεται νοθείας ὑπὸ Τυφῶνος, ὡς οὐκ ὦν καθαρὸς οὐδ' εἰλικρινής, οἷος ὁ πατήρ λόγος αὐτὸς καθ' εἶπτον ἀμιγῆς καὶ ἀπαθῆς, ἀλλὰ νενοθεύμενος τῇ ὕλῃ διὰ τὸ σωματικόν. Περιγίνεται δὲ καὶ νικᾷ τοῦ Ἑρμοῦ, τουτέστι τοῦ λόγου, μαρτυροῦντος καὶ δεικνύοντος ὅτι πρὸς τὸ νοητὸν ἢ φύσις μετασχηματιζομένη τὸν κόσμον ἀποδίδωσιν.”

“Horus is the sensible world, given birth to by Isis in the image of the Intelligible. That is why it is said that he is pursued in illegitimate birth by

Typhon, deprived as he is of the absolute purity of his father - Reason (λόγος) in itself, without mix and impurity and bastardised by the matter in which he has a corporal element. He prevails and is victorious through the testimony of Hermes, that is to say reason, who shows that nature, having been reshaped in reference to the Intelligible, produces the world.”

From Plutarch's interpretation here, it seems that he does not regard the sensible world as produced by the Demiurge out of matter in the Receptacle, but as a co-production between the Demiurge and receptacle-matter, existing as an independent entity. Also confusing here is the double mention of Λόγος, but presumably the distinction here is between transcendent Λόγος represented by Osiris and immanent reason (Hermes). Plutarch here also has recourse to the Platonic conception of the inherent badness of matter.

Horus is then forced to engage in combat with Typhon (Disorder) in a battle for survival. This in fact has been previously revealed by Plato at 373A (quoted above, without the aid of an allegory). This battle between Horus and Seth-Typhon is Plutarch's mechanism for harmonising his dualism. Typhon is revealed as essential for cosmic order at 367A, where it is claimed that a perfect world would be impossible without the igneous element, and at 371A:

“Μεμιγμένη γὰρ ἡ τοῦδε τοῦ κόσμου γένεσις καὶ σύστασις ἐξ ἐναντίων, οὐ μὴν ἰσοσθενῶν, δυνάμεων, ἀλλὰ τῆς βελτίουτος τὸ κράτος ἐστίν· ἀπολέσθαι⁶² δὲ τὴν φαύλην παντάπασιν ἀδύνατον, πολλὴν μὲν ἐμπεφυκυῖαν τῷ σώματι, πολλὴν δὲ τῇ ψυχῇ τοῦ παντὸς ἀεὶ πρὸς τὴν βελτίονα <δυσμεναίνουσαν> καὶ δυσμαχοῦσαν.”

“The birth and constitution of our world is the result of the mixture of the action of the two forces which oppose each other without being equal; supremacy rests with the beneficial force, but it is impossible that the evil force disappear completely, because it is deeply implanted in the body and particularly in the soul of the universe and is always (hostile to and) battling against the better.”

This idea is Mazdean, although it is also expressed in Greek literature by Hesiod's description of the “mixed” life of the human race.⁶³ Here Plutarch assigns Typhon a role, not merely in ensuring cosmic order, but actually a part in demiurgy. Typhon at 371B is an errant cause:

“Τυφῶν δὲ τῆς ψυχῆς τὸ παθητικὸν καὶ τιτανικὸν καὶ ἄλογον καὶ ἔμπληκτον, τοῦ δὲ σωματικοῦ τὸ ἐπίκηρον καὶ νοσῶδες καὶ ταρακτικὸν ἀωρίαις καὶ δυσκρασίας καὶ κρύψεσιν ἡλίου καὶ ἀφανισμοῖς σελήνης οἷον ἐκδρομαὶ καὶ ἀφηγιασμοὶ [καὶ] Τυφῶνος”.

⁶² Cf. *Theatetus* 176.

⁶³ Froidefond, C. (1992), 117.

“Typhon is the affectable and titanic, irrational and unstable element in the soul and in the body of the world that which is perishable, diseased and disordered; lack of order in the seasons and bad temperament, eclipses of the sun and of the moon, all these phenomena are the attacks and rebellions of Typhon”.

At 373C-D, Plutarch outlines another myth to explain Typhon's role in cosmic harmony, in which Hermes uses the nerves of Typhon to make the cords of the lyre:

“διδάσκοντες ὡς τὸ πᾶν ὁ λόγος διαρμυσάμενος σύμφωνον ἐξ ἄσυμφώνων μερῶν ἐποίησε καὶ τὴν φθαρτικὴν οὐκ ἀπώλεσεν ἀλλ' ἀνεπήρωσε δύναμιν. Ὅθεν ἐκείνη μὲν ἀσθενῆς καὶ ἀδρανὴς ἐνταῦθα, φυρομένη καὶ προπλεκομένη τοῖς παθητικοῖς καὶ μεταβολικοῖς μέρεσι”.

‘The lesson of the myth is that Reason ordered the universe by harmonisation, creating concord between dissonant elements and that it did not eliminate them, but only changed their destructive power. And so they still subsist in our world, but weakened and debilitated, causing confusion in all that which is capable of being affected and altered.”

It is for this reason that although Horus acts as a check on Typhon, he is not permitted by Isis to kill him because she did not wish that the element opposed to humidity should completely disappear, but she wished that the mixture should subsist (367A). In any case, the “errant cause” of the *Timaeus* opens the way for this sort of dualistic opposition. Bianchi views this as radical dualism, with a split between Being and Becoming existing prior to the beginning of the world.⁶⁴

Bianchi also sees Seth as combining destructive aggressivity with unavoidable sterility. However, I feel that perhaps one more naturally associates sterility with the Plutarchean Demiurge, symbolised by loss of the phallus. This stresses that Osiris cannot create, but merely regulate. Bianchi also characterises Isis in terms of “passive receptivity” and Seth as “violent reactivity”. This distorts the picture - Isis as receptacle-matter is much more active than her counterpart in other mythological systems and characterising Seth in terms of “reactivity” masks the fact that he is ultimately regulated to some extent by demiurgic reasoning and owes his very existence to Isis - perhaps a Plutarchean echo of the recalcitrance of matter, which is essentially responsible for the errant cause. Bianchi also raises the interesting point that in Seth we have a typical example of the Demiurge-trickster found in the Gnostic systems. However, Bianchi links this identification with his view of the sterility of Seth, whereas I feel that this is a trait more associated with Osiris.

⁶⁴ Bianchi, U (1987), 354.

Plutarch is playing a complicated game here in his account of the Isis myth since it is a dual exegesis of an aspect of Egyptian mythology, as well as of the *Timaeus*. I think that it is Plutarch's interpretation of the *Timaeus* which shapes his reaction to the Isis myth. This can be observed in the fact that, despite the fluidity of the allegory, Plutarch distinguishes the Platonic triad of First Principles: Matter (Isis), Forms (transcendent Osiris) and God (immanent Osiris). This can be further confirmed by the evidence of *Quaestiones Conviviales* 720A-B:

“ Ἐἴσεσθε ῥαδίως' εἶπον ἀναμνήσαντες αὐτοὺς τῆς ἐν Τιμαίῳ διαιρέσεως, ἣ διείλε τριχῆ τὰ πρῶθ' ὑφ' ὧν τὴν γένεσιν ὁ κόσμος ἔσχεν, ὧν τὸ μὲν θεὸν τῷ δικαιοτάτῳ τῶν ὀνοματῶν, τὸ δ' ὕλην τὸ ἰδέαν καλοῦμεν. Ἡ μὲν οὖν ὕλη τῶν ὑποκειμένων ἀτακτότατόν ἐστιν, ἡ δ' ἰδέα τῶν παραδειγμάτων κάλλιστον, ὁ δὲ θεὸς τῶν αἰτίων ἄριστον.”

“You will easily see”, I said, “If you recall the division in the *Timaeus*, by which Plato distinguished the three constitutive principles in the universe: The first which we justly call “God”, the second “Matter” and the third “Form” Matter is the most disorganised of substances, Form the most beautiful of models and God the most perfect of causes.”

Quaestiones Conviviales

Quaestiones Conviviales is a work that has curiously been largely ignored in terms of the background which it can provide on demiurgic causality (though they are analysed by Ferrari⁶⁵). Admittedly, the *Quaestiones* are records of dinner conversations, rather than technical philosophical discussions, and are not actually cited in the *Catalogue of Lamprias*. Book 1, 615F-616A contains an allusion to *Timaeus* 30 A-B:

“Καὶ τὸν μέγαν θεὸν ὑμεῖς πού φατε τὴν ἀκοσμίαν εὐταξίᾳ μεταβαλεῖν εἰς κόσμον οὔτ' ἀφελόντα τῶν ὄντων οὐδὲν οὔτε πρὸσθεντα, τῷ δ' ἕκαστον ἐπὶ τὴν προσήκουσαν χώραν καταστήσαι τὸ κάλλιστον ἐξ ἀμορφοτάτου σχῆμα περὶ τὴν φύσιν ἀπεργασάμενον.”

“And you, you speak correctly when you say that it is by a general arrangement that the great God substituted order for disorder, without taking away anything from that which existed and without adding anything and that it is in placing each thing in the most suitable location that he created from extreme confusion the most beautiful form for Nature.”

In this passage, Plutarch stresses the fact that the Demiurge orders rather than produces; here he is not involved in creation or destruction.

⁶⁵ Ferrari, F. (1995)

In Book III, Plutarch raises the question of which existed first; the chicken or the egg. This discussion is related to Aristotle's problem, concerning the priority of the actual or the potential, and contains some interesting points. For example at 636C:

“διὸ καὶ τῇ φύσει τὸ πρῶτον εἰκὸς ἐστὶν ἀτρέμα κινούση τὴν ὕλην ἀργότεραν ὑπακούειν, τύπους ἀμόρφους καὶ ἀορίστους ἐκφέρουσαν ὡσπερ τὰ ὡά, μορφουμένων δὲ τούτων καὶ διαχαρασσομένων ὕστερον ἔνδημιουργεῖσθαι τὸ ζῷον.”

“It is therefore probable that at the beginning matter, slow to submit itself to Nature's impulses, which were still weak, produced nothing but poorly-formed and imperfect images, such as eggs, and that these, afterwards taking form, gave birth to the animal.”

Here we have an echo of the "phantom" of the world, spontaneously produced by matter, with the interesting use of the verb δημιουργέω to describe this action. This is rationalised at 636C-D; in every transformation the original form must precede the resultant one. At 636D Plutarch draws allusion to the Orphic myth which claims that the egg must proceed out of all creation, because, as 636E makes clear, the egg represents the being who created the universe (i.e. the Demiurge) and who contains it in himself.

So far these points only add some further details to the tenets expounded by *De Iside*. The second question of Book VIII is more enlightening. It asks why the Demiurge continually engages in geometry. The first exegesis proposed by Tyndarus is that it underlines the role played by geometry in the intellectual ascent towards the Forms. Florus proposes that humans, rather than the Demiurge, have need of geometry. Lycurgus raises an interesting point on arithmetical proportion (719B): “He teaches that it is necessary to regard justice as equal for everybody and not equality as justice”.⁶⁶ For Lycurgus, the Demiurge preserves a sort of meritocracy by determining the principle of law by the principle of proportion (γεωμετρικῶς). Autobulus' response is the most valuable, as he claims that without geometry the Demiurge would have no other means of regulating the universe (a point touched on above within the context of the sexual sterility of Osiris.)

Autobulus' Demiurge sets to work in a manner similar to Timaeus'; he first introduces numbers and proportions, then lines and contours, followed by surfaces and volumes (octahedrons, icosahedrons, pyramids and cubes) in order to produce the first elements (719C-D). Autoboulos then makes an interesting point:

⁶⁶ This is a further way in which the activity of the Demiurge is comparable with the activity of a legislator.

“τῆς μὲν ὕλης αἰὲν βιαζομένης εἰς τὸ ἀόριστον ἀναδύναι καὶ φευγούσης τὸ γεωμετρεῖσθαι, τοῦ δὲ λόγου καταλαμβάνοντος αὐτὴν καὶ περιγράφοντος καὶ διανέμοντος εἰς ιδέας καὶ διαφοράς ἐξ ὧν τὰ φυόμενα πάντα τὴν γένεσιν ἔσχεν καὶ σύστασιν”. (719E)

“If matter continually fights to return to indistinction and searches to escape from the order of geometry, reason is there to contain it, to limit it and to distribute it in forms and in the species which are formed and to form it into everything that comes to be in the world.”

Here the Demiurge is shown as continually engaging in the process of creation, something one would expect more from Philo than Plutarch, who posits a temporal creation. This could perhaps be explained as Osiris' continual conflict with Typhon, but this cannot mask the shift in the portrayal of the quasi-material principle (Isis) here. In the *De Iside* it is attracted to the good, but here it has a predisposition towards evil, or at least disorder. I think that the answer to this problem can be found in the response of Plutarch which follows (720B):

“Ἡ μὲν οὖν ὕλη τῶν ὑποκειμένων ἀτακτότατόν ἐστιν, ἡ δ' ἰδέα τῶν παραδειγμάτων κάλλιστον, ὁ δὲ θεὸς τῶν αἰτίων ἄριστον. Ἐβουλέτ' οὖν μηθέν, ὡς ἀνυστόν ἦν, ὑπολιπεῖν ἀπέρατον καὶ ἄοριστον, ἀλλὰ κοσμηθῆναι λόγῳ καὶ μέτρῳ καὶ ἀριθμῷ τὴν φύσιν, ἓν τι ποιῶν ἐκ πάντων ὁμοῦ τῶν ὑποκειμένων, οἷου <ἡ> ἰδέα καὶ ὅσον ἢ ὕλη γενόμενον. Διὸ τοῦτο πρόβλημα δοὺς αὐτῷ, δεῦν ὄντων τρίτου ἐποίησε καὶ ποιεῖ καὶ φυλάττει διὰ παντὸς τὸ ἴσον τῇ ὕλῃ καὶ ὁμοιον τῇ ἰδέᾳ τὸν κόσμον.”

“Matter is the most disordered of substances, Form the most beautiful of paradigms and God the most perfect of causes. Well, his wish was in as great a measure as possible to leave nothing unlimited and indefinite but to order nature by proportion, measure and number, ordering in all substances a single element which contained the quality of the form and the quality of matter. Such was the problem which he was given, starting with two existing elements, he blended and preserves through the whole expanse of time a third element, which is equal to matter and modelled on the Form; the universe.”

Here the Demiurge is ordering, but by virtue of doing that, here it appears that he is creating a new product. The three principles Plutarch elucidates here: Demiurge (active cause), matter and form are in fact those of *Timaeus* 27b-29d. I think that what we have here is something of an anomaly - a cosmogony heavily modelled on the *Timaeus* and that explains its striking difference to the same subject-matter treated elsewhere in the Plutarchean corpus.

Book IX deals with the aspect of destiny treated at greater length in *De fato*. The problem with using *De fato* is that it certainly is not genuine, as its author claims to have written little else, but given the overlap between this work and *Quaestiones*

IX, I feel that it is legitimate to make reference to some of the points raised here, provided that due caution be exercised.

Destiny is the action of the World-Soul, divided into three parts, corresponding to the three Moirai - the highest is Clotho, followed by Atropos and Lachesis, who receives the more celestial activities of her sisters and transmits them to men.⁶⁷ They can be viewed either as a stable element, an errant element and a terrestrial/sublunar element or a Supreme Providence (volition of the first God), a second Providence (that of the heavenly Gods) and the third that of the daimons (573A). The cosmos is governed by divine law, which has an existence outside the Demiurge, not existing as his thoughts; in the same way that he regulates the world by mathematical principles that are not his creation. This destiny still preserves independence of action (through Tyche and Free-will), but has the advantage of not making the Demiurge responsible for the existence of evil.

Other Texts

The *Quaestiones Conviviales* in fact yield more information on demiurgic causality than the more technical *Platonicae Quaestiones*. Here the most interesting point raised is at 1002E:

“Τὸ δὴ ποτε, τὴν ψυχὴν αἰεὶ πρεσβυτέραν ἀποφαίνων τε τῆς τοῦ σώματος αἰτίαν ἐκείνου γενέσεως καὶ ἀρχὴν, πάλιν φησὶν οὐκ ἂν γενέσθαι ψυχὴν ἄνευ σώματος οὔδε νοῦν ἄνευ ψυχῆς ἀλλὰ ψυχὴν μὲν ἐν σώματι νοῦν δ' ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ; δόξει γὰρ τὸ σῶμα καὶ εἶναι καὶ μὴ εἶναι συνυπάρχον ἅμα τῇ ψυχῇ καὶ γεννώμενον ὑπὸ τῆς ψυχῆς”.

“Whyever, when he declares that the soul is always senior to the body and the cause and origin of the latter's generation, does he again say that the soul could not have come to be without body or intelligence without soul either, but soul in body and intelligence in soul? For it would seem that the body both exists and does not exist, if it is at once coexistent with the soul and being generated by the soul.”⁶⁸

This passage is modelled upon *Timaeus* 30B3-5.⁶⁹ Plutarch answers the question at 1003ff., pointing out that the soul does not fabriacte (“ἐδημιούργει”) the

⁶⁷ Echoing Plato's *Laws* 960C, Arist. *De Mundo* 401 B 14.

⁶⁸ trans, Cherniss, H. (1976), 48.

⁶⁹ “νοῦν δ' αὖ χωρὶς ψυχῆς ἀδύνατον παραγενέσθαι τῷ. διὰ δὲ τὸν λογισμὸν τόνδε νοῦν μὲν ἐν ψυχῇ, ψυχὴν δὲ ἐν σώματι ξυμίστας τὸ πᾶν ξυνεκταίνετο, ὅπως ὅ τι κάλλιστον εἶη κατὰ φύσιν ἄριστόν τε ἔργον ἀπειργασμένος.” (“...and further that reason cannot possibly belong to any apart from Soul. So because of this reflexion He constructed reason within soul and soul within body as He fashioned the All, that so the work he was executing might be of its nature most fair and most good”).

nature of body out of itself or out of what is non-existent, but converts a disorderly body into an orderly one. For Plutarch, this helps to explain how amorphous and indefinite matter (“ἡ ἄμορφος ὕλη καὶ ἀόριστος” 1003B) acquires form and properties (“διάθεσιν”) through the interaction of soul upon it. Plutarch may infer this from the description of the Demiurge putting the soul into the body of the cosmos.

Some further light can be thrown on the issue of demiurgic causality by turning to *De E*. Of the seven possible interpretations of the symbolism behind the E, only the response of Ammonius, since it deals with the most elevated issues, need concern us here: (*De E* 392B)

“Ἡμῖν μὲν γὰρ ὄντως τοῦ εἶναι μέτεστιν οὐδέν, ἀλλὰ πᾶσα θνητὴ φύσις ἐν μέσῳ γενέσεως καὶ φθορᾶς γενομένη φᾶσμα παρέχει καὶ δόκησιν ἀμυδρὰν καὶ ἀβέβαιον αὐτῆς”.

‘We indeed do not participate in a real manner of existence. All perishable nature placed between birth and death only offers itself an image an appearance deprived of order and of constancy.’

Here Ammonius draws the Platonic distinction between Being and Becoming, before going on to expound the continual temporal creation (392D):

“μένει δ’ οὐδεὶς οὐδ’ ἔστιν εἷς, ἀλλὰ γιγνόμεθα πολλοί, περὶ ἓν τὶ φάντασμα καὶ κοινὸν ἐκμαγεῖον ὕλης περιελαυνομένης καὶ ὀλισθανούσης”.

“And no one continues or remains the same, but we are successively many beings, while around us a common image and semblance of matter glides and circulates.”

This, like *Quaestiones Conviviales* 719D, posits a continually active Demiurge, similar to Plato, and at odds with the passivity of Osiris. Ammonius describes true Being at 392E:

“Τί οὖν ὄντως ὄν ἐστὶ; τὸ αἰδίου καὶ ἀγένητον καὶ ἀφθαρτον, ὃ χρόνος μεταβολὴν οὐδὲ εἷς ἐπάγει. κινητὸν γὰρ τὶ καὶ κινουμένη συμφανταζόμενον ὕλη καὶ ῥεόν ἀεὶ καὶ μὴ στέγον, ὡς περὶ ἀγγεῖον φθορᾶς καὶ γενέσεως, ὁ χρόνος.”

“What then is That Which Is (= Real Being)? That which is eternal, who had no beginning and will have no end, who does not undergo change at any moment in time. For time is in motion and appearance, comparable to material in motion, it is in flux continually and can hold nothing back; it is like the recipient of all birth and death.”

Plutarch here places the Demiurge beyond the reach of the evil principle. As has previously been illustrated, the evil principle is not equal in power to the Demiurge. By ὁ ἔστι, Plutarch must be referring to the transcendent Λόγος

represented in the *De Iside* by the soul of Osiris, rather than the immanent Λόγος represented by his body, which is subject to Time.

De Animae Procreatione in Timaeo

Some interesting points can be gleaned from *De Animae Procreatione*, which along with *Platonicae Quaestiones* is the only surviving exegetical treatise of Plutarch. However, as Cherniss comments on Plutarch's supposedly literal interpretation of the *Timaeus*: "his motive was not strict fidelity to Plato's words, but concern to enlist Plato's authority for the proposition that the universe was brought into being by God".⁷⁰ As Cherniss also points out, there is little in the treatise that is original and it is interesting mainly due to information which it provides on earlier treatments of the *Timaeus*.⁷¹ Part of the reason I consider it here, after *De Iside*, is although it is an ἀναγραφή in response to his son's request that he synthesise what he has said frequently on the soul (and therefore can be taken as evidence of his carefully considered position on the matter), it only treats of *Tim.* 35A1-36B5. *De Iside*, by contrast, displays greater breadth and scope in dealing with the metaphysical matters addressed by the *Timaeus*.

Extensive lists of the distortions of Plato's thought created by Plutarch have been compiled by both Cherniss and Hershbell. For example, Plutarch's quotations tend to be inaccurate (but this is probably due to the fact that he reproduced a text that differs from ours). At 1012B - C, Plutarch adapts *Politicus* 273B4-6, but omits the preceding τὸ σωματοειδὲς τῆς συγκράσεως, which would undermine his interpretation. At 1024C Plutarch equates χῶρα (receptacle) with ὕλη (matter). At 1014B-C and 1016D-1017A, he identifies χῶρα with "precosmic" chaos. At 1015 D-E Plutarch inverses the situation, equating ὕλη with χῶρα: "ὁ γὰρ Πλάτων μητέρα μὲν καὶ τιθήνην καλεῖ τὴν ὕλην αἰτίαν δὲ κακοῦ τὴν κινητικὴν τῆς ὕλης" ("In fact, while Plato calls matter mother and nurse, what he calls the cause of evil is the motion that moves matter"), ignoring the fact that Plato actually calls the Receptacle Mother and Nurse. Cherniss and Hershbell both censure Plutarch for this wilful distortion of Plutarch's thought. Yet Plutarch synthesised ὕλη and χῶρα into the Receptacle-matter represented by Isis and so for him they both represent the

⁷⁰ Cherniss, H. (1976), 146.

⁷¹ Cherniss, H. (1976), 135.

same thing (as they did for other Platonists, as a result of Aristotelian influence). Indeed, identification between the two is justifiable in terms of the *Timaeus* text, as has been noted above (p. 36),

One passage where Plutarch has been severely criticised is at *De an. proc.*1012B-C. Plutarch, quoting from *Tim.* 35A-B states: “ τῆς τε ταύτου φύσεως αὐτῆς περὶ καὶ τῆς τοῦ ἑτέρου καὶ κατὰ ταῦτα συνέστησεν ἐν μέσῳ τοῦ τ’ἀμεροῦς αὐτῆν καὶ τοῦ κατὰ τὰ σώματα μεριστοῦ.” There are several variations here between Plutarch’s text and the standard reading of the *Timaeus*, the most problematic of which is αὐτῆν for αὐτῶν. αὐτῆν is incompatible with the standard interpretation of “again in the case of sameness and in that of difference, he also on the same principle made a compound intermediate between that kind of them which is indivisible and the kind that is divisible in bodies.” (trans. Opsomer). This implies that for sameness and for difference the divisible and indivisible kinds are mixed together. Plutarch’s reading is “And with regard to the nature of sameness again and that of difference he also in this way compounded it, in the middle, out of the indivisible and what is divisible among bodies.”

Opsomer provides an extensive analysis of the matter, which I just trace over briefly.⁷² Essentially Plutarch interprets the soul as the mixture of sameness, difference and the blend of divisible and indivisible being. As indivisible being for Plutarch represents the intelligible, the realm of the Demiurge, this is how Plutarch is led to claim that something of the Demiurge is imparted to soul (*cf. Quaest. Plat.* 2, 1001C). At 1014 - 1017, Plutarch also argues against a creation *ex nihilo*. The Demiurge creates the cosmos from ἀρχαί (precosmic principles consisting of disorganised corporeality (τὸ σωματικόν) and irrational motivity (τὸ κινητικόν). This principle combines the "infinitude" (ἀπειρία) of the *Philebus*, the “Necessity” (ἀναγκή) of *Timaeus* 52D, with the disorderly soul of *Laws* X. A non-literal interpretation is contained in Plutarch's view that the Timaeian Demiurge creates soul (even though he regulates matter), whereas the Plutarchean Demiurge only regulates soul by combining it with νοῦς.

At 1014D-E and 1015E, Plutarch disregards the fact that in the *Laws*, Plato does not refer to the evil aspect of soul as precosmic to beneficial soul, but describes it as coeval with good souls. Given Plutarch's marked dualistic tendencies, this might

⁷² Opsomer, J. (2004), *passim*.

appear to be an acceptable manoeuvre. But at 1023C, Plutarch argues that the Demiurge's relationship to soul is that of producer to product. Since the Demiurge introduces νοῦς, which is a part of the Demiurge, the soul is akin to God, rather than his finished product. This makes the indivisible being of the *Timaeus* practically identical to the Demiurge.⁷³ If the ungenerated universe is coeval with soul (1013E-F), this neither provides strong evidence that the god exists or any reason for his existence, when the Demiurge's existence requires that the soul of the universe has its beginning prior to that of the corporeal cosmos.⁷⁴ He does also refer, at *Quaest. Plat.*, 1001C, to the soul as not just the product, but a part of God (“οὐκ ἔστι τοῦ θεοῦ μόνον ἀλλὰ καὶ μέρος”).

This is all in accordance with Plutarch's views that soul exists and is capable of causing motion, prior to the addition of harmony and order by the Demiurge (clearly an attitude taken directly from the pages of the *Timaeus*.), but the motion that it caused was disorderly. To this extent it is a cause of evil (*cf.* 1027A). The Demiurge's great contribution is to bind sameness and difference by means of the intermediate terms of indivisible and divisible and to use this ordered soul to transmit harmony lower down the ontological scale.

Conclusion

Plutarch's most distinctive doctrines - his dualism and his belief in temporal creation contrary to the majority of Platonic interpreters, such as Speusippus, Xenocrates and Crantor, shapes his understanding of the mechanics of demiurgy, as can be seen from *De Iside et Osiride*. While some other passages of Plutarch indicate less originality, the fact that the *De Is.* contains his basic thoughts on this matter is illustrated by the confirmation provided by certain other texts.

Plutarch's demiurgic system owes a great deal to his attempts to extricate himself from many of the problems he saw encountered by Stoicism: a procedure which has earned him censure as an eclectic. As Dillon comments: “In fact there is nothing at all wrong with being “eclectic” if that means simply that one is prepared to adopt a good formulation, or a valid line of argument, from a rival school or individual and adjust one's philosophical position accordingly. In this sense, most of the great philosophers are eclectics, and eclecticism is a mark of acuteness and

⁷³ Cherniss, H. (1976), 142.

⁷⁴ Cherniss, H. (1976), 148.

originality as opposed to narrow-minded sectarianism.”⁷⁵ Plutarch should be viewed as an original "thinker" (although perhaps "philosopher" would be stretching the point), who adapted ideas from rival schools and was even prepared to distort Plato's thought to produce a modified version of demiurgic causality, which resolved the problem of evil, with more adroitness and skill than is generally appreciated by modern scholars.

⁷⁵ Dillon, J. M. (1988), 103.

Chapter 3: Maximus of Tyre

Introduction

Maximus of Tyre, usually rather disparagingly termed a *Halbphilosoph* or a “sophist” rather than a philosopher, still deserves closer attention than is generally paid to him. It is his lack of originality which renders him useful in trying to form an impression of the current of second-century philosophical thought. Maximus' forty-one orations tend to focus on practical morality, although some have a bearing on theology. Unfortunately, Maximus treats the problem of demiurgic causality (and indeed practically every other philosophical problem that he encounters) in a superficial way. Modern scholarship on Maximus has tended to focus on emendation of the text (notably by Trapp and Renehan), or in attempts to locate Maximus within the current of Middle Platonism. Puiggali's magisterial study provides a comprehensive survey of Maximus' orations themselves and reveals how fruitful a detailed investigation of the writings of this *Halbphilosoph* can be.

As a result of his philosophical *oeuvre* (introductory lectures to students of philosophy), he does not provide a detailed analysis of the problems of the *Timaeus*, but only some standardised interpretations of certain points of Platonic metaphysics. His influence upon the development of the Demiurge does not appear to have been particularly great, though he does present some noteworthy imagery (such as the comparison of causality to machinery). He was interested in factors limiting the influence of the Demiurge (such as Fortune), but his main stance is a moralising and antisectarian one: provided that God receives his appropriate honours, then for Maximus fine theological distinctions pale in comparison.

Maximus propounds the standard conception of a Demiurge who engages in noetic activity in order to stabilise the universe and considers the origin of evil, where he adopts formulations that appear close to Stoic thought. Maximus also concerns himself equally with how the Demiurge continually cares for or administers the cosmos, as well as the generative act. Perhaps because of his personal religious views, he stresses divine transcendence (through his articulation of the power of Zeus' “nod”). Maximus, in general, does not consider how the mechanics of demiurgy function, although he does consider how a continuous ontological link can be formed from Demiurge to mankind through the daimons. One of his most interesting insights is the deeply-allusive reference to Anaximander's philosophy through the medium of

the marriage of Zeus and Chthonie as a metaphor for the principle of harmony. For Maximus, the Demiurge is the supreme god, though he stresses the unity of the divine, regarding various deities as functioning in association with one another, while they may have their own allotted spheres. Though Maximus speculates regarding the limits Necessity imposes upon the Demiurge during world-generation, as well as during continual governance, he mainly expounds the metaphysics of the *Timaeus* in an engaging literary fashion, rather than developing the philosophical issues involved.

Oration 11

Oration 11: τίς ὁ θεὸς κατὰ Πλάτωνα "What is God according to Plato?" is an account of the opinions Maximus believed that Plato held concerning the divinity. God is portrayed as a supreme, transcendent intellect. One cannot really hope for a critical analysis of the Platonic Demiurge from Maximus' opening statement:

“When even Plato, unsurpassed in eloquence (even in comparison to Homer) is still unable to carry conviction with his account of God, and people desire instead to learn of his opinions from some other source, then only a fool would be ready to hazard an account.” .

§ 5 expresses a belief in a demiurgic God who rules assisted by subordinates.

The only noteworthy point here is the quote:

“θεοῦ πάντα ἔργα, ἢ ψυχὴ λέγει, καὶ τὸν τεχνίτην ποθεῖ καὶ καταμαντεύεται τῆς τέχνης”. (11.5.89–90)

“They are all the handiwork of God, replies the soul, as it yearns for the craftsman and divines the presence of his craft.”

Interestingly, Maximus does not refer here to his craftsman-god as the Demiurge but as τεχνίτης. Maximus avoids providing an explanation of demiurgic causality, launching instead into an attack on agnostic or atheistic philosophical theories:

“They know him without wanting to and speak of him in spite of themselves: even if, like Leucippus, you remove his goodness; even if, like Democritus, you add "community of sensation", even if, like Strato, you alter his nature, even if, like Epicurus, you allow him to feel pleasure; even if, like Diagoras, you deny his existence; even if, like Protagoras, you declare yourself agnostic.”

It is typical of Maximus to adopt a moralising stance, perhaps less in order to avoid engaging in serious philosophical inquiry than from his conviction that belief in Gos is what matters, rather than the refinements of various metaphysical schemes.

However, at § 8, he tries to locate God's position in the cosmos, placing him obviously in the suprasensible world. Here there is a textual complication:

“ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐνταυθα διαφύην (Shorey. διαφή R) ὀρώ· τοῦ γὰρ νοῦ ὁ μὲν νοεῖν πέφυκεν, καὶ μὴ νοῶν, ὁ δὲ καὶ νοεῖ· ἀλλὰ καὶ οὗτος οὔπω τέλειος, ἂν μὴ προσθῆς αὐτῷ τὸ καὶ νοεῖν αἰεὶ, καὶ πάντα νοεῖν, καὶ μὴ ἄλλοτε ἄλλα· ὥστε εἴη ἂν ἐντελέστατος ὁ νοῶν αἰεὶ καὶ πάντα καὶ ἅμα.” (11.8.186-191)

I have opted for Trapp's reading “ὁ δὲ καὶ νοεῖ” (“one of them has the natural capacity for thought, even though it does not think, the other actually thinks”), rather than the manuscript reading of “ὁ δὲ καὶ πέφυκεν” (“and has the natural capacity”). Both Heinsius and the corrector of Harl (possibly Janus Lascarius) observed a problem here with the readings “καὶ <νοεῖ καὶ> πέφυκεν” (Heinsius, “both actually thinks and has the natural capacity”) and “καὶ πεφυκεν <καὶ νοεῖ>” (Harl. 5760) *post corr.* (“both has the natural capacity and actually thinks”). Trapp observed that light can be shed on the problem by a similar passage, Chapter 10 of the *Didaskalikos* of Alcinous (itself probably deriving from the doxographic work of Arius Didymus:

“ἔπει δὲ ψυχῆς νοῦς ἀμείνων; νοῦ δὲ τῶν ἐν δυνάμει ὁ κατ' ἐνέργειαν πάντα νοῶν καὶ ἅμα καὶ αἰεὶ”. (*Did.* 10.164)

The distinction between a potential and active Intellect was ultimately Aristotelian, but is a standard part of Middle Platonic theology, which Trapp observes is likely to be found here, as the passage evinces a “more than usual dependance upon scholastic material”.⁷⁶ As Trapp's reading actually develops a pointed statement, it is the one which I follow here. The passage highlights the Platonic perception of demiurgy as noetic activity. Maximus draws a further distinction:

“Yet even this latter does not yet rank as perfect intellect, unless you add to it the further properties of thinking eternally and thinking all things and not thinking differently at different times. Thus the most perfect form of intellect is that which thinks all things for ever and at the same time.”

Maximus here seems to be close to Berkeley's view that all objects have a continuous existence in the mind of God. God thinking eternally the same things seems to posit a continual noetic creation. This may be seen as straining the text, but in the introduction to this section, Maximus states "For can anything have stability if

⁷⁶ Trapp, M. B. (1991), 569.

God does not lay his steadying hand upon it" (11.8, 165-7), which seems to indicate the Demiurge's ordering of the cosmos.

Oration 41

A much more promising oration for present purposes is *Oration 41*: τοῦ θεοῦ τὰ ἀγαθὰ ποιούντος, πόθεν τὰ κακά—"Good being the work of God, whence comes evil?" In this attempt to solve the problem of evil, Maximus expresses certain interesting comments concerning the mechanics of demiurgy. He adopts a stoicising attitude- after absolving the gods from responsibility for evil, he claims that evil either results from alterations to matter or from human freedom of choice.

At *Oration 2*, Maximus elegantly expresses a platitude concerning the manner in which the demiurgic intellect pervades the universe:

"The fostering god, whose mind adamant and unwearied, pervading the whole of creation with extraordinary speed like the glance of an eye, brings order and beauty to all that it touches, just as the rays of the sun when they fall on the earth illuminate every part that they reach."

The demiurgic intellect is like the sun's light simultaneously embracing all parts of the earth, in comparison to human intelligence, which is compared to the daily passage of the sun - it gradually passes over each individual point of the earth in turn. Maximus then draws the commonplace distinction between the superlunary and suprasensible realms:

"τίς οὖν ἡ τῆς ἀτασθαλίας αἰτία; οὐρανοῦ καὶ γῆς δυοῖν ἐστίαν τὴν μὲν ἄμοιραν ἡγήτεον κακῶν, τὴν δὲ ἐξ ἀμφοῖν ἐπιμεμιγμένην, ἣ τὰ μὲν ἀγαθὰ ἐπίρρυτα ἐκ τῆς ἑτέρας, τὰ δὲ κακά ἐξ αὐτοφουῶς μοχθηρίας ἀνίσταται. διττὴ δὲ αὕτη, ἡ μὲν ὕλης πάθος, ἡ δὲ ψυχῆς ἐξουσία".(41.4.109-113).

"What then is the cause of these misdeeds? Of the two dwellings constituted by heaven and earth, we must believe that the former has no contact with evil, while the latter is compounded of good and evil both, having the goods flow down to it from the other and the evils that arise from its own innate imperfections. These imperfections are themselves of two kinds, those deriving from modifications of physical matter and those deriving from the license enjoyed by the human soul."

There appears to be a process of emanation (ἐπίρρυτα) by which the lower realm receives necessary goods, indicating that the Demiurge continues to care for the sublunar realm, though it is not stated expressly here. The notion that the earth is a blend of good and evil echoes Plato's portrayal of the cosmos as a blend of reason and necessity. Maximus' view of the inherent imperfections of the cosmos still parallels

Plato's view that the cosmos is the best type that can exist. But what is particularly noteworthy is Maximus' explanation of physical evil – ὕλης πάθος. It was common for second century Platonists to oppose God, the source of Good, to recalcitrant matter, the source of evil. As Simone Pétrement comments "Au second siècle après Jésus-Christ, les platoniciens sont nettement dualistes: Plutarque, Maxime de Tyr, Atticus, Hermogène, Celse, Numénius d' Apamée, Cronius, Harpocraton opposent profondément Dieu à la matière au point que la plupart d'entre eux font de celle-ci le principe du mal."⁷⁷

The problem is that Maximus here does not speak of matter as being responsible for evil, but the modifications which matter undergoes to create the cosmos; a turn of phrase which is alarmingly Stoic. Maximus is not dualist in the same sense as certain other Platonists, who view creation as an ongoing conflict between the Demiurge and matter; or indeed in the manner of Numenius and Plutarch, who posit an evil or an irrational soul as a third principle. Maximus is only dualist in the sense that like all Platonists, he draws a sharp distinction between the intelligible world and the realm of phenomena.⁷⁸

The difficulty with Maximus' Stoic formulation here is that he is still preserving the Platonic transcendent divinity, while the Stoic explanation of evil operates in the context of a monistic system, with God and matter perpetually united. Admittedly, other Platonists during this period also adopted the Stoic formulation. Regarding the existence of evil as a by-product of the creation of the cosmos still makes the Demiurge responsible for evil, although Maximus does not seem to think that this is the case. After all, an industrialist is still responsible for harmful by-products, even though the end product of the process may be valuable:

“ὕλην ὀρᾶς ὑποβεβλημένην δημιουργῶ ἀγαθῶ, ἧς τὸ μὲν κοσμηθὲν ἦκει παρὰ τῆς τέχνης, εἰ δέ τι ἀκρατῶς ἑαυτῶν τὰ ἐν γῆ ἔχοντα πάσχει πλημμελές, ἀναίτιον μοι τὴν τέχνην τίθει· βούλησις γὰρ οὐδεμία τεχνίτου ἄτεχνος οὐδὲ γὰρ νομοθέτου ἄδικος· ὁ δὲ θεῖος νοῦς ἀνθρωπίνης τέχνης εὐστοχώτερος. καθάπερ οὖν ἐν ταῖς τῶν τεχνῶν χειρουργίαις τὰ μὲν ἢ τέχνη προηγουμένως δρᾶ, στοχαζομένη τοῦ τέλους, τὰ δὲ ἔπεται τῇ χειρουργίᾳ, οὐ τέχνης ἔργα ἀλλ' ὕλης πάθη, σπινθηρές τε ἐξ ἄκμονος καὶ ἐκ βαίνου αἰθαλώσεις, καὶ ἄλλο ἐξ ἄλλης πάθος ἀναγκαῖον μὲν τῇ ἐργασίᾳ, οὐ προηγούμενον δὲ τῷ τεχνίτῃ· οὕτως ἀμέλει καὶ ὅσα περὶ γῆν πάθη γίνεται, ἃς καλοῦμεν κακῶν ἀνθρωπίνων ἐμβολάς, ἐνταῦθα ἡγητέον ἀναίτιον {καὶ} τὴν τέχνην, εἶναι δὲ ταῦτα τῆς τοῦ ὅλου δημιουργίας ὥσπερ τινὰς ἀναγκαίας καὶ ἐπομένας φύσεις. ἃ δὲ

⁷⁷ Pétrement, S. - *Essai sur le dualisme chez Platon, les Gnostiques, et les manichéens*, Paris 1947, 11.

⁷⁸ Puiggali, J. (1983), 315.

ἡμεῖς καλοῦμεν κακὰ καὶ φθοράς, καὶ ἐφ' οἷς ὀδυρόμεθα, ταῦτα ὁ τεχνίτης καλεῖ σωτηρίαν τοῦ ὅλου.”(41.4.114-131)

“What you see around you is matter that has been subjected to the efforts of a good craftsman: the element of order in it derives from his science, but if earthly things experience any disharmony in their ability to control themselves, then I would beg you to absolve that science from any blame. No craftsman can form an intention that counteracts his science any more than a lawmaker can form an intention that is unjust, and divine intelligence is surer in its aim than human science. Just as in the exercise of the crafts, science itself produces some effects directly as it aims for its objectives, while other consequences follow on from its activity, not as effects of the science itself, but as incidental modifications of matter, like sparks from the anvil and gust of heat from the furnace and other modifications of forms of matter, which are the necessary consequences of work done, but not produced directly by the craftsman himself; of just the same kind is the genesis of earthly events we call the assaults of human ill. Here too we must believe that the science is blameless and that those effects are so to speak the necessary and natural consequences of the crafting of the whole. What we call evil and ruin, the things we lament over, the craftsman calls the preservation of the whole.”

This passage I have quoted at length as it is one of Maximus' most detailed discussions of demiurgic causality. Maximus is evidently alluding to the Aristotelian concept of accidental causation.⁷⁹ Here the demiurgic image is developed at the expense of philosophical coherence - if the Demiurge really creates the cosmos in the same manner as a blacksmith works, he would cease to be a transcendent divinity. The comparison of the Demiurge with the lawmaker is perhaps more apt, placing him in the position of a regulator, rather than a creator, although it is a Platonic commonplace. Maximus indicates that there are restrictions on the Demiurge when he creates the universe, although unlike many other philosophers, he is reticent as to what exactly these are.

Fortunately, Maximus elaborates on why exactly the Demiurge is not to be blamed for the creation (albeit indirect) of evil (§ 4) by regarding it as preservation of the whole and in the statement “his concern is precisely for the whole, and it is necessary for the part to suffer in the interests of the whole”. For Maximus, evil does not exist on the physical plane; its existence is merely a human perception. In fact, these so-called evils are useful, necessary as they are for the preservation of the cosmos as a whole. Physical evil is a human conception, because men are unable to comprehend the intentions of the divinity. This idea of minor unpleasantness resulting

⁷⁹ Cf. ps.-Alex. *Mantissa* p.170 ff.

from creative activity had been previously adopted by other Platonists⁸⁰ and can be traced back to Plato (*Laws* X 903b), but is ultimately Stoic.⁸¹

The demiurgic image above contrasts sharply with a parallel account of demiurgic causality, which exists in the same sermon.

“ὁμοῦ δὲ τῷ Δίῳ νεύματι γῆ ξυνέστη καὶ ὅσα γῆς θρέμματα, καὶ θάλασσα ξυνέστη καὶ ὅσα θαλάττης γεννήματα, καὶ ἀήρ ξυνέστη καὶ ὅσα ἄερος φορήματα, καὶ οὐρανὸς ξυνέστη καὶ ὅσα ἐν οὐρανῷ κινήματα.”(41.2.51-54)

“At Zeus' nod, the earth took form, and all that is nourished on the earth and the sea and all that is born in it and the air took form and all the creatures that ride in it, and the heavens took form and all that moves in them. This is the work of Zeus' nod.”

For Maximus, the Demiurge's νεῦμα is a sign of his power. Creation takes place merely by his assenting to it. This also helps to preserve his status as a transcendent deity and to insulate him from matter. Incidentally, matter in Maximus' conception here must be inert or actually desire to be ordered. Here also, no mention is made of any force opposing the Demiurge during the act of creation. Unfortunately, one cannot avoid reading this passage without the same feeling of disappointment that one experienced upon encountering Plutarch's view that the Demiurge creates the universe “by other contacts and attachments.” In both cases it seems to provide an escape route that is a little too convenient. Maximus' description of Zeus' nod allows him to preserve the dignity of his chief divinity, but it also absolves him from having to engage in any serious philosophical enquiry on how the Demiurge operates on matter or orders it.

Apart from seeming to abandon the Platonic conception of matter as an independent or quasi-independent principle here, Maximus also makes no mention of the World-Soul or how he perceives that it should operate within his system - it seems that the divine intelligence of Zeus' νεῦμα is enough to pervade the cosmos.⁸²

This image of Zeus' νεῦμα is used also in *Oration* 4, when Maximus is considering the accounts of the gods produced by poets and philosophers:

“αἰσθάνομαι τῶν Διὸς νευμάτων· διὰ τούτων γῆ μένει καὶ ἀναχεῖται θάλαττα καὶ ἀήρ διαρρεῖ καὶ πῦρ ἄνω θεῖ καὶ οὐρανὸς περιφέρεται

⁸⁰ Phil. *Prov.* (Armenian tr.) 100, 102, 104, Aurelius 6.36, 7.75

⁸¹ eg. SVF ii 1170.

⁸² The importance of the divine νεῦμα as an illustration of the authority of Zeus is exhibited also by Atticus at Eusebius *Pr. Ev.* XV, 4, 9: “οὐ παλινάγρετον, ὅτι κεν οὗτος τῇ κεφαλῇ ἐπινεύσῃ”, Ps.-Justin *Ch.* 23 and Stobaeus *Flor.* III, II, 2 (= III, 430, 1-2H). Puiggali, J. (1983), 185, quoting from *Homer Il.* 1. 526-7.

καὶ ζῶα γίνεται καὶ δένδρα φύεται· τῶν Διὸς νευμάτων ἔργα καὶ ἀνθρώπου ἀρετὴ καὶ εὐδαιμονία.”(4.8.152–156)

“Yes I can see what happens when Zeus nods his assent for it is by this agency that the earth keeps its station and the sea covers it and the air surrounds it and fire flies upwards and the heavens revolve and animals are born and trees grow. Human virtue and human happiness are likewise products of Zeus' nod of assent.”

Here again, the Demiurge is not really involved in creating or indeed in ordering; all he has to do is assent to creation and matters, or rather matter, takes care of itself. This is underlined by the reference to human virtue as equally the product of Zeus' nod of assent. At *Oration* 5.8, Maximus considers Socrates' prayer to the gods in the context of human virtue as a divine gift:

“ἀλλ' εὐχέτο μὲν τοῖς θεοῖς, ἐλάμβανεν δὲ παρ' ἑαυτοῦ συνεπινεούτων ἐκείνων ἀρετὴν ψυχῆς καὶ ἡσυχίαν βίου καὶ ζωὴν ἀμεμπτον καὶ εὐελπιν θάνατον, τὰ θαυμαστὰ δῶρα, τὰ θεοῖς δοτά.” (5.8.193-195)

“It was indeed to the gods that he prayed, but it was for himself, for their blessing, that he received his virtuous soul, his serene career, his irreproachable life, and his cheerful death -those amazing "God-given" gifts.” It is as if Socrates appeals to God to allow him to be virtuous, but promises himself to take care of it. In Maximus' view, everything appears to regulate itself to some degree, although perhaps the νεῦμα of Zeus is more than just an assent, but rather the initial impetus required to start the process of creation, followed by a less active role where the Demiurge engages in continual creation “by thinking the same things”.

Limits imposed upon the Demiurge

Maximus frequently alludes to the limits placed upon demiurgic causality by external factors. For example at *Oration* 13 (8.163-167), he considers the principle of Necessity:

“ὥστε ἐγὼ ὑποπτεύω μὲν τὴν ἀνάγκην, ὀνομάσαι δὲ αὐτὴν εὐπορῶς οὐκ ἔχω. κὰν γὰρ πεπρωμένην φῶ, ὄνομα λέγω πλανώμενον ἐν ἀνθρώπων δόξαις· τίς γὰρ ἡ πεπρωμένη; ποίας φύσεως; τίνος οὐσίας”.

“For these reasons, I have my suspicions about Necessity, but find it difficult to give the phenomena a name. If I say “destiny” I am using a name that has no stable meaning in men's minds. What is destiny? What is its nature? What is its essence?”

Unfortunately, Maximus shies away from any attempt to investigate the principle of Necessity and indulges instead in Homeric quotation and moralising:

“εἰ μὲν τοι θεός ἐσσι, τοι οὐρανὸν εὐρὺν ἔχουσιν, οὐδὲν τῶν δεινῶν σὸν ἔργον; εἰ δὲ τις ἐσσι βροτῶν τοῖ ἐπὶ χθονὶ ναιετάουσιν

ψεύδεται μὲν ὁ Ἑλπηνωρ λέγων, "ἄσε με δαίμονος αἴσα κακή..." Εοικεν δὲ καὶ ταυτὶ τὰ ὀνόματα εἶναι μοχθηρίας ἀνθρωπίνης εὐφημοὶ ἀποστροφαί..."

"If you are a god, one of those who dwell in the broad heavens", then nothing that is terrible can be your handiwork. But if you are one of the mortal race, who dwell on the earth, then Elpenor is lying when he says: "It was an evil fate sent by the gods that led me astray. These names too look like evasive euphemisms for human wickedness." (13.8.167-179)

Maximus does, however, engage in a somewhat more "scientific" study of other factors that affect the Demiurge's relationship with the world in *Oration 5: εἰ δὲ εὐχεσθαι—Whether One Ought to Pray*. Maximus here considers God's relationship with the world. Four factors other than the Demiurge play a role in causality: Providence, Destiny, Fortune/Chance and Science. A demarcation dispute exists between these factors and it is unclear what distinction Maximus intends between them. Like *Oration 41*, this provides another opportunity to absolve the Demiurge from responsibility for the existence of evil, although in that sermon also Maximus tends to rely more on moralising assertion than upon reasoned philosophical argument:

"God does not distribute evils; they are rather the gift of chance coming blindly from their unreasoning source like the cheery greetings of drunkards." (5.1.22-25)⁸³

Maximus gives a brief outline of the role played by each of these factors:

"Καὶ μὴν τῶν ὅσα οἱ ἄνθρωποι εὐχονται γενέσθαι σφίσι, τὰ μὲν ἢ πρόνοια ἐφορᾶ, τὰ δὲ <ή> εἰμαρμένη καταναγκάζει, τὰ δὲ μεταβάλλει ἢ τύχη, τὰ δὲ οἰκονομεῖ ἢ τέχνη. καὶ ἢ μὲν πρόνοια θεοῦ ἔργον, ἢ δὲ εἰμαρμένη ἀναγκῆς, ἢ δὲ τέχνη ἀνθρώπου, ἢ δὲ τύχη τοῦ αὐτομάτου· διακεκλήρωται δὲ τούτων ἕκαστω αἱ ὕλαι τοῦ βίου· ἅ τοίνυν εὐχομεθα, ἢ εἰς πρόνοιαν συντελεῖ θεοῦ ἢ εἰς εἰμαρμένης ἀνάγκην ἢ εἰς ἀνθρώπου τέχνην ἢ εἰς τύχης φορᾶν." (5.4.80-87)

"Of all the things which men pray to obtain, some are under the control of Providence, some are enforced by Destiny, some are at the mercy of fickle Fortune and some are regulated by Science. Providence is God's work, Destiny the work of Necessity, Science the work of man, and Fortune the work of blind Chance. It is to the supervision of one or other of these four factors that the raw material of life is allocated. What we pray for must therefore be attributed either to divine Providence, or to destined Necessity, or to human science or to the vagaries of Fortune."⁸⁴

⁸³ Cf. *Tim.* 30A.

⁸⁴ Similar lists exist – [Plut.] *Placita* 885cd, Sextus *Pyrr. Hyp.* 1.237, Stob. *Ecl.* 1.5. 15-16, i.45, 25-47.16 Meineke, Diog. Laert. 3.96 cf. Trapp, M. B. (1997), 45.

Here, Maximus adheres to the Platonic opposition to Destiny as the sole factor in causality, as opposed to the Stoic unification of Providence and destiny and their denial of the existence of Chance.⁸⁵ Platonic accounts can be found at [Plut.] *De Fato*, Alcib. *Didasc.* 26 and Apul. *De Plat.* 1.12. Trapp states “Quite what distinction Maximus himself intends here and in §§ 4-5 between Providence and Destiny remains obscure.”⁸⁶ However at § 4, Maximus refers to Providence as that exercised by God on behalf of creation as a whole - so I believe that it represents demiurgic reason. Since Destiny is explicitly said to be the work of ἀνάγκη, it must be Maximus' equivalent of the Necessity which Plato's Demiurge has to confront in the *Timaeus*. Therefore, I find Trapp's statement difficult to understand - the real problem here is not the distinction between providence and destiny, but rather how fortune and science play a role in the act of creation, along with the two original factors found in the *Timaeus*. That all four factors must play a role in creation is clear from the statement that the raw material (αἰ ὕλαι could equally be applied to matter although the use of the plural creates a certain degree of ambivalence) is allocated to one of the four. But who or what exactly does the allocating? Another problem exists concerning the precise nature of εἰμαρμένης ἀνάγκη. How exactly is Necessity destined? Presumably in the same sense as in Plato's *Timaeus* -certain features cannot of necessity be combined by the Demiurge in the creation of the phenomenal realm and so in this manner ἀνάγκη is preordained.

Maximus, like Plato, stresses that the Demiurge, not just in the act of creation, but even in his theodicy, is bound by Necessity:

“ἀλλ' οὐδὲ ὁ Ζεὺς αὐτὸς εὔρετο παρ' ἐκείνης ἀποτροπήν, ἀλλ' ὀδύρεται· ὦ μοι ἐγὼν ὃ τέ μοι Σαρπηδόνα φίλτατον ἀνδρῶν μοῖρ' ὑπὸ Πατρόκλοιῳ Μενoitιάδαο δαμῆναι. τίτι θεῶν εὔχεται ὁ Ζεὺς ὑπερ τοῦ παιδός; καὶ ἡ Θέτις βοᾷ, ὦ μοι ἐγὼ δειλή· ὦ μοι δυσαριστοτόκεια.”(5.5. 124–130)

“Not even Zeus could find an escape; he could only lament: "Ah me, that it is destined that the dearest of men, Sarpedon, must go down under the hands of Menoetus' son, Patroclus"(Il. 16. 433-4). What god can Zeus pray to for his son's life? Thetis too cries out "Ah me, the sorrow, the bitterness in this best of child-rearing!" (Il. 18. 54)

In fact, in the parallel that Maximus uses, Zeus was capable of overruling fate, but chose not to do so, as the other gods would have disapproved. I think that this is

⁸⁵ Trapp, M. B. (1997), 45.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

deliberate, not an oversight, since introducing this point would vitiate the efficacy of this allegory - the Demiurge cannot go against the dictates of Necessity. Admittedly, here Maximus is discussing Providence within the context of its influence over human lives, rather than any role it may play in world-generation. I note the remark here, as it is indicative of how Maximus conceptualises the interrelation between God/the Demiurge and factors which limit his activity.

Maximus goes on to describe Fortune, but in a manner that is particularly vague and so it is difficult to work out what kind of restriction this could impose upon the Demiurge:

“ Ἄλλ' οὐδὲ ἐν τοῖς κατὰ τὴν τύχην εὐκτεόν καὶ πολὺ μᾶλλον ἐνταῦθα οὐκ εὐκτέον· οὐδὲ γὰρ ἀνοήτῳ δυνάστη διαλεκτεόν, ἔνθα οὐ βούλευμα οὐδὲ κρίσις οὐδὲ ὄρμῃ σῶφρων οἰκονομεῖ τὴν ἀρχὴν ἀλλὰ καὶ φορὰ καὶ ἄλογοι ὀρέξεις καὶ ἔμπληκτοι ὄρμαί, καὶ ἐπιθυμιῶν διαδοχαί. τοιοῦτον ἢ τύχη, ἄλογον, ἔμπληκτον, ἀπροόρατον, ἀνήκοον ἀμάντευτον Εὐρίπου δίκην μεταρρέον, περιφερόμενον, καὶ οὐδεμιᾶς ἀνεχόμενον κυβερνή του τέχνης. τί ἂν οὖν τις εὔξαιτο ἀστατῷ χρήματι καὶ ἀνόητῳ καὶ ἀσταθμήτῳ καὶ ἀμίκτῳ; ”(5.6. 135–144)

“Nor again can one pray about matters governed by Fortune - still less in this case than in others. There can be no way of conversing with a mindless despot in circumstances devoid of planning, judgement and sober instincts, where authority is exercised instead by rage and impulse, by irrational dispositions and mad appetites and successive waves of desire. Such is Fortune: irrational, impulsive, improvidential, deaf and unpredictable, swirling and changing like the tides of the Euripus and defying the best efforts of helmsmen to steer a steady course. Given this, what prayer could one make to something so unstable, mindless, imponderable and savage?”

The description is very loosely modelled on the description of the tyrant at *Resp.* 571aff, but it is difficult to read this passage as anything more than an elaborate literary flourish. It also seems that in a world produced by a rational Demiurge, admittedly under the constraints of necessity, there is no room for an additional irrational force. Necessity already accounts for the irrational substratum that persists in the sublunar realm. The situation becomes even more confusing in the subsequent passage:

“Λοιπὸν δὴ μετὰ τὴν τύχην ἢ τέχνη. καὶ τίς τέκτων εὔξεται περὶ κάλλους ἀρότρου, τὴν τέχνην ἔχων; ἢ τίς ὑφάντης περὶ κάλλους χλανίδος, τὴν τέχνην ἔχων;...ἢ τίς ἀγαθὸς περὶ εὐδαιμονίας, τὴν ἀρετὴν ἔχων;(5.6. 145–150)

“After Fortune, it remains to speak only of Science. But what carpenter secure in the possession of his craft, prays to make a good plough? What weaver, secure in the possession of his craft, prays to make a good clock? What good man secure in the possession of his virtue, prays for happiness?”

Trapp states that this passage underlines “the proper provinces of human enterprise and divine assistance.”⁸⁷ What is unclear is how human science can be regarded as a causal factor (in our lives) comparable to the Demiurge, Necessity and Fortune. Perhaps Maximus envisages that in some sense humanity is capable of becoming a co-creator with the Demiurge in a manner akin to the Christian notion of procreation. However, in the absence of any detailed comment from Maximus, who breaks his promise, by claiming that it only remains to speak of science and then failing to expound the topic, it is idle to speculate.

Evidently, here Maximus is dealing with two separate problems- the limitations imposed upon the Demiurge during the actual process of world-creation, and the limitations that emerge in relation to his governance of the world in order to allow room for human free will. Even though it is clear that at *Oration 5*, Maximus intends to deal with the latter problem; once he starts to investigate the limits imposed on the Demiurge by Necessity, he immediately opens up the related question of the limits to the Demiurge’s powers during world-generation. Since Maximus treats both issues simultaneously, I have found it more efficient to follow his example. Both problems were related by the Stoics in their theory that humans should become artisans of their lives, and I think that this is what Maximus is getting at here.

Maximus seems to be aware that all four factors play a role in demiurgic causality, but he does not appear to have worked out a coherent system and he avoids elaborating on the manner of their interaction during the process of creation. Προνοια, often translated as “providence”, is perhaps something more akin to “forethought”, and is possibly intended to play a role similar to Ἐννοια in Philo's system -an emanation of the transcendental God, which engages in demiurgic activity and helps to insulate Him from matter. In *Oration 5*, Maximus again points out that evils only appear to be so:

“ὦν σὺ μὲν τὴν διάλυσιν φθορὰν καλεῖς, ὁ δὲ ἰατρὸς οἶδεν τὴν αἰτίαν καὶ ἀμελεῖ εὐχομένων τῶν μερῶν, σώζει δὲ τὸ πᾶν· φροντίζει γὰρ τοῦ ὅλου. ἀλλὰ καὶ τῶν κατὰ μέρος προνοεῖ ὁ θεὸς. οὐδὲ ἐνταῦθα τοίνυν εὐκτέον, ὅμοιον ὡς εἰ καὶ ἰατρὸν ἦται ὁ κάμνων φάρμακον ἢ σιτίον· τοῦτο γὰρ εἰ μὲν ἀνύτει, καὶ μὴ αἰτοῦντι δώσει, εἰ δὲ ἐπισφαλές, οὐδὲ αἰτοῦντι δώσει.”

(5.4.103–9)

“You may call such breakings-up "destruction" but the true doctor knows their cause; he disregards the prayers of the parts and preserves the whole for his concern is for creation at large. Although God's Providence does in fact extend

⁸⁷ Trapp, M. B. (1997), 48.

to particulars as well. But prayer is out of place there too, being like a patient asking his doctor for food or medicine on his own initiative: if it is efficacious, the doctor will give it unasked; if it is dangerous, he will withhold it, even when asked."

Here it is unclear what restrictions Fortune and Necessity could possibly place upon the Demiurge, since these "breakings-up" are in fact not evil at all and here they are even attributed to his *προνοία*.

Oration 13: εἰ μαντικῆς οὔσης ἔστιν τι ἐφ' ἡμῖν, "Whether given the reality of prophecy, there is free will", also investigates the nature of causality, demiurgic and otherwise, although in fact Maximus concentrates more on the compatibility of prophecy with human intelligence, rather than with free will. This is linked with *Oration 5*, since here also Maximus regards events in the cosmos as caused by (and therefore predictable by) multiple factors. Maximus expresses some rather interesting comments on the nature of divine intellect:

“τὸ δὲ θεῖον δοκεῖ σοι γινώσκειν πάντα ἐξῆς καὶ τὰ καλὰ καὶ τὰ αἰσχρά, καὶ τὰ τίμια καὶ τὰ ἄτιμα; φείδομαι τῶν ῥημάτων καὶ αἰδῶς με τοῦ θεοῦ ἔχει· σεμνὸν γάρ τι τὸ πάντα εἶδέναι, καὶ ἀριθμὸν ψάμμων καὶ θαλάττης μέτρα, καὶ ξυιέναι ἀτόπου λέβητος ἐψομένου ἐν Λυδοῖς”.(13.2.43-47)

“As for divine intellect, do you really believe that it knows everything from first to last - both the beautiful and the ugly, both the precious and the base? I am at a loss for words; reverence for the divine overcomes me! It is an awesome achievement to know everything - the number of the sands, the measure of the sea- and to be aware of a weird cauldron cooking in Lydia.”

Evidently, Maximus is being rather sarcastic here. I think that what underlines this statement is the Stoicised notion that God or Providence focuses on the entire cosmos, only considering smaller parts insofar as they contribute to the whole. Yet here, Maximus appears to contradict his own comments at *Oration 11* that divine intellect thinks all things simultaneously and eternally. It is, however, in keeping with his conception of the demiurgic *νεῦμα* as responsible for creation- if the Demiurge actively created or ordered he should have some idea of the number of grains of sand. It is as if by giving his *νεῦμα* he stands back and allows matter to order itself, rather than adopting a more active role. However, this stance allows Maximus to preserve the transcendent nature of the deity, even at the expense of downplaying his demiurgy:

“δεινῶς τινα πολυπράγμονα ἡγεῖ τὸν θεὸν καὶ περίεργον καὶ εὐήθη, καὶ μηδὲν τῶν ἐν τοῖς κύκλοις ἀγειρόντων διαφέροντα, οἳ δυοῖν ὀβολοῖν τῷ προστυχόντι ἀποθεσπίζουσιν.” (13.3.50-53)

“What an awfully naive, meddlesome busybody you take God to be- for all the world like those mountebanks who prophesy to all and sundry for two obols!” However, this passage is not completely applicable to demiurgy, since it actually considers whether it is fitting for God to tell the truth when consulted on certain issues by man.

There then follows a description of demiurgic causality, which is effectively a summary of the *Timaeus*:

“ἀλλ' ἡγοῦ τὸ πᾶν τοῦτο ἁρμονίαν τινὰ εἶναι ὀργάνου μουσικοῦ, καὶ τεχνίτην μὲν τὸν θεὸν τὴν δὲ ἁρμονίαν αὐτὴν ἀρξαμένην παρ' αὐτοῦ, δι' ἀέρος ἰοῦσαν καὶ γῆς καὶ θαλάττης καὶ ζώων καὶ φυτῶν, ἐμπεσοῦσαν μετὰ τοῦτο εἰς πολλὰς καὶ ἀνομοίους φύσεις, συντάττειν τὸν ἐν αὐταῖς πόλεμον· ὡς κορυφαίου ἁρμονία, ἐμπεσοῦσα εἰς πολυφωνίαν χοροῦ, συντάττει τὸν ἐν αὐτῇ θόρυβον.”

“Imagine instead that this whole universe of ours is a harmony like that of a musical instrument with God as the craftsman and the harmony itself beginning from him and spreading through air and earth and sea and animals and plants, then following in a great disparate mass of natural substances and bringing an end to the strife that rages among them - just as the notes sung by the leader of a choir pervading the many voices of the choristers, brings order to their discord.” (13.3.64-71)

The harmony mentioned alludes to the harmonic ratios according to which the soul is divided in the *Timaeus*. The notion of a direct descent of the divine is to be found at Arist. *De Mund.* 399b15 and 400b8, although Maximus develops it in a Platonic direction by hinting at creation through ordering.

Maximus then goes on to give his most explicit statement concerning the mechanics of divine causality:

“τίς δὲ ὁ τρόπος τῆς θείας τέχνης, ὀνόματι μὲν εἰπεῖν οὐκ ἔχω, εἶση δὲ αὐτῆς τὴν δύναμιν ἐξ εἰκόνος ἐθεάσω νεῶν ἐρύσεις ἐκ θαλάττης ἄνω καὶ λίθων ἀγωγὰς ὑπερφυῶν κατὰ μέγεθος παντοδαποῖς ἐλιγμοῖς καὶ ἀναστροφαῖς ὀργάνων· ὧν ἕκαστον πρὸς τὸ πλησίον τὴν ῥώμην νειμάμενον, ἕτερον ἐξ ἑτέρου διαδεχόμενον τὴν ἀγωγὴν, κινεῖ τὸ πᾶν· καὶ τὸ μὲν ὅλον ἔχει τὴν αἰτίαν τοῦ ἔργου, συνεπιλαμβάνει δέ τι αὐτῷ καὶ τὰ μερῆ.” (13.4.71-79)

“As to the nature of this divine craft, I am unable to describe it to you explicitly, but you will be able to understand its effects from an image of the kind I shall now give you. You have surely before now seen ships being hauled up out of the sea and stones of enormous bulk being moved by all sorts of twistings and rotations of machinery as each component transmits its impetus to the next and one component receives the movement from another, the whole machine is set in motion. It is the whole machine that is responsible for achieving the task, but by means of the collaboration of its individual parts.”

Finally, it appears that Maximus is ready to explain the manner in which the Demiurge collaborates with Necessity and Fortune in the creation of the cosmos.

These separate elements are co-responsible with the Demiurge for the creation of the sublunar realm. This image is similar to that of *De Mundo* 398b11-17, but here Maximus is straying away from the question that he had previously set out to discuss, exploring how the Demiurge causes events rather than the manner in which God foresees them. Unfortunately, as is so frequently the case with Maximus, he appears to be on the point of providing a detailed account of demiurgic causality, before dealing with the matter in a superficial manner. The Demiurge is merely a part of the machine involved in world generation. The image of the machine is similar to Aristotle's view of causality in terms of contact between bodies- the efficient cause has to touch bodies lower down the chain in order to operate on them. This is what is going on here, although Maximus never elaborates on the sort of twistings or rotations that he imagines to be necessary for a component to transmit its impetus to the next.

A more detailed account of how the Demiurge interacts with fate then follows:

“κάλει τοίνυν τεχνίτην μὲν τὸν θεόν, ὄργανα δὲ τοὺς λογισμοὺς τοὺς ἀνθρωπίους, τέχνην δὲ τὴν μαντικὴν σπῶσαν ἡμᾶς ἐπὶ τὴν ἀγωγὴν τῆς εἰμαρμένης. εἰ δέ σοι καὶ σαφεστέρας εἰκόνας δεῖ, νόει μοι στρατηγὸν μὲν τὸν θεόν, στρατείαν δὲ τὴν ζῶην, ὀπλίτην δὲ τὸν ἄνθρωπον, σύνθημα δὲ τὴν εἰμαρμένην, ὄπλα δὲ τὰς εὐπορίας, πολεμίους δὲ τὰς συμφοράς, σύμμαχον δὲ τὸν λογισμὸν, ἀριστείαν δὲ τὴν ἀρετὴν, ἦτταν δὲ τὴν μοχθηρίαν, μαντικὴν δὲ τὴν τέχνην αὐτὴν τὴν ἐκ τῆς παρασκευῆς ἐπισταμένην τὸ μέλλον. καὶ γὰρ κυβερνήτης ναῦν ἔχων καὶ εἶδως τὰ ὄργανα καὶ τὴν θάλατταν ὁρῶν καὶ αἰσθανόμενος τῶν πνευμάτων, οἶδεν τὸ ἀποβησόμενον· καὶ στρατηγὸς στρατόπεδον ἔχων καὶ τὰ ὄπλα εἶδως καὶ τῆς παρασκευῆς μεμνημένος καὶ τῶν πολεμίων αἰσθανόμενος, οἶδεν τὸ ἀποβησόμενον.” (13.4.79-92)

“Call the mechanic God, the machines human powers of reasoning and the mechanic's technical knowledge the prophetic art which draws us to follow the guidance of Fate. Or if you need a still clearer image, you could imagine God as a general, life as a campaign, man as a hoplite, Fate as the watchword, resources as weapons, misfortunes as enemies, Reason as an ally, Virtue as victory, wickedness as defeat and prophecy as the skill that can predict future contingencies on the strength of present resources. A helmsman in command of his ship, knowing his tackle, watching the sea and keeping note of the winds, knows what will result. A general in command of his army, knowing his weaponry, keeping his resources in mind and watching the enemy, knows what will result.”

The Demiurge is also compared to a doctor, who, relying on his art, can foresee the probable result of an illness. Here again, Necessity or Fate is portrayed as an external factor, which is not subject to the authority of the Demiurge - but his knowledge of the art of demiurgy allows him to predict the probable result of the

dictates of Necessity. Maximus then moves away from the topic of demiurgic causality to consider whether there is any place for human free will or autonomy, concluding that it is inextricably bound up with Necessity/Fate (§4), but the regular operations of Fate make it predictable, even by human intellect (§ 5).

The wording here is particularly ambivalent. Maximus tries to demonstrate that human free will is ultimately autonomous, but expresses himself in such a way as to make it appear that it is actually one aspect of an overarching "Stoic" Fate; although Maximus exhibits a classic Middle Platonic difficulty in trying to combine universal divine control with human autonomy; exhibited also at Alcin. *Didasc.* 26 and [Plut.] *De Fato* 569ff, where use is made of a comparison between Fate and law.⁸⁸ Alcinous' theory, which seems to be the basic Platonic one during this period, is as follows (*Didasc.* 26.1):

- 1) All things are within the sphere of Fate, but not all things are fated.
- 2) Fate has the status of a law, but it does not make specific statements, since that would result in an infinity of possibilities and results.
- 3) If all things are fated, what is in our power (τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν) would disappear.
- 4) The soul is autonomous, but once it makes a specific choice, a particular chain of causality results, which is brought about by Fate.

This is in accordance with Maximus' speculations on Fate and human free will (illustrated by the example which he provides of Laius). However, another Middle Platonist, Apuleius of Madaura, attempted to work out more specifically the interaction between fate and the actions of the Demiurge, with a triadic division of providence (which recalls the three spheres administered by the Moirai in pseudo-Plutarch). At *De Plat.* 1. 12, he distinguishes between a primary providence - that of the supreme god (Demiurge), a secondary providence entrusted to secondary gods

⁸⁸ [Plut.] *De Fato* 569 D ff: "Σχεδὸν μὲν οὖν καὶ τοῦτο δηλοῖ ὁποῖόν τι τυγχάνει ἡ εἰμαρμένη, πλὴν οὐχ ἢ γε κατὰ μέρος οὐδ' ἢ καθ' ἕκαστα. Ποία τις οὖν καὶ ἡδε κατ' αὐτὸ τὸδε τὸ εἶδος τοῦ λόγου; ἔστι τοίνυν, ὡς ἂν τις εἰκάσαι, οἷος ὁ πολιτικὸς νόμος, ὃς πρῶτον μὲν τὰ πλεῖστα, εἰ καὶ μὴ πάντα, ἐξ ὑποθέσεως προστάττει, ἔπειτα μὴν καθόλου τὰ πόλει προσήκοντα εἰς δύναμιν περιλαμβάνει. Πάλιν δὲ τούτων ἐκάτερον ὁποῖόν τί ἐστι σκεπτέον."

"These explanations explain quite well, I think, the quality of Fate in general, but not yet that of particular or individual Fate. What then is the status of Fate, considered now under this aspect of the question? It can be explained by means of a comparison with civic law, which subordinates, if not everyone, than at least the majority, to its ordinances, and which then embraces universally, as much as it can, all the affairs which concern the city. It now remains for us to examine in their turn these two elements to understand their nature."

(the Young Gods of the *Timaeus*), and a tertiary Providence, (although he does not refer to it as such), which is administered by the daimones.⁸⁹ A similar system can be found in Pseudo-Plutarch *De Fato* 572F, Calcidius (ch. 155) and Nemesius (ch. 34 p.287 Matthaei).⁹⁰

In general, these theories seem to be part of a Middle Platonic attempt to work out how demiurgic Providence can enclose Fate which then encloses Free Will and to place all elements in a coherent system. The comparison with other Middle Platonists is instructive, since it illustrates the lack of refinements and subtleties inherent in Maximus' account, where very little attempt is made to define the four elements of causality which he identifies in anything approaching a coherent system.

Maximus then quotes Plato's *Laws* 709B-C to summarise the Platonic view concerning the manner in which Fate, Science, Chance and the Demiurge all contribute to causality:

“ὡς θεὸς μὲν πάντα καὶ μετὰ θεοῦ τύχη καὶ καιρὸς τὰ ἀνθρώπινα κυβερνῶσιν τὰ ξύμπαντα· ἡμερώτερον γὰρ μὴν τρίτον ἐπι τούτοις προσθεῖναι δέον ἔπεσθαι τῆν τέχνην. καιρῷ γὰρ χειμῶνος συλλαβέσθαι κυβερνητικὴν ἢ μή, μέγα πλεονέκτημα ἔγωγ' ἂν θείην.”(13.7.151-155)

“The all-controlling agent in human affairs is God assisted by the sundry influences of Chance and Opportunity. A less stern way of putting it is to add that there must be a third factor to accompany these, science. For instance in a storm, the steersman may or may not use his science to seize a favourable opportunity; I should say it would be a great advantage if he did.”

From the echo of this text at Plut. *Quaest. Conv.* 740C, it seems to have been used as a proof text in Middle Platonic discussions of the topic.⁹¹ The oration closes with a worryingly Stoic comment that humanity confronted by Necessity has the autonomy of a man in chains who follows his captors of his own free will (a variant of Zeno's example of a small dog tied to a cart) and an assertion that nothing that is evil can be the work of the Demiurge.

An alternative explanation of the functioning of demiurgic causality can be found in *Oration 4*: τίνες ἄμεινον περὶ θεῶν διέλαβον ποιηταὶ ἢ φιλόσοφοι, “Which produced the better account of the gods, poets or philosophers?”. In the course of the sermon, Maximus makes allusion to the work of Pherecydes of Syros, entitled, according to the *Souda*, ἐπτάμυχος ἢ θεογονία ἢ θεοκρασία. This work begins with the line “Ζᾶς μὲν καὶ χρόνος ἦσαν ἀεὶ καὶ Χθονίη. Χθονίη δὲ

⁸⁹ Dillon, J. M. (1977), 325.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 323.

⁹¹ Trapp, M. B. (1997), 122.

ὄνομα ἐγένετο Γῆ, ἐπειδὴ αὐτῇ Ζῆς γῆν γέρας διδοῖ” (“Zeus, on the occasion of his marriage with Chthonie, offered her the earth as a present”).⁹²

Fr. B3 elaborates: “Ζεὺς, μέλλοντα δημιουργεῖν, transformed himself into Eros and “τὸν κόσμον ἐκ τῶν ἐναντίων σωμαστὰς εἰς ὁμολογίαν καὶ φιλίαν ἤγαγε”. Chronos creates the various elements, but Zeus, having transformed himself into Eros (the principle of harmony) creates in this manner the unified world. Zeus is clearly similar to the Platonic Demiurge, ordering pre-existent and recalcitrant matter. Chronos, I think, is not pre-cosmic chaos, but rather something akin to the winnowing motion of the *Timaeus*, which is responsible for the initial creative impulse.

Further light is shed on this matter by Proclus' *Commentary on the Timaeus* (III 155-156 Diehl): “τὴν γὰρ Ἀφροδίτην παρήγαγει ὁ δημιουργὸς..Ἐχει δὲ καὶ αὐτὸς ἐν ἑαυτῷ τὴν τοῦ Ἔρωτος αἰτίαν”. The Demiurge harmonises the cosmos through the introduction of the Principle of Love and attraction. Maximus' allusion to this seems to have largely gone unnoticed by commentators, with the exception of Puiggali:

“ἀλλὰ καὶ τοῦ Συρίου τὴν ποίησιν σκόπει, τὸν Ζῆνα καὶ τὴν Χθονίην καὶ τὸν ἐν τούτοις ἔρωτα καὶ τὴν Ὀφιονέως γένεσιν καὶ τὴν θεῶν μάχην καὶ τὸ δένδρον καὶ τὸν πέπλον· σκόπει καὶ τὸ Ἡρακλείτου, θεοὶ θνητοὶ, ἄνθρωποι ἀθάνατοι”.(4.4.77-81)

“Consider also the poetry of the man from Syros with his Zeus and Chthonie and their love and the birth of Ophioneus and the battle of the gods and the tree and the robe. And consider the saying of Heraclitus, “gods mortals, men immortals.”

Here I would prefer to accept the reading of Puiggali “τὸν Ζῆνα καὶ τὴν Χθονίην καὶ τὸν ἐν τούτοις ἔρωτα” (rather than Trapp's ἔρωτα) “Zeus, Chthonie and *the Eros which is in them*”. According to this reading Maximus is not recounting a simple love story, but how the Demiurge and his spouse both transformed themselves into the principle of harmony at the moment of creation in order to allow this creation to occur.

Ophioneus is Maximus' name for Ophion- a name for which there are two candidates: 1) the first master of the world and the adversary of Chronos and 2) a giant in conflict with Zeus and who was defeated by him. Wüst's opinion was that Maximus confounds the two, while Puiggali feels that Maximus only refers to Ophion (1). If Ophion (1) is referred to, Maximus is alluding to an additional ordering

⁹² Fr. B1 - Vorsokr. Diels-Kranz.

principle (the adversary of Chronos) or if (2) is referred to, he is alluding to Necessity or an evil World-Soul, a disordered principle which is in conflict with the Demiurge.

The πέπλος is the φάρος which Zeus offers Chthonie as a wedding-present: “τότε Ζᾶς ποιεῖ φάρος μέγα τε καὶ καλὸν καὶ ἐν αὐτῷ ποικίλλει τὴν καὶ Ὠγηνοῦ δώματα” (Fr. B2). As for the tree, it is alluded to by Clement of Alexandria (*Strom.* VI 53, 5: ὑπόπτερος δρυς καὶ τὸ ἐπ’ αὐτῇ πεποικιλμένον φᾶρος). Diels explains the allusion to the tree by referring to Anaximander's representation of the earth. Anaximander compared the earth to the trunk of a tree and the sky which surrounds it to bark.⁹³ The garment which Zeus offers Chthonie must therefore be the surface of the earth. Taken together, then, the Demiurge offers Chthonie (the generative female principle) the earth at the moment of creation, when both engage in the demiurgic act by simultaneously transforming themselves into the principle of harmony.

Here we have an allegory of demiurgic causality far removed from Maximus' usual superficial treatment of this (and practically every other) matter. In the passage immediately following, Maximus expresses his approval of the use of myth to expound philosophical truth (although as a sophist he does really have views and just presents variations on a theme):

“πάντα μεστὰ αἰνιγμάτων καὶ παρὰ ποιηταῖς καὶ παρὰ φιλοσόφοις, ὧν ἐγὼ τὴν πρὸς τὸ ἀληθές αἰδῶ ἀγαπῶ μᾶλλον ἢ τὴν παρρησίαν τῶν νεωτέρων. Πραγμάτων γὰρ ὑπ’ ἀνθρωπίνης ἀσθενείας οὐ καθορωμένων σαφῶς εὐσχημονέστερος ἑρμηνεὺς ὁ μῦθος...τί γὰρ ἄν ἄλλο εἶη μύθου χρεία <ἢ> λόγος περισκεπῆς ἐτέρῳ κόσμῳ, καθάπερ τὰ ἰδρύματα οἷς περιεβαλλόν οἱ τελεσταὶ χρυσοῦν καὶ πέπλους, <τὰ> ἀποσεμνύοντες αὐτῶν τὴν προσδοκίαν;” (4.5.82 -94)

“Allegory is ubiquitous among both poets and philosophers. I admire these older authors' reverence for the truth more than I do the outspokenness of the moderns; the most seemly vehicle for topics which our human frailty does not allow us to see clearly is myth... What else is the point of a myth? It is a doctrine concealed beneath adornments of a different kind, like the statues that priests of the mysteries have clothed in gold and silver and robes, so as to make their appearance the more impressive.”

Since this passage is delivered immediately after the allusion to the Zeus and Chthonie myth, it seems probable that Maximus was aware of the philosophical insight contained therein, and was prepared to accept it.

⁹³ Puiggali, J. (1983), 79.

Unity of The Divine

Maximus, like many educated Greeks of his time, moves away from the polytheistic tendencies of Greek religion, believing instead that the traditional gods are merely aspects of the Demiurge (who, for him is presumably the supreme god). At *Oration* 2.1, Maximus points out that all gods assist all men, but humanity has been led to assign spheres of responsibility to individual gods. At § 10, he then describes the Demiurge:

“ Ὁ μὲν γὰρ θεός, ὁ τῶν ὄντων πατήρ καὶ δημιουργός, {ὁ} πρεσβύτερος μὲν ἡλίου, πρεσβύτερος δὲ οὐρανοῦ, κρείττων δὲ χρόνου καὶ αἰῶνος καὶ πάσης ῥεούσης φύσεως, ἀνώνυμος νομοθέταις καὶ ἄρρητος φωνῇ καὶ ἀόρατος ὀφθαλμοῖς”.

“For God the Father and Creator of all that exists is greater than the Sun and the heavens, mightier than time and eternity and the whole flux of nature, legislators cannot name him, tongues cannot speak him and eyes cannot see him.” (2.10.183-187)

This echoes numerous Platonising descriptions of the divine, owing their inspiration to *Tim.* 41a. Apart from the usual commonplace ideas concerning the ineffability of the divine,⁹⁴ what is interesting is that the Demiurge is here regarded as greater than Eternity and the flux of Nature, which would seem to indicate that he is not under any constraint in the creation of the sensible world, but given the fact that this conflicts sharply with the opinion which Maximus expresses elsewhere, I think that we must regard this more as rhetorical flourish than reasoned philosophical argument.

Unity of the divine is also stressed at *Oration* 39.5. There Maximus claims that the gods share customs, life and character. All rule, all are of the same age and are the saviours of mankind. They only have one nature, although they have many names and it is through ignorance that the gifts which they bestow collectively are attributed to individual divine names. This concept of the unity of the divine is essentially Stoic, rather than Platonic, although Maximus tends to develop it in a Platonising direction.⁹⁵

Again, *Oration* 4 provides a useful comment on the unity of the divine:

“ταῦτα μὲν οἱ ποιηταὶ λέγουσιν, ταῦτα δὲ καὶ οἱ φιλόσοφοι λέγουσιν· ὧν ἂν μεταβάλῃς τὰ ὀνόματα, εὐρήσεις τὴν ὁμοιότητα καὶ γνωριεῖς τὸ διήγημα. κάλει τὸν μὲν Δία νοῦν πρεσβύτατον καὶ ἀρχικώτατον, ᾧ πάντα ἔπεται καὶ πειθαρχεῖ· τὴν δὲ Ἀθηνᾶν, φρόνησιν· τὸν δὲ Ἀπόλλω, ἥλιον· τὸν δὲ Ποσειδῶ, πνεῦμα διὰ γῆς καὶ θαλάττης ἰόν, οἰκονομοῦν αὐτῶν τὴν στάσιν καὶ τὴν ἁρμονίαν”

“This is what the poets say and this is what the philosophers say too, simply change the terminology and you will discover the resemblance and realise

⁹⁴ Found also at Alcín. *Didasc.* 10 (164-5) and Apul. *De Plat.* 15.

⁹⁵ cf. *SVF* ii 1021, Cic. *ND* 2.63ff.

what they are discussing. Call Zeus the supreme and venerable Mind, which all things follow and obey. Call Athena Intelligence, Apollo the Sun and Poseidon the cosmic breath that pervades land and sea, preserving their stability and harmony.” (4.8.165-172)

Here Maximus portrays the traditional Olympian pantheon as merely aspects and extensions of the Demiurge and his activity. The reference to all things following and obeying Zeus again seems to place the Demiurge above the dictates of Necessity.

Maximus has located him in the suprasensible realm, providing contact with the sublunar realm by means of πνεῦμα. This is an interesting development, as in Stoic accounts, Poseidon pervades the seas, not both land and sea as here.⁹⁶

For Maximus, πνεῦμα has become an immanent World-Soul, counterpart of the Philonic Logos, allowing the Demiurge to interact with the sensible realm. Maximus further elaborates on the Demiurge's interaction with the cosmos in *Orations* 8 and 9 – τὸ δαιμονιὸν Σωκρατοῦς "What was Socrates' divine sign?", which points out that daimones are necessary in the hierarchy of entities in order to prevent the cosmos splitting in two between the suprasensible and sublunar realms. The daimones are similar to the Young Gods of the *Timaeus* as assistants of the Demiurge, although here they seem to be involved more in administration than in the act of creation:

“Θεὸς μὲν οὖν αὐτὸς κατὰ χώραν ἰδρυμένος οἰκονομεῖ τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν ἐν οὐρανῷ τάξιν· εἰσὶ δ' αὐτῷ φύσεις ἀθάνατοι δεύτεραι, οἱ καλούμενοι δαίμονες, ἐν μεθορία γῆς καὶ οὐρανοῦ τεταγμένοι.”
(*Oration* 8.8.lines 180-183)

“God himself, settled and immobile, administers the heavens and maintains their ordered hierarchy. But he has a race of secondary immortal beings, the so-called daimones, who have their station between earth and heaven.”

This parallels the description of the Demiurge at *Oration* 11.12, where he is compared to the Great King sitting motionless, but governing through a hierarchy of entities, who are compared to courtiers.

At *Oration* 8.8.lines 186-189, the *daimones* play a role in demiurgy as a result of the harmonising effect which they have on the cosmos as a whole:

“ἢ γὰρ ἂν τῷ διὰ μέσου πολλῷ τὸ θνητὸν πρὸς τὸ ἀθάνατον διετειχίσθη τῆς οὐρανοῦ ἐπόψεως τε καὶ ὁμιλίας, ὅτι μὴ τῆς δαιμονίου ταύτης φύσεως, οἷον ἁρμονίας, κατὰ τὴν πρὸς ἑκάτερον συγγένειαν καταλαβούσης δεσμῷ τὴν ἀνθρωπίνην ἀσθένειαν πρὸς τὸ θεῖον κάλλος”.

“The mortal realm would indeed be separated from the immortal and from any sight or dealings with the heavens by a great intervening gulf were it not for

⁹⁶ Chrysippus – ap. Cic. *ND* I. 40 and *Diog. Bab. Fr.* 33.

the harmonising effect of these daimones, who bend and connect human beings to divine beauty in virtue of their kinship with both.”

In *Oration 9*, Maximus goes on to argue that the existence of daimones is necessary in providing a link between the Demiurge and man, due to the dependence of continuity upon shared terms, a concept owing its origin to Arist. *Met.* 10.1069a5ff, but first applied to the intermediate status of daimones by Xenocrates.

Interestingly, unlike Plutarch, Maximus never uses his daimonology as a mechanism for resolving the problem of evil. For him, the daimones are the assistants of the Demiurge in the act of creation and in the administration of the cosmos. Even in their terrifying aspect (8.8.207), they are beneficial, since they punish the wicked, although Maximus merely says “ὁ μὲν φοβερὸς” and does not elaborate on this point. However, Maximus probably avoids making daimones responsible for the existence of evil, not just because such a notion was unpalatable to him, but because he had no need for such an explanation, as he attempts to regulate the problem by means of the Stoic formulation that evils only appear to be such, but in fact occur for the good of the whole.

Conclusion

Maximus never really elaborates on the causality of the Demiurge - for him the world is created merely by the *νεῦμα* of Zeus. Yet in spite of this his orations are rich in imagery and insights on this topic, which due to Maximus' lack of originality reveal the preoccupations of Middle Platonic speculations concerning creation. Maximus himself tends to steer clear of attempts to resolve any of these, although at points he can avoid difficulties experienced by other Platonists, because of his acceptance of Stoic formulations; which in itself probably indicates that these concepts had by the second century become common philosophical property.

Maximus does not investigate how the Demiurge actually operates on matter or his relationship with Necessity and the other causal factors. This is possibly because such intricacies, which would naturally have a sectarian nature, hold no interest for him. All that is important for him is that the world was created by a benevolent Demiurge, who continues to care for it and who is only responsible for good, not evil. What is important is that God created the world; how is irrelevant. This point is expressed forcefully at *Oration 2.10*: “What point is there in my

continuing to inquire into this topic...I have no objection to such diversity. Let them only know God, love him and recollect him.”

Chapter 4: Demiurgic causality in Numenius

Introduction

Surveying Numenius of Apamea's views concerning demiurgic causality is a task fraught with difficulty, given the fragmentary remains of his work. Numenius forms a bridge between Philo and the Gnostic and Hermetic traditions, as well as ranking as an important predecessor of Plotinus, to such an extent that the latter philosopher was actually accused of plagiarising him. Numenius composed a treatise *On the Unfaithfulness of the Academy to Plato* and one *On The Good* in (at least) 6 books. Many of the fragments have been gleaned from Eusebius' *Praeparatio Evangelica*, with some supplementary material from Calcidius' *Commentary on the Timaeus*, Origen and certain Neoplatonic sources. There is a great difference in the quality of the fragments which we possess from Eusebius (actual quotations) and those obtained from other sources (Numenian texts altered by the writer) and one of the drawbacks of Des Places' 1973 edition is that it tends to treat both sets of fragments with an unjustified level of equality. My practice here has been to use the actual fragments, taken from Eusebius, to build up my case for each sub-topic and then to turn to the *testimonia*, using them for evidence that might help to confirm or deny my theses, but not giving them excessive weight and also noting very clearly the original source-text.

This discrepancy in the quality of fragments is not the only reason why the study of Numenius is problematic. Another is the unjustified prejudice with which he has been viewed on account of his syncretistic tendencies:

“The main fabric of Numenius' thought is no doubt derived from Neopythagorean tradition...But because he was, as Macrobius says, *occuliorum curiosior* (F39), he welcomed the superstitions of his time, whatever their origin and thereby contributed to the eventual degradation of Greek philosophical thought.”⁹⁷

A more accurate observation is that of Dillon, which illustrates an alternative approach to the fragments:

“In Numenius, we have a fascinating figure about whom we know all too little but who plainly combines in his doctrine various strands; Platonic and Neopythagorean, Hermetic and Gnostic, Zoroastrian and Jewish. In his person, the “underworld” of Platonic-influenced theorizing...attains some modicum of philosophical respectability.”⁹⁸

⁹⁷ Dodds, E. R. (1960), 11.

⁹⁸ Dillon, J. M. (1977), 379.

In the ancient philosophical tradition, there was tension between the Platonic-Pythagorean perception of the First Principle as Unity (One/Monad) and the Anaxagorean/Aristotelian view of it as an intellect which thought itself. While both perceptions are not actually mutually incompatible, a tension between these opposing views can be remarked in Middle Platonism,⁹⁹ observable in the views of Numenius (and indeed in his subsequent influence upon Plotinus). While the Platonic supreme principle is the Good of *Republic* VI – VII, it is less clear how this principle is actually responsible for demiurgic causality. Certain Platonic philosophers stripped away the mythology of the Timaeian Demiurge, equating him to the Stoic Logos, while Numenius adopted the alternative approach of positing the Demiurge as a second intermediate god between the Supreme Principle and the World-Soul, who creates the sublunar world from pre-existent Matter.¹⁰⁰

Numenius, in many ways, seems to represent an important precursor of Gnosticism (although it is difficult to prove conclusively in which direction the influence was travelling), with his sharp distinction between three divine entities, and explicitly according the Demiurge only second rank. To this extent, he can be regarded as intermediate between the *Timaeus* and Gnosticism: for him, the Demiurge is clearly less than entirely good. The First God remains relatively inert and transcendent. The continuity of the ontological descent posited by Numenius is stressed through the familial lineage of Grandfather, Father and Grandson, as well as the assertion of the sameness of the Second and Third Gods. Numenius prefigures the ignorant Demiurge of Gnosticism by stressing his divisibility and negligence of the upper-tending part of his own nature. In this sense too, he is part of the intellectual current which led to the supposition of decreased unity (and therefore less perfect entities) as one descends the ontological scale.

A further point of interest is the role of the Third God, who takes on the functions of the World-Soul, an entity without a very great level of activity in the Numenian system. Numenius also details very clearly the mechanics of the interaction between the First Principle and the Demiurge. As a result of the cooperation he posits between both entities, he is in this regard more reminiscent of Judaeo-Christian thinkers such as Philo and Origen. However, while they both regard God as a Demiurge by extension, Numenius stresses that the First God should not be

⁹⁹ Dillon, J. M. (1992), 192.

¹⁰⁰ Dillon, J. M. (1992), 195.

regarded as a Demiurge, though he does appear to be a conduit, ensuring that the Forms are communicated to the Demiurge. As a result of the cooperation between both entities he is an interesting pagan comparison to the model of world-generation assumed in the Judaeo-Christian tradition.

Numenius also represents an important attempt to reconcile two aspects of the divine- the immanent and the transcendent. While the First God contemplates the Intelligibles, there is no suggestion (in the extant fragments) that they are actually his thoughts. The Second God is not to be completely identified with demiurgic activity, as he also has a separate “inner life” comprising contemplation of the Forms – in this sense he could be said to “retire”, like his counterpart in the *Timaeus*. While Numenius follows the *Timaeus* quite closely in certain respects, explaining demiurgy in terms of Intellect’s attempt to smooth out the recalcitrance of matter, he extends the concept, explaining the origin of the Demiurge himself. All this renders all the more regrettable the fragmentary remains of his work, as he played a central role in the demiurgic debate.

The First Principle

Being shares many characteristics with the Numenian First God, although it is still open to debate as to whether it is actually equivalent. It is perfectly stable (Fr. 5 (14L.) = Eus. *Pr. Ev.*, XI, 9, 8-10, 5):

“φέρει οὖν, ὅση δύναμις ἐγγύτατα πρὸς τὸ ὄν ἀναγόμεθα καὶ λέγωμεν· τὸ ὄν οὔτε ποτὲ ἦν οὔτε ποτε μὴ γένηται, ἀλλ’ ἔστιν αἰεὶ ἐν χρόνῳ ὀρισμένῳ τῷ ἐνεστῶτι μόνῳ. Τοῦτον μὲν οὖν τὸν ἐνεστῶτα εἴ τις ἐθέλει ἀνακαλεῖν αἰῶνα, καγὼ συμβούλομαι· τὸν δὲ παρελθόντα χρόνον οἶεσθαι χρὴ ἡμᾶς διαπεφευγότα ἤδη διαπεφευγέναι, ἀποδεδρακέναι τε εἰς τὸ εἶναι μηκέτι· ὃ τε αὐτῶν μέλλον ἔστι μὲν οὐδέπω, ἐπαγγέλλεται δὲ οἷος τε ἔσεσθαι ἤξειν εἰς τὸ εἶναι. Οὐκ οὐκ εἰκὸς ἔστιν ἐνί γε τρόπῳ νομίζειν τὸ ὄν ἤτοι μὴ εἶναι ἢ μηκέτι ἢ μηδέπω, ὡς τούτου γε οὕτως λεγομένου ἐν γίγνεταιί τι ἐν τῷ λόγῳ μέγα ἀδύνατον, εἶναι τε ὁμοῦ ταῦτόν καὶ μὴ εἶναι.

- Εἰ δ’ οὕτως ἔχει, σχολῆ γ’ ἂν ἄλλο τι εἶναι δύναιτο, τοῦ ὄντος αὐτοῦ μὴ ὄντος κατὰ αὐτὸ τὸ ὄν.
- Τὸ ἄρα ὄν αἰδίον τε βεβαιόν τε ἔστιν αἰεὶ κατὰ ταῦτόν καὶ ταυτόν. Οὐδὲ γέγονε μὲν, ἐφθάρη δέ, οὐδ’ ἐμεγεθύνετο μὲν, ἐμειώθη δέ, οὐδὲ μὴν ἐγένετό πω πλεῖον ἢ ἔλασσον. Καὶ μὲν δὴ τά τε ἄλλα καὶ οὐδε τοπικῶς κινηθήσεται· οὐδε γὰρ θέμις αὐτῷ κινηθῆναι, οὐδὲ μὲν ὀπίσω οὐδὲ πρόσω, οὔτε ἄνω ποτε οὕτω κάτω, οὐδ’ εἰς δεξιά οὐδ’ εἰς ἀριστερά μεταθεύσεται ποτε τὸ ὄν οὔτε περὶ τὸ μέσον ποτὲ ἑαυτοῦ κινηθήσεται, ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον καὶ ἐστήξεται καὶ ἀραρός τε καὶ ἐστηκὸς ἔσται κατὰ ταῦτα ἔχον αἰεὶ καὶ ὡσαύτως”.

“Well! Let us, then, as far as our forces allow, ascend towards being and say: Being was never, it never has the chance to be, it is constantly in a fixed time the only fixed item. Whether one wants to call fixed time “eternity”, I am in

agreement, myself also; as far as past time, we have to believe, now that it has taken flight, that it has fled and is stripped from us so as not to return; while concerning the future, it is not still, but it promises to be in the state of arriving at Being. It is not suitable in any case, to think according to a particular manner what Being is not, or no longer is or will not yet be; since to state the argument in such a way involves at the very least a great impossibility, that the same thing at the same time is and is not.

- But if this is the case, how could something else be capable of Being, so that Being itself will not be even according to Being?
- Therefore Being is eternal, constantly stable, immutable, identical. One cannot say that it was born or has died, that it has grown then diminished, and that it has not yet become greater or lesser. Moreover, without any relationship, even locally, it will not be moved; because it is not permitted to it to move itself, neither backwards, nor forwards, nor upwards or downwards; Being never turns to right or left, it never moves about its own centre; even though it holds itself immobile, fixed and rests according to the same mode and the same manner constantly”.

This is a fairly standard Platonic division between the realms of Being and Becoming. The final section concerning the lack of motion of Being, evokes Plato’s description of the motion of the cosmos in the *Timaeus*. Numenius even goes one step further. He not only denies Being all irrational movement, but also the only rational movement: rotation around a fixed point. It seems evident here that Being is not actually described in terms appropriate to a realm; it seems more akin to an entity. I would contend that Being is in fact equivalent to the Numenean First God. However, it is only in Fragment 11(20 L. = Eus. *Pr. Ev.* XI, 17, 11-18, 5) that the investigation of divinity is introduced:

“Τὸν μέλλοντα δὲ συνήσειν θεοῦ πέρι πρώτου καὶ δευτέρου χρῆ πρότερον διελέσθαι ἕκαστα ἐν τάξει καὶ ἐν εὐθιμοσύνῃ τινί· κάπειτα, ἐπὰν δοκῇ ἤδη εὖ ἔχειν, τότε καὶ δεῖ ἐπιχειρεῖν εἰπεῖν κοσμίως, ἄλλως δὲ μή, ἢ τῷ πρωϊαίτερον πρὶν τὰ πρῶτα γενέσθαι ἀπτομένῳ σποδὸς ὁ θησαυρὸς γίγνεσθαι λέγεται. Μὴ δὴ πάθωμεν ἡμεῖς ταῦτόν· θεὸν δὲ προσκαλεσάμενοι ἑαυτοῦ γνώμονα γενόμενον τῷ λόγῳ δεῖξαι θησαυρὸν φροντίδων, ἀρχώμεθα οὕτως· εὐκτέον μὲν ἤδη, διελέσθαι δὲ δεῖ.”

“He who wishes to form an idea regarding the First and Second God must first of all distinguish all things according to their rank and in good order. Then, when things appear to him to be in their place; then he can commence discussing them reasonably. Otherwise, it is useless or for him who risks discussing these things prematurely, before the First Principles exist, his treasure, as the proverb goes, simply turns to ashes. Let us ourselves not suffer from this evil, after having invoked the God in order that he may act as his own interpreter and reveal by his speech a treasure of thoughts. Let us begin in the following manner: It is now the time when we must pray, but we must also draw distinctions.”

The style of this fragment is interesting: Numenius opens his account of divinity with a prayer to the divinity, just like Timaeus. However, the subsequent section of this fragment is rather more interesting, as Numenius investigates the nature of the relationship between the First and Second Gods. From this fragment, it would seem that he was rather more interested in demiurgic causality than in the nature of his First Principle, which he glosses over very rapidly. The First God here seems rather inert; since he is alive he must have motion of some sort but Numenius seems to be caught in a bind, since to attribute motion to him would be to deny his stability.

Fr. 8 (= Eus. *Pr. Ev.* XI, 10, 12-14) elaborates further:

“Εἰ μὲν δὴ τὸ ὄν πάντως πάντη αἰδίου τέ ἐστι καὶ ἄτρεπτον καὶ οὐδαμῶς οὐδαμῇ ἐξιστάμενον ἐξ ἑαυτοῦ, μένει δὲ κατὰ τὰ αὐτὰ καὶ ὡσαύτως ἔστηκε, τοῦτο δήπου ἂν εἴη τὸ τῆ ‘νοήσει μετὰ λόγου περιληπτόν’. Εἰ δὲ τὸ σῶμα ῥεῖ καὶ φέρεται ὑπὸ τῆς εὐθὺ μεταβολῆς, ἀποδιδράσκει καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν.” Ὅθεν οὐ πολλὴ μανία μὴ οὐ τοῦτο εἶναι ἀόριστον, δόξη δὲ μόνη δοξαστὸν καί, ὡς φησι Πλάτων, ‘γιγνόμενον καὶ ἀπολλύμενον, ὄντως δὲ οὐδέποτε ὄν’.”

“If then Being is absolutely and everywhere eternal, immutable, if in no manner and in no place it does not issue forth from itself, but stays within the same parameters and maintains itself completely stable, that it is without doubt what is graspable by intellection with the help of reason. And if body is fluid, if it is removed by an immediate change, it runs away and has no stable existence. In consequence, is it not great folly not to call indeterminate, the object of opinion only, and which, as Plato says, “comes to be and perishes, but never really exists?”

Again, Numenius stresses the stability of Being. It cannot issue forth from itself, which underlines the (limited) role which it is capable of playing in world-creation; it requires another conduit by which it can inform the sensible world, since it is confined to certain defined parameters. Being is characterised by eternal identity in essence (ἀεὶ κατὰ ταῦτόν).¹⁰¹ Numenius’ First God resembles the Pythagorean Monad, which in multiplication cannot bring about self-change or alter another number. This situation creates a need for the Second God who can actually engage in the motion involved in creation.

This Second God is not in any way evil, but as he does not possess the unity of the First (since he is divisible, though this is a once-off occurrence) it is true to say that he is less good:

¹⁰¹ O’Meara, D. J. (1976), 120-129.

“For since it was perfect it had to generate, and not be without offspring when it was so great a power. But its offspring could not be better than it (this is not so even here below) but it had to be a lesser image of it, and in the same way indefinite, but defined by its parent and to speak, given a form.”¹⁰²

Admittedly, this text comes from Plotinus, but since it outlines his response to a problem similar to that which confronted Numenius, it is valid to cite it here. Plotinus’ One is not Intellect and does not intentionally generate anything: the question here is whether this is true of Numenius’ First God. I think not. Since Numenius’ First Principle has a kind of demiurgic role, in terms of the production of soul, it is not equivalent to Plotinus’ One. Since it continually contemplates the Intelligibles, then it can also be regarded as Intellect. Though Plotinus’ One engages in this activity it can best be regarded as a sort of super-Intellect or beyond Intellect, while for Numenius this is not actually clear. However, since the Numenian Demiurge can be regarded also as an Intellect, it would appear that the First God must contain an intellectual element.

It is clear that as a dualist, Numenius did not regard the First God as responsible for the creation of matter. It must always have been there as part of a duality of causes. One can compare the explanation of Proclus regarding the relationship between monad and dyad:

“The One is prior to all opposition, as the Pythagoreans also say. But when after the first cause ἡ δὴ δὴς τῶν ἀρχῶν ἀνεφανη also among these (καὶ ἐν ταύταις) the monad is superior to the Dyad.”¹⁰³

Numenius attributes the same doctrine to various Neopythagoreans, as does Calcidius.¹⁰⁴ He was certainly opposed to Pythagorean attempts that claimed that the One retired from its own nature and put on the guise of duality.¹⁰⁵ It is important to note this, as Numenius is often classed as a Neopythagorean, but his dualistic views mean that his version of demiurgic causality owes more to Plato.

The Demiurge and his relationship with the First God

The Numenian First God is not involved in the business of world creation- his main purpose is to produce the Demiurge (Fr.11):

¹⁰²Plotinus V1,7,3,7ff. trans. Armstrong.

¹⁰³ Proclus, *Commentary on the Timaeus*, 1.176.9 Diehl.

¹⁰⁴ “Sed nonullos Pythagoreos vim sententiae non recte adsecutos putasse dici etiam indeterminatum et immensam divitatem ad unica singularitate institutam, recedente a natura sua singularitate et in divitatis habitum migrante”.

Calcidius – *In Timaeum*, 324 Waszink.

¹⁰⁵ Rist, J. M. (1965), 337.

“Ὁ θεὸς ὁ μὲν πρῶτος ἐν ἑαυτοῦ ὧν ἔστιν ἀπλοῦς, διὰ τὸ ἑαυτῷ συγγιγνόμενος διόλου μὴ ποτε εἶναι διαίρετος· ὁ θεὸς μέντοι ὁ δεύτερος καὶ τρίτος ἔστιν εἷς· συμφερόμενος δὲ τῇ ὕλην δυάδι οὔση ἐνοῖ μὲν αὐτήν, σχίζεται δὲ ὑπ’ αὐτῆς, ἐπιθυμητικὸν ἦθος ἐχούσης καὶ ῥεούσης. Τῷ οὖν μὴ εἶναι πρὸς τῷ νοητῷ (ἦν γὰρ ἂν πρὸς ἑαυτῷ) διὰ τὸ τὴν ὕλην βλέπειν, ταύτης ἐπιμελούμενος ἀπερίοπτος ἑαυτοῦ γίγνεται. Καὶ ἄπτεται τοῦ αἰσθητοῦ καὶ περιέπει ἀνάγει τε ἔτι εἰς τὸ ἴδιον ἦθος ἐπορεξάμενος τῆς ὕλης.”

“The First God, who remains inside himself, is unified, due to the fact that, entirely concentrated within himself, he is in no way divisible. However, the Second and Third Gods are in fact one, but coming into contact with matter, which is the Dyad, even though he unifies it, he is divided by it, since it is of such a character that it is not without concupiscence and which is fluid. Not being attached to the intelligible (for in this case he would be concentrated upon into himself), because he is looking at matter he is preoccupied with it and he is forgetful of himself; he enters into contact with the sensible and raises it up to his own proper character, because he has directed his desire towards matter.”

Here it seems that the Demiurge is turned in two directions during the act of creation, contemplating the Forms, while he transmits the Intelligibles to the sensible realm. Part of the problem is why exactly the Demiurge should be split in two by the Dyad – I do not think it is the case that the upper-tending part of the divinity returns to contemplate the Forms, while the lower part engages in the creation and continual generation of the sensible world. It is possible that the Third God is merely a lower aspect of the second. Clearly the Demiurge creates as the result of an act of lust or *orexis*, which is not particularly praiseworthy, since it prevents him from contemplating the Intelligibles and even leads him to become forgetful of his own nature. This guilty element could be regarded as being expelled from the Second God, in the same manner that a lower Sophia is expelled from the Pleroma in the Gnostic systems.

However, I do not feel that it is necessary to posit a lower aspect of the Second God. The *orexis* of the Demiurge can be viewed in a more favourable light, as part of a natural desire to produce, observable also in Plotinus’ One, and which is presumably the reason why the First God produced the Second God (if that is in fact what he did). It is quite possible that the First God merely split a pre-existent entity into the Second and Third Gods, who then share the functions of the Demiurge. However, this would make it difficult to explain the terminology of Grandfather, Son and Grandson, relayed by Proclus, and would also deny the evidence of Fr. 12 (which is reliable, since it comes from Eusebius). The Second God can only produce

something less perfect than himself (since to replicate himself would be to accomplish nothing).and so he produces the World-Soul which is less perfect, since it is further removed from the First God., although the World-Soul is an entity downplayed by Numenius. In the act of creation, the Demiurge is forced to give something of himself to matter in order to regulate it and to produce the sensible world.

This giving of himself to produce the World Soul is the Demiurge's mechanism for creating the phenomenal realm. I think that this is the meaning of the expression that the Demiurge raises matter to his own character, but because he has to provide his substance to create, he becomes divided by matter. It would also neatly explain why the Second and Third Gods are in fact one, since they share the same substance; but the Third God, as World-Soul, has actually become enmattered, and is in a sense, dragged down by matter, which prevents him from fully contemplating the Intelligibles, while after the process of creation, presumably the Demiurge is capable of doing this.

The Second and Third Gods must then be substantially the same, while the First God is of a different substance (because he does not know how to be divisible, for if he was, it would compromise his unity, a necessary trait in the Numenian First Principle).This elucidates why Numenius posited a god whose sole *raison d'être* seems to be to create another creator-god. In fact, the Second and Third Gods appear to differ principally in their interaction to the Intelligibles and matter.

This relationship between the First and Second Gods is clarified at Fr. 12 (21L = Eus. *Pr. Ev.* XI, 18, 6-10), but not greatly:

“Καὶ γὰρ οὔτε δημιουργεῖν ἐστι χρεῶν τὸν πρῶτον καὶ τοῦ δημιουργοῦντος δὲ θεοῦ χρὴ εἶναι νομίζεσθαι πατέρα τὸν πρῶτον θεόν.”

“In fact, it is necessary that the First does not create, but it is necessary to regard the First God as the father of the demiurgic god.”

and further on in the same fragment:

“τὸν μὲν πρῶτον θεὸν ἀργὸν εἶναι ἔργων συμπάντων καὶ βασιλέα, τὸν δημιουργικὸν δὲ θεὸν ἡγεμονεῖν δι' οὐρανοῦ ἰόντα. Διὰ δὲ τούτου καὶ ὁ στόλος ἡμῖν ἐστι, κάτω τοῦ νοῦ πεμπομένου ἐν διεξόδῳ πᾶσι τοῖς κοινωνῆσαι συντεταγμένοις. Βλέπωντος μὲν οὖν καὶ ἐπεστραμμένου πρὸς ἡμῶν ἕκαστου τοῦ θεοῦ συμβαίνει ζῆν τε καὶ βιώσκεσθαι τότε τὰ σώματα κηδεύοντα τοῦ θεοῦ τοῖς ἀκροβολισμοῖς· μεταστρέφοντος δὲ εἰς τὴν ἑαυτοῦ περιωπὴν τοῦ θεοῦ ταῦτα μὲν ἀποσβέννυσθαι, τὸν δὲ νοῦν ζῆν βίου ἐπαυρόμενον εὐδαίμονος.”

“The First God remains inactive in the whole process of creation, he is the King, while the Demiurge-god is the overseer, who circulates in the heavens.

It is the Demiurge who sends us on our voyage, when Intellect is sent below, crossing the sphere, to those who are destined to participate in it.”

As Whittaker observed “ainsi, lorsque le Dieu regarde et se tourne vers chacun de nous il arrive qu’alors les corps vivent et sont animés par ses radiations, auxquelles ils s’unissent; mais si le Dieu retourne à son observatoire, tout s’éteint tandis que l’intellect poursuit sa vie en jouissant d’une existence bienheureux”¹⁰⁶ I think that these radiations by which the Second God animates are comparable to the manner in which he is said to be split by matter.

Fr. 13 (22L = Eus. *Pr. Ev.* XI, 18, 13-14), though short, outlines a view of demiurgic causality which has been the source of much difficulty:

[‘Ο Νομήμιος ἐπάκουσον οἶα περὶ τοῦ δευτέρου αἰτίου θεολογεῖ.]
“Ὡσπερ δὲ πάλιν λόγος ἐστι γεωργῶ πρὸς τὸν φυτεύοντα, ἀνὰ τὸν αὐτὸν λόγον μάλιστα ἐστὶν ὁ πρῶτος θεὸς πρὸς τὸν δημιουργόν. Ὁ μὲν γὰρ ὦν σπέρμα πάσης ψυχῆς σπείρει εἰς τὰ μεταλαγχάνοντα αὐτοῦ χρήματα σύμπαντα· ὁ νομοθέτης δὲ φυτεύει καὶ διανέμει καὶ μεταφυτεύει εἰς ἡμᾶς ἐκάστους τὰ ἐκεῖθεν προκαταβεβλημένα.”

“And even as is the relation between the farmer and the planter; such is that which relates the First God to the Demiurge. *The one who is sows the seeds of every soul* into the things which partake of it, while the Lawgiver plants and distributes and transplants what has been sown from that source into each one of us.”¹⁰⁷

This notion of sowing again evokes the *Timaeus*. Much speculation has been expended on the precise use of the word γεωργός, who is generally felt to be the proprietor of a garden or or a farmer who directs operations from a distance, while the φυτεύων is regarded as a labourer who works under his direction.¹⁰⁸ The head-gardener sows a single seed of each type of plant, while the gardener distributes the seeds and cultivates them individually. All souls come from the First God, who produces one mass of soul-stuff, while the Second God, the Demiurge, distributes the seeds, implants them in individual human bodies and transfers impure souls into a new human body for reincarnation.¹⁰⁹

Part of the reason behind this speculation is the supposed textual corruption of the fragment. The phrase “Ὁ μὲν γὰρ ὦν” is interpreted variously as a biblism or Hebraism, which is felt to be out of place in Numenius. Scott reads “ὁ μὲν [γὰρ ἔν]

¹⁰⁶ Whittaker, J. – *God Time Being = Symbolae Osloenses fasc. Suppl. 23*, 1971, p 27 n. 2

¹⁰⁷ Trans. Dillon, J., *The Middle Platonists*, p.368 with modifications by Andron

¹⁰⁸ Cf. for example W. Scott, *Hermetica*, p. 79 n.5 or Festugière.

¹⁰⁹ Des Places, E. (1973), 109.

σπέρμα πάσης ψυχῆς σπείρει εἰς τὰ μεταλαγχάνοντα [αὐτῆς] χρήματα σύμπαντα. [“The First God sows one seed (or one sowing) of all soul (or life) to serve for all things that together partake of soul.”] This avoids the problem of ὁ ὦν, but is not convincing palaeographically, and as Andron points out, posits a change for two passages instead of just one, as in other approaches.¹¹⁰ Dillon’s response is “I read with hesitation, *georgon*, for the *ge on* of the MSS. [...] I agree that Numenius is probably not using *ho on* here in the Philonic sense of He Who Is”.

Andron favours this reading over all other proposals for changing the text, but prefers that the text should remain in its original state. He contends that to read ὁ γεωργῶν damages the balance, since he does not find any obvious relationship between a lawgiver and a farmer.¹¹¹ He interprets this fragment to refer to two different kinds of occupation, and the rapport or *logos* between them. For him there is no problem with the phrase ὁ ὦν to refer to ὁ πρῶτος θεός, and ὁ νομοθέτης to refer to the Second, since he views the first as pure existent and the second as the Demiurge is obviously an ordering force. Andron further states that The One Who Is is not a particularly problematic phrase, citing two passages of Philo which help to elucidate our fragment:

“ Ὁ μὲν τοίνυν τῶν φυτουργῶν μέγιστος καὶ τὴν τέχνην τελειότατος ὁ τῶν ὅλων ἡγεμών ἐστὶ, φυτὸν δὲ αὐτῷ περιέχον ἐν ἑαυτῷ τὰ ἐν μέρει φυτὰ ἅμα παμμυρία καθάπερ κληματίδας ἐκ μιᾶς ἀναβλαστάνοντα ῥίζης ὅδε ὁ κόσμος. Ἐπειδὴ γὰρ τὴν οὐσίαν ἄτακτον καὶ συγκεχυμένην οὖσαν ἐξ αὐτῆς εἰς τάξιν ἐξ ἀταξίας καὶ ἐκ συγχύσεως εἰς διάκρισιν ἄγων ὁ κοσμοπλάστης μορφοῦν ἤρξατο, γῆν μὲν καὶ ὕδωρ ἐπὶ τὸ μέσον ἐρρίζον, τὰ δὲ ἀέρος καὶ πυρὸς δένδρα πρὸς τὴν μετάρσιον ἀνείλκεν ἀπο τοῦ μέσου χώραν, τὸν δὲ αἰθέριον ἐν κύκλῳ, τόπον ὠχυροῦτο τῶν ἐντος ὄρον τε καὶ φυλακτήριον αὐτὸν τιθείς.” (*De Plantatione* 2-3)

“It is the Lord of all things that is the greatest of planters and most perfect Master of his art. It is this world that is a plant containing in itself the particular plants all at once in their myriads, like shoots springing from a single root. For when the Framer of the world, finding all that existed confused and disordered of itself, began to give it form by bringing it out of disorder into order, out of confusion into distinction of parts, he caused earth and water to occupy the position of roots at its centre: the trees that are air and fire, He drew up from the centre to the space on high: the encircling region of ether He firmly established, and set it to be at once a boundary and guard of all that is within”.¹¹²

¹¹⁰ Andron, C. I., 6ff.

¹¹¹ Andron, C. I., 7.

¹¹² Trans. G. H. Whitaker, *Philo Works* – Loeb Classical Library Vol. III (London-Cambridge 1929-1962).

Here the First Principle is explicitly defined as a φυτουργός. The same is true of the following fragment from *De Agricultura* 1-5:

“οὐ μὲν πολλοὶ τῶν ἀνθρώπων τὰς φύσεις τῶν πραγμάτων οὐκ εἰδότες καὶ περὶ τὴν τῶν ὀνομάτων θέσιν ἐξ ἀνάγκης ἀμαρτάνουσι (...) τίνι γὰρ τῶν προχειροτέρων οὐκ ἂν δόξειε τὰ αὐτὰ εἶναι γεωργία τε καὶ γῆς ἐργασία, καίτοι πρὸς ἀλήθειαν οὐ μόνον οὐκ ὄντα τὰ αὐτά, ἀλλὰ καὶ λίαν ἀπηρητημένα, ὡς ἀντιστατεῖν καὶ διαμάχεσθαι, δύναται μὲν γὰρ τις καὶ ἄνευ ἐπιστήμης περὶ τὴν γῆς ἐπιμέλειαν ποιεῖσθαι, γεωργὸς δὲ τὸ μὴ ἰδιώτης ἀλλ’ ἔμπειρος εἶναι καὶ τῷ ὀνόματι πεπίστωται, ὅπερ ἐκ τῆς γεωργικῆς τέχνης, ἧς φερώνυμός ἐστιν, εὔρηται.”

“Most men, not knowing the nature of things necessarily go wrong also in giving them names (...). Would not anyone who answers questions offhand think that husbandry (γεωργία) and working in the soil (γῆς ἐργασία) were the same things, but are ideas utterly at variance with each other and mutually repugnant? For a man is guaranteed to be no unprofessional but a skilled worker by his very name which he has gained from the science of husbandry, the science whose title he bears.”

This term γεωργός is not to be found in the *Timaeus* (although the image of cultivation as part of the process of creation already exists there), but is used of divinities during the imperial age.¹¹³ Philo draws a distinction between the farmer and the labourer, which results from his attempt to combine the Book of *Genesis* with the *Timaeus*. Numenius is influenced by this Philonic distinction, but brings it into sharper focus by positing two separate Gods. For Andron, ὁ ὢν or Being is the name of the First God, just as the Second God is called the Demiurge, taken from *Exodus* 3.14.¹¹⁴ From the evidence of Fr. 42 (Iamblichus, *Περὶ Ψυχῆς* ap. Stob. *Anth.* I. 49.67), it would appear that the First God is indeed the seed of all souls, since Numenius regarded the soul as identical with its principles:

“Ἐνωσιν μὲν οὔν καὶ ταυτότητα ἀδιάκριτον τῆς ψυχῆς πρὸς τὰς ἑαυτῆς ἀρχὰς πρεσβεύειν φαίνεται Νομῆμιος.”

“Numenius appears to maintain that there is unification and identity without distinction of the soul with its principles.”

Towards the end of the same passage of Iamblichus comes some further support for the opinion that the soul is an emanation from the First God:

¹¹³ In this context, one might cite the cult of Ζεὺς γεωργός. This element can further be traced in popular Stoicism: “Deus ad homines venit immo quod est proprius in homines venit; nulla sine deo mens bona est. semina in corporibus humanis divina dispersa sunt, quae si bonus cultor excipit similia origini prodeant et paria iis, ex quibus orta sunt, surgunt;” etc. Seneca *Ep.* 73.16. Andron, C.I., 13 n. 31

¹¹⁴ Andron, C. I., 20.

“σύμφυσιν δὲ καθ’ ἑτέραν οὐσίαν οἱ πρεσβύτεροι διασωζουσι καὶ ἀναλύσει μὲν ἐκεῖνοι, συντάξει δὲ οὗτοι προσοίκασι· καὶ οὐ μὲν ἀδιορίστῳ συναφῇ, οἱ δὲ διωρισμένη χρωῦνται.”

“But the ancients maintain that the soul is united while remaining distinct as substance. Numenius compares it to a dissolution, but the Ancients to an ordering, and the former treat it as a union without individuation, the latter as one with individuation.” (Finamore-Dillon ed. §50, p. 72 -3).

Part of the problem with using this fragment is that it may not refer to the creation of soul, but rather to the rewards given to good souls after their death, since this is the subject-matter of the text proceeding, Fr. 42.¹¹⁵ In any case, Fr. 42 comes from Iamblichus and as such, it provides us only with very weak evidence for Numenius’ thought.¹¹⁶

The Platonist Alcinous cites an alternative means of constructing soul¹¹⁷:

“Declaring that there exists an intelligible essence which is indivisible and another which is divisible about bodies he (i.e. the Demiurge) constructed from these a single essence, explaining that thus it can grasp in thought each of the aforesaid two essences; and seeing that sameness and difference occur both on the level of the intelligible and of divisible things, he put the soul together out of all these things. For either like is known by like, as is the view of the Pythagoreans, or unlike by unlike, as is held by Heraclitus, the philosopher of nature.”

This passage outlines two means of soul construction – one suggested by the Pythagoreans and the other by Heraclitus. As a Pythagorean, one would expect Numenius to subscribe to the doctrine that like is known by like. This would suggest that the soul and the First God share some properties. Here the Demiurge is regarded as responsible for the construction of soul, which is not necessarily a contradiction of Fr.13 – there too the Demiurge distributes soul, even though he does not actually create it. Here also, the Demiurge is not said to produce either essence, he merely mixes them like a bartender making a cocktail.

Numenius then goes on to expound the view that even if the Demiurge has to provide some of his own substance to initiate creation and even if he is split by matter, he is not weakened by this process (Fr. 14 (23L) = Eus. *Pr. Ev.* XI, 18, 15-19).

“Ὅποσα δὲ δοθέντα μέτεισι πρὸς τὸν λαμβάνοντα ἀπελθόντα ἐκ τοῦ δεδωκότος (ἔστι <δὲ> θεραπεία, χρήματα, νόμισμα κοῖλον, ἐπίσημον) ταυτὶ μὲν οὖν ἔστι θνητά καὶ ἀνθρώπινα, τὰ δὲ θεῖά ἔστιν διαμεταδοθέντα ἐνθένδ’ ἐκεῖθι γεγενημένα ἔνθεν τε οὐκ ἀπελήλυθε κακεῖθι γενόμενα τὸν μὲν ὤνησε τὸν δ’ οὐκ ἔβλαψε καὶ προσώνησε τῇ περὶ ὧν ἠπίστατο ἀναμνήσει.” Ἔστι δὲ τοῦτο τὸ καλὸν χρῆμα

¹¹⁵ Iamblichus, *De Anima* (ed. & trans. Finamore, J.F. & Dillon, J. M., E.J. Brill, Leiden, 2002), 73 §50 p.72-3.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ *Didaskalikos* XIV.

ἐπιστήμη ἢ καλή, ἥς ὄνατο μὲν ὁ λαβών, οὐκ ἀπολείπεται δ' αὐτῆς ὁ δεδωκώς. Οἷον ἂν ἴδιος ἐξαφθέντα ἀφ' ἑτέρου λύχνου φῶς ἔχοντα, ὁ μὴ τὸν πρότερον ἀφείλατο ἀλλ' ἢ τῆς ἐν αὐτῷ ὕλης πρὸς τὸ ἐκείνον πῦρ ἐξαφθείσης. Τοιοῦτον τὸ χρῆμά ἐστι τὸ τῆς ἐπιστήμης, ἢ δοθεῖσα καὶ ληφθεῖσα παραμένει μὲν τῷ δεδωκότι, σύνεστι δὲ τῷ λαβόντι ἢ αὐτῇ. Τούτου δὲ τὸ αἴτιον, ὧ ξένε, οὐδέν ἐστιν ἀνθρώπινον, ἀλλ' ὅτι ἕξις τε καὶ οὐσία. ἢ ἔχουσα τὴν ἐπιστήμην ἢ αὐτὴ ἐστὶ παρά τε τῷ δεδωκότι θεῷ καὶ παρά τῷ εἰληφότι ἐμοὶ καὶ σοί. Διὸ καὶ ὁ Πλάτων τὴν σοφίαν ὑπο Προμηθέως ἐλθεῖν εἰς ἀνθρώπους μετὰ φανοτάτου τινὸς πυρὸς ἔφη .”

“All that which, as a gift., passes to the recipient, coming from the giver (for examples slaves, wealth, precious metals or money) all these goods then are mortal and human; divine gifts on the contrary are those which transmitted from above, here below, have not departed from above: arriving here they profit the recipient without leaving the giver: and indeed they bestow the additional profit of the recollection. Well, this great treasure is knowledge, from which the recipient can benefit without the giver being impoverished. It is in the same manner that one can see a lamp lit by another and kindling a light of which it has not deprived the source; its wick has merely been lit by this fire. It is the same with the treasure of knowledge: given and received, it remains with the giver, while passing equally to the recipient. The reason for this strange fact is not in any way human, it is that the essence in continual possession of knowledge is identical with the God who supplied it, as it is with you and me who have received it. That is why also Plato said that knowledge came to men by the agency of Prometheus along with the most brilliant fire.”

This idea of a lamp transmitting its flame without being diminished probably goes back to Posidonius.¹¹⁸ The idea that the Demiurge illuminates us by the transmission of knowledge is noteworthy – I think that for Numenius it emphasises the notion that the basic principle of creation is number, which is transmitted by the self-contemplating intellect to the Demiurge. It is possible for humanity to possess the number-principle (possibly soul) in a manner that is identical with the God who supplied it, because the Numenian Demiurge is only the creator of Becoming, not the creator of true Being. In this way the difference between the Demiurge and the First God is more than just one of an intellect at rest and one in motion – they must be substantially different, since it is not possible that the creator of Being can exist in the same sense as created Being. Clearly the Second and Third Gods are in fact one, but soul must be of a different order, since it is supposed to come from the First God. In this case, the Numenian Demiurge also takes over the role of the Young Gods of the *Timaeus*. This is hardly surprising given the tendency of philosophers after Plato to claim to be going further back than him in attempting to find the First Principle.

¹¹⁸ Witt, R. E. (1931), 200 n. 8.

Fr. 15 (24L = Eus. *Pr. Ev.* XI, 18, 20-21) reiterates the position of the Second God as the generator of the world of Becoming:

“Εἰσὶ δ’ οὗτοι βίοι ὁ μὲν πρώτου, ὁ δὲ δεύτερου θεοῦ. Δηλονότι ὁ μὲν πρῶτος θεὸς ἔσται ἔστως, ὁ δὲ δεύτερος ἔμπαλιν ἔστι κινούμενος· ὁ μὲν οὖν πρῶτος περὶ τὰ νοητὰ, ὁ δὲ δεύτερος περὶ τὰ νοητὰ καὶ αἰσθητὰ. Μὴ θαυμάσης δ’ εἰ τοῦτ’ ἔφη· πολὺ γὰρ ἔτι θαυμαστότερον ἀκούση. Ἐπιτὶ γὰρ τῆς προσοῦσης τῷ δευτέρῳ κινήσεως τὴν προσοῦσαν τῷ πρώτῳ στάσιν φημὶ εἶναι κίνησιν σύμφυτον, ἀφ’ ἧς ἢ τε τάξις τοῦ κόσμου καὶ ἡ μονὴ ἢ αἰδῖος καὶ ἡ σωτηρία ἀναχεῖται εἰς τὰ ὅλα.”

“Such are the lives of the First and Second Gods. The First God remains stable, the second remains in motion, while the First God occupies himself with intelligibles, the Second occupies himself with intelligibles and sensibles. And do not be surprised if I have spoken in: this manner; because you will hear something that is even more surprising. Corresponding to the inherent movement of the Second God, I declare that the inherent stability of the First God is an innate movement from which proceeds the order of the world and its eternal stability, and from which salvation spreads out over all beings.”

Here the Second God seems to play a role akin to God’s Logos in the Philonic and Christian traditions, going into those parts of the cosmos where it would be beneath God’s dignity to go.

It is worth considering this inherent motion at rest of the First God. Since he is a living being he needs to have a motion of some sort. This is provided by his contemplation of the Intelligibles. At the same time, the First God here appears to play a role in demiurgic causality, beyond merely spawning the Demiurge. He is responsible for world- order and its stability. Des Places interpreted the situation as follows: the First God appears to contemplate the intelligibles with the assistance of the Second, so that the Second God also corresponds to intellect and states that the Second creates in his turn using the Third God, so that the Third God also corresponds to an intellect which uses discursive intelligence.¹¹⁹ I think it is justifiable to cast an eye on Plotinus at this point – the Neoplatonist was heavily influenced by Numenius and there are certain issues concerning Numenius that he can help to illuminate. As Dillon points out, the Platonist concept of “the First God as intellect was under strain when Plotinus came to examine it”.¹²⁰

The First God is required to think himself. As Plotinus remarks during the latter part of *Ennead* V 3 (chs. 10-17), self-intellection requires duality; a subjective, thinking element and an objective, thought element, which comprises the unity and simplicity of the Monad. This difficulty is illustrated by Nicomachus’ highly-strained

¹¹⁹ Des Places, E.(1973), 109.

¹²⁰ Dillon, J. (1992), 195.

definition of the First Principle as “νοῦς εἶτα καὶ ἀρσενόθηλος καὶ θεὸς καὶ ὕλη δέ πως”.¹²¹ Numenius is, of course, a dualist and so the situation is not as problematic for him as for monists. But this duality may be observed in his attempt to regard the stability of the First God as an inherent motion. Numenius’ First God is clearly an intellect, although one can see here the beginning of a move to regard intellection as the domain of the second principle – the Demiurge is specifically identified by Numenius here as an intellect. The influence of this can be seen in Plotinus, as he claims that the One is superior to Intellect.

The nature of the “inner life” of the First God is of vital importance for understanding demiurgic causality. Since he is the ultimate source of life, he cannot be regarded as inert (a problem faced also by Plotinus) and I think that Numenius is attempting to deal with this by postulating some kind of motion, even one that appears to all intensive purposes to be non-existent. The exact nature of the First God also has important implications: if his nature transcends that of the Demiurge to such an extent, how exactly does the Second God interact with him.

In Fr. 15, the First God seems akin to the Demiurge of the *Timaeus* in permitting the Young Gods to exist forever – the stability of the Demiurge’s creation is guaranteed by the First God and not by the Demiurge himself. At this point, another passage of Plotinus might prove enlightening:

“The object of (Intellect’s) intellection remains by itself and is not deficient, like that which it sees and thinks. I call that which thinks deficient as compared with the Intelligible, but it is not like something senseless; all things belong to it and are in it and with it. It is completely able to discern itself (*pante diakritikon heautou*); it has life in itself and all things in itself and its cognition of itself takes place by a kind of immediate self-consciousness (*hoionei synaisthesei*) in everlasting rest and in a manner of thinking different from the thinking of Intellect (*Enn. V 4.2*, trans. Armstrong, slightly adapted by Dillon).¹²²

Here the One seems like a sort of living “table of contents” of creation, a self-conscious blueprint which the Demiurge can follow. Applying this to our original fragment, it seems that the Numenian First God comprises this all-encompassing element. He might not be involved in the practicalities of demiurgy, but he appears to regulate things in the same manner that the chairman of a board of directors might regulate a multinational. He has some limited role in creation, since it is from him

¹²¹ Ap. Phot. *Bibl.* 187 143 A. quoted by Rist (1965), 337.

¹²² Dillon, J. (1992), 196.

that σωτηρία spreads to all beings, but I am unclear as to what exactly Numenius means by this (although it is perhaps just a basic presentation in existence). It is difficult to see how exactly the First God can be responsible for universal salvation, even though he seems to generate the soul-principle, although perhaps this is merely an allusion to the fact that he prevents cosmic collapse. If this inherent stability is really an “innate movement, perhaps it is even possible to postulate that the First God is involved in a sort of continual creation: by constantly remaining stable, he prevents the destruction of the world.

At Fr. 16 (25L = Eus. *Pr. Ev.* XI, 22, 3-5), there seems to be something of a demarcation dispute between Numenius’ triad of principles:

“Εἰ δ’ ἔστι μὲν νοητὸν ἢ οὐσία καὶ ἡ ἰδέα, ταύτης δ’ ὡμολογήθη πρεσβύτερον καὶ αἴτιον εἶναι ὁ νοῦς, αὐτὸς οὗτος μόνος εὑρεται ὦν τὸ ἀγαθόν. Καὶ γὰρ εἰ ὁ μὲν δημιουργὸς θεὸς ἔστι γενέσεως, ἀρκεῖ τὸ ἀγαθὸν οὐσίας εἶναι ἀρχή. Ἀνάλογον δὲ τούτῳ μὲν ὁ δημιουργὸς θεός, ὦν αὐτοῦ μιμητής, τῇ δὲ οὐσία ἢ γένεσις <ἢ> εἰκὼν αὐτῆς ἔστι καὶ μίμημα. Εἶπερ δὲ ὁ δημιουργὸς ὁ τῆς γενέσεως ἔστιν ἀγαθός, ἢ που ἔσται καὶ ὁ τῆς οὐσίας δημιουργὸς αὐτοάγαθον σύμθυτον τῇ οὐσίᾳ. Ὁ γὰρ δεύτερος διττὸς ὦν αὐτοποιεῖ τὴν τε ἰδέαν ἑαυτοῦ καὶ τὸν κόσμον, δημιουργὸς ὦν, ἔπειτα θεωρητικὸς ὄλως. Συλλελογισμείων δ’ ἡμῶν ὀνόματα τεσσάρων πραγμάτων τέσσαρα ἔστω ταῦτα· ὁ μὲν πρῶτος θεὸς αὐτοάγαθον· ὁ δὲ τούτου μιμητής δημιουργὸς ἀγαθός· ἢ δ’ οὐσία μία μὲν ἢ τοῦ πρῶτου, ἕτερα δ’ ἢ τοῦ δευτέρου· ἢς μίμημα ὁ κάλος κόσμος, κεκαλλωπισμένος μετουσία τοῦ καλοῦ.”

“And if essence and the Idea are on the level of the Intelligible and if Intellect has been recognised as prior and superior as their cause, it is only Intellect which is revealed as being the Good. In effect, if the Demiurge is the god of Becoming, it suffices for the Good to be of Being. The first principle, the demiurgic god bears the same relation to him, being his imitator, as Becoming does to Being. Well, if indeed the Demiurge of Becoming is good, without doubt also the Demiurge of Being will be the Good itself, as connatural to Being; because the Second, who is double, produces from himself his own idea and the universe, as a Demiurge, after which he devotes himself entirely to contemplation. In order to conclude our reasoning, let us posit four names corresponding to four entities: a) The First God, the Good itself, b) his imitator, the Demiurge, who is good, c) the essence, one of the First, another of the Second; d) the copy of all this, the beautiful universe, embellished by its participation in the Good.”

These four entities are divided up amongst three gods: Good itself, the Demiurge and the world or World-Soul. The double οὐσία shared by the First and Second Gods does not seem to add a new reality to either.¹²³ These four seem to be composed of two gods and two *ousiai*, but it is an odd way of calculating. Krämer

¹²³ Des Places, E. (1973), 109.

points out that since the Demiurge can be confounded with the good World-Soul,¹²⁴ the Second and Third Gods only count as one (Fr. 11,1, 4), which leaves us with only two divinities: an ultimate reality and a creative entity. However, I feel that all four entities can best be understood in terms of demiurgic causality – there are two causal principles, since, as has been stated before, the First God also plays a limited role in creation and the result is the Third God.

It is difficult to explain the third entity – the double οὐσία. I think that Numenius wishes to point out that the Second God is in some way consubstantial with the First, just as has previously been illustrated, the Second and Third are substantially the same. This would be necessary if the Demiurge also has to deal with the intelligibles. The Demiurge is referred to as the imitator of the First God – he imitates him, not only in his contemplation of the intelligibles but also in his need to create. Numenius also tries to assign some kind of creative role to the First God, referring to him as “the Demiurge of essence”. Numenius here regards the Good, not as a Form which contains all the other Forms, but rather playing a role similar to that played by the Second God in the realm of Becoming. The First God is the Demiurge of the realm of Being, although it is unclear here whether he is contemplating the Intelligibles or whether the Intelligibles only exist because he contemplates them.

Dodds’ position was that the First God is all contemplation; and I think that this contemplation must be equivalent to the “inner life” of the First God. I also agree with his contention that the Second only creates as a first step, after which he returns to contemplation, in which he serves as a model for the philosopher (*Rep.* VI, 496d, 498 b-c, 501a-c). ἔπειτα may not necessarily imply temporal succession; Des Places claims that the Demiurge engages in a first creative movement, by which he creates his own idea and the idea of the world, and then undergoes a conversion by which he turns away from matter towards the first νοῦς.¹²⁵ I fail to understand how the Demiurge creates his own idea when surely that is generated by the First God, unless this is related to the concept Plotinus picks up on, of the self-generation of lower hypostases through reversion on the higher. Secondly, I am unhappy with the phrasing – the idea that the Second God undergoes a conversion seems to imply that creation is the result of some kind of moral fall”, and that the Numenian Demiurge is

¹²⁴ Des Places, E. (1973), 109.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

similar to his ignorant or fundamentally flawed Gnostic counterpart, which is clearly not the case here.

Fr. 17 (26L = Eus. *Pr. Ev.* XI, 18, 22-23) boldly attempts to use the *Timaeus* to justify the existence of an intellect superior to the Demiurge:

“Ἐπειδὴ ἤδει ὁ Πλάτων παρὰ τοῦς ἀνθρώπους τὸν μὲν δημιουργὸν γινωσκόμενον μόνον, τὸν μέντοι πρῶτον νοῦν, ὅστις καλεῖται αὐτόν παντάπασιν ἀγνοούμενον παρ’ αὐτοῖς, διὰ τοῦτο οὕτως εἶπεν ὡς περ ἂν τις οὕτω λέγοι· “Ὁ ἀνθρωποι, ὃν τοπάζετε ὑμεῖς νοῦν οὐκ ἔστι πρῶτος, ἀλλ’ ἕτερος πρὸ τούτου νοῦς πρεσβύτερος καὶ θεϊότερος.”

“Since Plato knew that amongst men only the Demiurge is known, while the First Intellect, that which bears the name of Being in itself, remains completely unknown, for this reason he spoke as he did, “Men, the one whom you conjecture to be Intellect is not the First, there is before him another intellect, anterior and more divine.”

Numenius here alludes to *Timaeus* 28C, which he interprets to include two gods, the “father” and the “creator” being different. Plutarch draws a similar distinction at *Quaest. Plat.* II and it is seen subsequently in Neoplatonism. Plutarch distinguishes between the activity of a builder or weaver, whose product is separated from him and that of a parent, where a principle emanating from the parent inhabits the child (1001A), “for not even of the placenta, says Chrysippus, is he who provided seed called father, though it is a product of the seed” (1000F). As god sows from himself into matter, he can be regarded as both “father and maker”. Incidentally, this position is mentioned and rejected by Proclus *In Platonis Timaeum* I p. 319, 15-20 [Diehl]. Plutarch, however, justifies his position by pointing out that Plato regards the Demiurge as producer of both the body and soul of the universe- the former is composed from matter (1001B), while soul, as a partaker in intelligence, reason and concord, is both a work, but also a part of god, as it is produced not just by him, but from him.

The identification of the First God and Being comes from the Xenocratic tradition.¹²⁶ Despite the slightly negative portrayal of the Demiurge here, there is no question that creation is evil in any way; it is just that he is inferior to the First God. That said, here it is possible to observe echoes of the Gnostic current in the reference to a superior god who remains unknown.

¹²⁶ Krämer, H., 109.

Fr.18 (27L = Eus. *Pr. Ev.* XI, 18, 24) provides an interesting description of the manner in which the Demiurge creates:

“Κυβερνήτης μὲν που ἐν μέσῳ πελάγει φορούμενος ὑπὲρ πηδαλίων ὑψίζυγος τοῖς οἴαζι διιθύνει τὴν ναῦν ἐφεζόμενος, ὄμματα δ’ αὐτοῦ καὶ νοῦς εὐθὺ τοῦ αἰθέρος συντέταται πρὸς τὰ μετάρσια καὶ ἡ ὁδὸς αὐτῷ ἄνω δι’ οὐρανοῦ ἄπεισι, πλέοντι κάτω κατὰ τὴν θάλατταν· οὕτω καὶ ὁ δημιουργὸς τὴν ὕλην, τοῦ μήτε διακροῦσαι μήτε ἀποπλαγχθῆναι αὐτήν, ἀρμονία συνδησάμενος αὐτὸς μὲν ὑπὲρ ταύτης ἴδρυται, οἶον ὑπὲρ νεῶς ἐπὶ θαλάττης [τῆς ὕλης]· τὴν ἀρμονίαν δ’ ἰθύνει, ταῖς ιδέας οἰακίζων, βλέπει τε ἀντὶ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ εἰς τὸν ἄνω θεὸν προσαγόμενον αὐτοῦ τὰ ὄμματα λαμβάνει τε τὸ μὲν κριτικὸν ἀπὸ τῆς θεωρίας, τὸ δ’ ὀρμητικὸν ἀπὸ τῆς ἐφέσεως.”

“A helmsman, I suppose, who travels on the open sea, perched above the helm, directs the ship with the tiller, but his eyes, like his spirit, are directed up towards the ether, towards the celestial regions, and his route comes from above, across the sky, while he sails across the sea; in a similar manner, the Demiurge, who knits together links of harmony around matter, for fear lest it break its fastenings, and will be cast adrift, remains himself adjusting it, just as if in a ship upon the sea, he regulates harmony in it by governing it in accordance with the Forms, but looking at the Good above in the heavens which attracts his eyes and if he receives his judgement from this contemplation, he retains his impulse to act from desire.”

Here the Demiurge creates by harmonising matter in accordance with the Forms, but it appears that he is only aware of what these Forms are as a result of his contemplation of the First God, who transmits this information to him. The First God’s role in demiurgic causality seems to be that of creating or transmitting a coherent scheme for organising matter to the Demiurge, who then proceeds to carry out, if not his instructions, then at least his intentions. Clearly, the idea of a subsequent “conversion” to philosophy on the part of the Demiurge propounded by certain commentators is out of place- he is “philosophising” even at the moment of creation. Also, one cannot speak of a “conversion” here; unlike the Gnostic Demiurge, the Numenian Second God is not only aware of the existence of a superior, but actually collaborates with it.

Fr. 20 (29L = Eus. *Pr. Ev.* 22, 9-10) elaborates further on the nature of the Demiurge:

“Ταῦτα δ’ οὕτως ἔχοντα ἔθηκεν ὁ Πλάτων ἄλλη καὶ ἄλλη χωρίσας· ἰδίᾳ μὲν γὰρ τὸν κυκλικὸν ἐπὶ τοῦ δημιουργοῦ ἐγράψατο ἐν Τιμαίῳ εἰπών· “Ἄγαθὸς ἦν.” ἐν δὲ τῇ Πολιτεία τὸ ἀγαθὸν εἶπεν “ἀγαθοῦ ιδέαν”, ὡς δὴ τοῦ δημιουργοῦ ιδέαν οὔσαν τὸ ἀγαθὸν, ὅστις πέφανται ἡμῖν ἄγαθὸς μετουσία τοῦ πρωτοῦ τε καὶ μόνοῦ. “Ὡσπερ γὰρ ἄνθρωποι μὲν λέγονται τυπωθέντες ὑπὸ τῆς ἀνθρώπου ιδέας, βόες δ’ ὑπὸ τῆς βοός, ἵπποι δ’ ὑπὸ τῆς ιδέας, οὕτως καὶ εἰκότως ὁ

δημιουργὸς εἶπερ ἐστὶ μετουσίᾳ τοῦ πρώτου ἀγαθοῦ ἀγαθός, <ἀγαθοῦ> ἰδέα ἂν εἴη ὁ πρῶτος νοῦς, ὧν αὐτοάγαθον.”

“Plato expounded these doctrines in diverse ways on many occasions, particularly in the *Timaeus*, he qualified the Demiurge as good in the current sense of the word: “He was good”; whereas in the *Republic*, he called Good “the Idea of the Good”, implying that the Good is the idea of the Demiurge, who appeared good to us on account of his participation in the First God, the Unique. Indeed, in the same way that men are said to be modelled on the Idea of Man, cattle by the Idea of Cow, horses by the Idea of Horse, in the same way, it is reasonable to suppose that if the Demiurge is good by participation in the First Good, then the First Intellect would be the Idea of <the Good>, being the Good itself.

Here the creative role of the Demiurge is once again placed in context. If he is “good” it is only as a result of his interaction with the First God. Even though he may be the creator, the creative role of the First God is stressed – the Demiurge is an instantiation of the Form of the First God.

At Fr. 21 (Test. 24 L fr. 36= Proclus, *In Timaeum* I, 303, 27-304), Numenius outlines the hierarchy of his three gods:

“Νουμήμιος μὲν γὰρ τρεῖς ἀνυμνήσας θεοὺς πατέρα μὲν καλεῖ τὸν πρῶτον, ποιητὴν δὲ τὸν δεύτερον, ποίημα δὲ τὸν τρίτον· ὁ γὰρ κόσμος κατ’ αὐτὸν ὁ τρίτος ἐστὶ θεός· ὥστε ὁ κατ’ αὐτὸν δημιουργὸς διττός, ὃ τε πρῶτος θεὸς καὶ ὁ δεύτερος, τὸ δε δημιουργούμενον ὁ τρίτος.” Ἀμεινον γὰρ οὕτω λέγειν ἢ ὡς ἐκεῖνος λέγει προστραγωδῶν, πάππον, ἔγγονον, ἀπόγονον. Ὁ δὴ ταῦτα λέγων πρῶτον μὲν οὐκ ὀρθῶς τὰγαθὸν συναριθμεῖ τοῖσδε τοῖς αἰτίοις· οὐ γὰρ πέφυκεν ἐκεῖνο συζέγγυσθαί τισιν οὐδε δευτέραν ἔχειν ἄλλου τάξιν.”

“Numenius proclaims that there are three gods and calls the first “Father”, the second “creator” and the third “creation”, because the world for him is the Third God; while the Demiurge is double, the First God and the Second, and the created world is the Third God. It is much better, in effect, to express it in this way, rather than to speak like him in a melodramatic style of “Grandfather”, “Father” and “Grandson”. But he who says this first of all is not correct in numbering the Good with these causes: for it is not in its nature to be linked to anything nor to hold a rank second to anything else.”

The hierarchy here is not that of Fragment 11 (20L), where the First God does not play a role in creation, while the Second and Third can be regarded as the same entity. Here the Demiurge is listed as comprising the First and Second Gods, while the Third plays no role in either creation or in the subsequent regulation of matter. Des Places points out that the equivalence God-Father is admitted implicitly by

Numenius, in contradiction to the *Timaeus* 28e3; where ποιητής precedes πατήρ¹²⁷, while Numenius relegates the role of ποιητής to second place. However, this fragment comes from Proclus, *In Timaeum* I, 303, 27-304 and is therefore not of the same value as Fragment 11, which is verbatim (from Eusebius) and therefore has precedence. One must assume that Proclus has here deliberately or otherwise distorted the *Dreigötterlehre* of Numenius.

Matter

In considering Numenius' doctrine of demiurgic causality, it is necessary also to investigate his conception of matter. For Numenius, matter is not created by the divine triad and it is involved in some sort of opposition to it, although the nature of this opposition remains to be seen. Fortunately, in this regard, we possess some fragments quoted by Eusebius on this subject, but further information may also be obtained from Calcidius' *Commentary on the Timaeus*, which used Numenius as a source, although a difficulty here is that even though Calcidius refers to his predecessors, he does not tend to acknowledge his sources and we cannot always conclude definitive use of a specific text.¹²⁸

At Fr. 4a (13L 0 Eus. *Pr. Ev.* XV, 17, 3-8), Numenius denies the stability of matter:

“Ὡστε καλῶς ὁ λόγος εἴρηκε φάσι, εἰ ἔστιν ἄπειρος ἢ ὕλη, ἀόριστον εἶναι αὐτήν· εἰ δὲ ἀόριστος, ἄλογος· εἰ δὲ ἄλογος, ἄγνωστος.” Ἀγνωστον δέ γε οὐσαν αὐτήν ἀναγκαῖον εἶναι ἄτακτον, ὡς τεταγμένα γνωσθῆναι πάνυ δήπουθεν ἂν εἴη ῥάδια· τὸ δὲ ἄτακτον οὐχ ἔστηκεν, ὅ τι δὲ μὴ ἔστηκεν, οὐχ ἂν εἴη ὄν. Τοῦτο δὲ ἦν ὅπερ ἡμῖν αὐτοῖς ὡμολογησάμεθα ἐν τοῖς ἔμπροσθεν, ταυτὶ πάντα συνενεχθῆναι τῷ ὄντι ἀθέμιστον εἶναι.”

“And so the argument clearly states that if matter is infinite, it is indeterminate if indeterminate, irrational; and if irrational, unknowable. Now if it is unknowable, it is necessarily without order, because that which has order is evidently easy to know, however, that which is disordered is not stable and that which is not stable cannot be existent. Well, we have now arrived at the point, given what preceded, to agree amongst ourselves: to apply these attributes to being is not right”

Numenius here characterises matter as in a state of flux and uses the recalcitrance traditionally associated with it, at least from a Platonic perspective, to deny a connection with Being. In the same fragment, Numenius goes on to describe the interaction of the Demiurge upon matter:

¹²⁷ Des Places, E. (1973), 113.

¹²⁸ Van Winden, J. C. M. (1959), 13.

- “- Οὐκ οὐκ φημι τὴν ὕλην οὔτε αὐτὴν οὔτε τὰ σώματα εἶναι ὄν.
- τί οὖν δὴ; ἢ ἔχομεν παρὰ ταῦτα ἄλλο τι ἐν τῇ φύσει τῇ τῶν ὄλων;
 - Ναί. τοῦτο οὐδὲν εἰπεῖν ποικίλον εἰ τόδε πρῶτον μὲν ἐν ἡμῖν αὐτοῖς ἅμα πειραθείημεν διαλεγόμενοι· ἐπειδὴ τὰ σώματά ἐστι φύσει τεθνηκότα καὶ νεκρά καὶ πεφορημένα καὶ οὐδ’ ἐν ταῦτῳ μένοντα ἄρ’ οὐχὶ τοῦ καθέξοντος αὐτοῖς ἔδει;
 - Παντὸς μάλλον.
 - Εἰ μὴ τύχοι δὲ τούτου, ἄρα μείνειεν ἄν;
 - Παντὸς ἦπτον.
 - Τί οὖν ἐστὶ τὸ κατασχῆσον; Εἰ μὲν δὴ καὶ τοῦτο εἴη σῶμα, Δίος Σωτήρος δοκεῖ ἄν μοι δεηθῆναι αὐτὸ παραλυόμενον καὶ σκιδνάμενον· Εἰ μέντοι χρὴ αὐτὸ ἀπηλλάχθαι τῆς τῶν σωμάτων πάθης, ἵνα κακείνοις κεκυκμημένους τὴν φθορὰν ἀμύνειν δύνηται καὶ κατέχη, ἐμοὶ μὲν οὐ δοκεῖ ἄλλο τι εἶναι ἢ μόνον γε τὸ ἀσώματον· αὐτὴ γὰρ δὴ φύσεων πασῶν μόνη ἔστηκε καὶ ἔστιν ἀραρυῖα καὶ οὐδὲν σωματικὴ. Οὔτε γοῦν γίγνεται οὔτε αὐξεται οὔτε κίνησιν κινεῖται ἄλλην οὐδεμίαν, καὶ διὰ ταῦτα καλῶς δίκαιον ἐφάνη πρεσβεῦσαι τὸ ἀσώματον”.
 - “I affirm then that matter, neither by itself, nor in the form of bodies, is not existent.
 - What? Have we besides that anything else in universal nature?
 - Yes, there is nothing complicated in saying that, if we first examine the matter in dialogue with ourselves in the following manner, that since bodies by nature are dead, without life, in perpetual movement, incapable of remaining in the same place, should there not also be a principle to maintain them?
 - Absolutely.
 - Deprived of which they cannot remain in their position?
 - Exactly.
 - What will it be then which maintains them? If it is also body, it will have need, so it seems to me, of Zeus the Saviour, being subject to dissolution and to disintegration; well if this salvational power escapes from the passivity of bodies, in order that it may be able to separate corruption from these mixtures and to maintain them, it will not, it appears to me anything else but incorporeal, because amongst diverse substances only those which contain the incorporeal remain fixed and stable. In any case, it will not become, nor will it move with any other movement, and that is why it appears correct to place in the first rank the incorporeals”.

Here Numenius explicitly attributes motion in matter to a recalcitrant principle, which renders bodies incapable of remaining in a fixed position. The Second God is clearly involved in continual creation in time, rather than a once-off event, since deprived of the principle that he injects into matter it will no longer retain its position. This raises the question – what is the nature of this principle? I think that it is quite possibly soul (which itself is a principle of number). Just like the Demiurge in numerous metaphysical systems, including Plato’s own, the Second God orders, rather than creates, although the situation here is rather more complicated, since the

Second God orders pre-existent matter using a principle which he himself has not created. This makes him an instrument of the First God in the creation of the world, rather than an autonomous Demiurge.

Fr. 4b (Test 29L = Nemesius, Περὶ φύσεως ἀνθρώπου, 2, 8-14) continues in much the same vein: ¹²⁹:

“τὰ σώματα τῇ οἰκείᾳ φύσει τρεπτὰ ὄντα καὶ σκεδαστὰ καὶ διόλου εἰς ἄπειρον τμητὰ μηδενὸς ἐν αὐτοῖς ἀμεταβλήτου ὑπολειπομένου δεῖται τοῦ συνέχοντος καὶ συνάγοντος καὶ ὡσπερ συσφίγγοντος καὶ συγκρατοῦντος αὐτὰ ὅπερ ψυχὴν λέγομεν. Εἰ τοίνυν σῶμα ἐστὶν ἢ ψυχὴ οἰονδήποτε, εἰ καὶ λεπτομερέστατον, τί πάλιν ἐστὶν τὸ συνέχον ἐκείνη; ἐδείχθη γὰρ πᾶν σῶμα δεῖσθαι τοῦ συνέχοντος καὶ οὕτως εἰς ἄπειρον, ἕως ἂν καταστήσωμεν εἰς ἀσωματον”.

“Just as by their nature bodies are changeable, susceptible to disintegration and totally divisible to infinity, without anything immutable, it is necessary that there exists something to maintain them, to reassemble them, to contract them, in order to give them cohesion; it is that which we call soul. Well, if soul is any kind of body, never mind how rarefied, what is there to maintain it in its turn? Because we have shown that all bodies need something to maintain them and it will require it to infinity, just until the point that we encounter the incorporeal.”

Here Numenius explicitly states that soul is responsible for holding together matter and providing it with cohesion, although he is less clear about the second principle, which maintains matter in its turn. I think that it is not beyond the bounds of possibility to propose that the principle supporting soul is the Second God, who implants it in the Cosmos. The rest of the fragment goes on to explore where this movement comes from:

“Εἰ μὲν οὖν καὶ ἡ δύναμις αὕτη ὕλη τίς ἐστὶν τοῖς αὐτοῖς πάλιν χρήσομαι λόγοις· εἰ δὲ οὐχ ὕλη ἀλλ’ ἔνυλον (ἕτερον δ’ ἐστὶ τὸ ἔνυλον παρὰ τὴν ὕλην· τὸ γὰρ μετέχον ὕλης ἔνυλον λέγεται), τί ποτ’ ἄρ’ ἐστὶν τὸ μετέχον τῆς ὕλης; πότερον ὕλη καὶ αὐτὸ ἢ ἄνυλον; εἰ μὲν οὖν ὕλη, πῶς ἔνυλον καὶ οὐχ ὕλη; εἰ δὲ οὐχ ὕλη, ἄνυλον ἄρα· εἰ δὲ ἄνυλον, οὐ σῶμα· πᾶν γὰρ σῶμα ἔνυλον. Εἰ δὲ λέγοιεν ὅτι τὰ σώματα τριχῆ διαστατά ἐστὶν, καὶ ἡ ψυχὴ δὲ δι’ ὅλου διήκουσα τοῦ σώματος τριχῆ διαστατὴ ἐστὶν· καὶ διὰ τοῦτο πάντως καὶ σῶμα, ἐροῦμεν ὅτι πᾶν μὲν σῶμα τριχῆ διαστατὸν, οὐ πᾶν δὲ τὸ τριχῆ διαστατὸν σῶμα.”

“If this faculty is matter, I return to the same arguments; if it is not matter, but material (the material differs from matter, because what one calls material is that which participates in matter), what is it then which participates in matter? Is it matter itself or the immaterial? If it is matter, how is it material without being matter? And if it is not matter, it is therefore immaterial; it is not a body; because all body is material. And if bodies have three dimensions also and for

¹²⁹ The passage actually comes from Nemesius, Περὶ φύσεως ἀνθρώπου, 2, 8-14, but I think that it can be regarded as quite reliable since it is supported by Fr. 4 a which comes from Eusebius.

this reason soul is also a body, we reply that if all body has three dimensions, it does not follow that all that has three dimensions is a body”.

Numenius regards soul as the basis of movement; though read in conjunction with the opening section of Fr. 4b, this must mean that soul is only the cause of all orderly motion, since as has previously been illustrated, matter is regarded as subject to an irrational motion which does not partake of Being. Numenius has a problem here: how can he explain the relation of an incorporeal upon a corporeal. He is forced to concede that it is three-dimensional, which allows it to permeate the “host-body”, but this argument allows him to deny attributing corporeality to matter.

When Numenius is forced to concede that soul is tridimensional, he claims “it is not such by itself, but κατὰ συμβεβηκός, that is because of the body in which it is: τῇ ψυχῇ καθ’ ἑαυτὴν μὲν πρόσεστι τὸ ἀδιάστατον· κατὰ συμβεβηκός δὲ τῷ ἐν ᾧ ἐστι διαστατῷ ὄντι συνθεωρεῖται καὶ αὐτὴ τρίχῃ διαστατῇ.”¹³⁰

Numenius is caught between the tendency to make matter corporeal and the opposing tendency to make soul corporeal.¹³¹ This same problem is evident in Calcidius, who uses Numenius as his main source here. Calcidius, in a similar position, believes that matter is *inpetibilis*, but believes that one may state “*silva patibilis est*”.¹³² Plotinus radically breaks with this in his statement ὕλη ἀπαθὴς ἐστι. It is clear that Calcidius is inspired by Numenius here. For Chrysippus matter was indifferent due to its lack of quality: “οὐ γὰρ ἢ γ’ ὕλη τὸ κακὸν ἐξ ἑαυτῆς παρέσχηκεν ἄποιος γὰρ ἐστι καὶ πάσας ὅσας δέχεται διαφορὰς ὑπὸ τοῦ κινουῦντος αὐτὴν...ἔσχε”¹³³ Van Winden raises the possibility that Numenius reacts against these words.¹³⁴

This hypothesis is rendered more credible by what I view as a distinction between essence and matter present in Numenius, which must come from Stoic sources. Essence for the Stoics was “*fundamentum operis*” – “that out of which something is made” while matter was “the means by which the Maker operates”.¹³⁵ I think that we can see the influence of this distinction upon Numenius in his attempts to posit a second principle supporting soul which also works upon matter. In this context, it is worth citing Calcidius *In Timaeum* 293:

¹³⁰ Nemesius, Περὶ φύσεως ἀνθρώπου, p. 69, Matth; Leemans, test. 29.

¹³¹ Van Winden, J. (1959), 160.

¹³² Cp. Ad. Par.309, 148.

¹³³ Plut. *De Comm. Notit.* 10765 C-D.

¹³⁴ Leemans adds : “ Materiam fontem esse malorum iam veteres Pythagorei adserunt (Dox. Gr. 302), quibus consentiunt omnes Platonici et Pythagorici recentiores”.

¹³⁵ Van Winden, J. (1959), 97.

“Thus, according to the Stoa, the body of the world is limited, is one, is a whole and is an essence: a whole, because it does not lack a single part; one, because its parts are inseparable and together form a coherent whole; an essence because it is the primary matter of all bodies (through the primary matter, they say, all penetrating reason passes as seed passes through the genitals and this reason in their opinion is the Creator himself), a coherent body without quality, entirely passive and variable: such, according to them, is matter or essence”.

This passage is interesting for the light that it sheds upon Stoic demiurgic causality, but it can help us to better understand the fragments of Numenius. Clearly, he is opposed to this view.¹³⁶ Matter cannot be without quality in his dualistic system. However, the Stoic speculation on essence has left its mark, even on the limited fragments that we possess. The penetration of the Demiurge into matter uses a sexual metaphor and this also cannot be Numenius’ view.¹³⁷ For Numenius, matter is not generated – he distinguishes between two states- one ordered and the other unarranged, and states that this unarranged state is *aequaeva deo*. This secondary matter (chaos) of the *Timaeus* is actually something concrete.

In Timaeum 296 contradicts somewhat this image we have constructed of Numenian matter:

“Thus Pythagoras also thinks, Numenius says, that matter is fluid and without qualities, in his opinion it is not what is according to the Stoics something intermediate between good and evil, which they call “indifferent”, but on the contrary absolutely harmful. For to him, as to Plato, God is the principle and cause of all good, matter of all evil. However, that which proceeds from form and matter is indifferent: so not matter but the world, being a mixture of the goodness of form and the badness of matter, is indifferent. Not without reason do the old theologians think it to have been generated out of Providence and Necessity”

Numenius’ view that Pythagoras would regard matter as without qualities appears problematic in light of his view that it is also evil; this reminds one of Plotinus’ attempts to reconcile both aspects of matter. Numenius breaks away from the Platonic supposition that the world is good, regarding it as merely indifferent. The Demiurge in the process of creation orders by allowing form to become enmattered,

¹³⁶ Calcidius goes on to say “Numenius ex Pythagorae magisterio Stoicorum hoc de initiis dogma refellens...”, but as Van Winden successfully demonstrates (p.103-104) Calcidius is dependent upon Numenius for these sections on Aristotle and the Stoics, a dependence betrayed by Calcidius’ statement “ut in Timaeo loquitur Plato” (327,3), which stands out in a commentary on the *Timaeus*, and indicates that Calcidius is here either following closely or merely translating Numenius.

¹³⁷ Numenius uses the image of seed in an agricultural and not a sexual sense; c.f. Fr. 13.

but he cannot neutralise completely its inherent evil. Matter is improved as a result of this mixture:

“So, according to Plato the world received its good things from the munificence of God as a father; evil clung to it through the evilness of matter, its mother. And thus, we understand why the Stoics vainly put the blame on a certain perversity, when they say that things happen by virtue of the stars. Now the stars are bodies and of all bodies matter is the foster-mother, so that also the unhappy confusion caused by the movement of the stars seems to originate from matter, in which there is much instability, blind impetuosity, change and arbitrary recklessness.

Therefore, if God has improved matter, as Plato says in the *Timaeus*, and ordered it from a state of being tossed about in great confusion, it is evident that this confused instability of matter was the result of some chance and unlucky fate and not of the beneficial plans of providence. That is why, according to Pythagoras, the soul of matter is not devoid of substances (a non-entity) as most people thought, and why it resists providence, always ready to thwart its plans through the power of its perversity.

Now Providence is the work and activity of God, whereas blind and casual arbitrariness comes from matter. Hence it is clear that, according to Pythagoras, the mass of the universe comes from a cooperation between God and matter or between Providence and Chance; and further that, after matter had received its adornment, it became the mother of corporeal and generated gods: Its condition is good to a high degree, though not entirely, since the evilness inherent in its nature could not be removed throughout”.

Numenius regarded stars as consisting of matter, so he was not particularly open to this attempt to blame evil on malevolent astral influence, since it is (for him) ultimately caused by the inherent badness of matter.¹³⁸ The Demiurge creates order out of disorder, but there must exist a second principle which is the cause of disorderly motion. As Calcidius remarks “*anima silvae neque sine ulla substantia est*”. This *malitia* for Numenius is more than mere disorder; rather it is due to a “volition” existing in matter of its soul.¹³⁹

“So, by his miraculous power, God adorned matter and in every way corrected its faults, without however destroying them entirely, thus preventing complete destruction of the nature of matter. Yet he did not allow them to grow and expand far and wide, but preserving its nature, capable of changing from a troublesome to a favourable state, he totally changed its condition, adorning and decorating it by joining order with disorder, measure with measurelessness and adornment with ugliness. Finally, Numenius says- and rightly so- that things which have come into being without defects are found nowhere, in neither the actions of man nor nature, in neither the bodies of animals nor trees, plants or fruit, not in the air nor in water, not even in the

¹³⁸ Van Winden, J (1959), 115.

¹³⁹ Van Winden, J. (1959), 117 uses the term “will”, although I am rather uncomfortable with using this word, since it denotes a concept that did not really exist in Greek philosophy.

firmament , since everywhere something of a lower order is as a kind of contamination, mixed up with Providence. And when, then, he wants to show and, as it were, bring to light an image of naked matter, he says that first all bodies, which in the womb of matter exchange and cause alteration, should be taken away one by one. Secondly we should contemplate in our mind that which has been made void by this removal: this he calls matter or necessity. From this and from God, in his opinion, the structure of the world came into being, God acting with persuasion, necessity obeying Him. This is what Pythagoras asserts about the principles of things.” (Calcidius, *In Timaeum* 299).

Here the God attempts to improve matter during the process of creation in order to make it as good as possible, but defects remain, through no fault of the Demiurge, but rather in spite of his best efforts. The image of demiurgic causality ascribed to Numenius here is similar to that of the *Timaeus* – Reason moulding Necessity as far as is possible through the use of persuasion. However, while Plato posits recalcitrant, pre-existent matter, to my knowledge, he never equates it with Necessity. Numenius posits animated matter, which is more than an Aristotelian δύναμις.¹⁴⁰ To apprehend matter it is necessary to “think away all bodies”. Numenius clearly envisages the essence of matter as non-corporeal. In reference to pre-cosmic chaos, he states that the bodies of matter are continually changing from [one form] to another in the womb of the *silva*. This would mean that matter is now being identified with the Receptacle; a modification observable also in Plutarch, but there the situation is somewhat different, as he regards Receptacle-matter as either passive or inclining towards the good. Numenius has blurred the distinctions between the space *in which creation occurs* and the substance *out of which* it occurs. Why? Perhaps it is under the influence of the Stoic distinction between matter and essence, although here again Plato’s association of “spatial” terms (such as ἐκμαγέλιον) makes such an interpretation justifiable.

Clearly for Numenius, the principle opposed to the Demiurge in the sensible world is more than just matter- there is an echo of the maleficient soul in precosmic matter posited by Plutarch. The Demiurge appears to produce, not be adding anything to matter, but by removing its recalcitrance. Even if Calcidius is not a completely reliable source for Numenius, we can follow his statement here since it agrees with fragments we possess from Eusebius, such as Fr. 4b and Fr. 49. In any case, Calcidius

¹⁴⁰ Van Winden, J. (1959), 117.

at this point does not try to mask the fact that Numenius stresses recalcitrance, while he, due to his attempt to free matter from evil, focuses more on its pliability.¹⁴¹

Matter is also linked to Numenius' daemonology, as illustrated by Fr. 37 (Test. 59L = Proclus, *In Timaeum*, I, 76, 30-77, 23 Diehl):

"Some explain [the fable of Atlantis] as representing the opposition between the two parties of daemons, a better and a worse, one superior in numbers, the other in power, one victorious, the other defeated: this was Origen's theory. Others speak of an opposition of souls, the fairer ones who are nurslings of Athena against others who are attached to generation, and who belong to the god who oversees generation. The champion of this doctrine is Numenius. Others combine the opinions of Origen and Numenius to produce a conflict between the souls and the daemons, the daemons causing a downward motion, while the souls are led aloft... According to these men, where the theologians (θεολόγοι) spoke of Osiris and Typhon or Dionysus and the Titans, Plato referred through reverence to the Athenians and the inhabitants of Atlantis. And [the proponent of this theory] says that before they enter solid bodies the souls are engaged in a war with material daemons, whom he locates in the west... This opinion is held by the philosopher Porphyry, whom one would not expect to contradict the tradition received from Numenius." (Proclus, *In Tim.* 1.76.30 -77.23 Diehl).

This fragment illustrates the manner in which the Osiris/Isis allegory of Plutarch and the lost work of Numenius which acted as the prototype for Porphyry's *Cave of the Nymphs*, both expound the same philosophical element: world-creation results from a conflict between the forces of order and disorder. The nursling of Athena is Odysseus, who is protected by her against Poseidon, the god of generation. Poseidon is not actually mentioned here, but clearly the plot of the *Odyssey* is the basis for this allegory. The sea is frequently used as an image of the generated universe in Numenius (e.g. Frs. 2 and 18), and Plato refers to Poseidon as the patron god of Atlantis (*Critias* 113c).¹⁴²

If Poseidon is meant to be the god of generation here it is difficult to see how he could represent the same entity as the Demiurge in spite of his title. Athena is evidently intellect, and as such must be identifiable with the First God. In this case, Poseidon cannot be the Second God, since he works in collaboration with the First, not in opposition to him. I do not see how he can even be identified with the Third God; he must rather represent an irrational World-Soul like Seth-Typhon; the counter-motion ascribed by Numenius to matter. Numenius probably borrowed this image from Pherecydes of Samos:

¹⁴¹ *In Timaeum* 301.

¹⁴² Edwards, M. J. (1990), 258.

“Pherecydes, he [Celsus] says, composed a myth of two embattled armies, one led by Cronus, the other by Ophioneus...they agreed that whichever should sink down to the Ocean (Ogēnos) would be defeated, while those who overcame and expelled them should possess heaven. He [Celsus] finds the same significance in those mysteries which describe the warfare of the Giants and the Titans against the Gods and in the Egyptian myths about Typhon, Horus and Osiris. (Origen, *Contra Celsum* VI. 42= Vol. II. P.III.13 Koetschau= Pherecydes Fr. B4 DK).

This acts as further evidence strengthening the interpretation of Fr. 37 as an excursus on demiurgic causality in terms of the ordering of disorder. Celsus also interprets the allegory in this manner:

“Such, he [Celsus] says is the meaning of the peplos of Athene which is beheld by all spectators at the Panathenaic procession. For what it depicts, says he, is the victory of the stainless and motherless daemon over the audacity of the Giants”. (Origen, *Contra Celsum* VI. 42= p. 112.30 Koetschau=Pherecydes Fr. B5 DK).

Celsus attributes this allegory to Pherecydes:

“Interpreting Homer’s words, [Celsus] says that Zeus’ words to Hera [*Iliad* 1. 590-1 and 15.18-24] are those of god to matter, signifying obscurely that he took it in an inchoate and turbulent state and gave it beauty and bound it with chains, banishing such of the indwelling daemons as were insolent by the road hither. He says that this was Pherecydes’ interpretation of Homer when he said: “Below this region is that of Tartarus...where Zeus casts such of the gods as are insolent.”¹⁴³

Here we are dealing with a model of demiurgic causality to which Numenius owes a certain debt, since he borrowed material for his image of the cave of the nymphs.¹⁴⁴ The Cave itself represents matter or the generated world, which is seen as home to evil forces, while the road hither is the descent of the soul to the sensible world. This reveals a negative view of the created world also observable in Numenius.¹⁴⁵ Porphyry’s interpretation of the Cave of the Nymphs can probably be regarded as the same as that of Numenius, since Celsus is never mentioned by Platonists as an original philosopher and since Porphyry admits that some of his knowledge of Pherecydes comes from Numenius. It is probable that Numenius is

¹⁴³ *Contra Celsum* VI. 42=p.112.20ff. Koetschau = Pherecydes Fr. B5 DK.

¹⁴⁴ “Pherecydes of Syros speaks of cavities, depths, caves openings and gates, and through these hints symbolically at the birth and return of souls” (p.77.18 Nauck = Pherecydes Fr.B6 DK.). This fragment appears in Porphyry’s *Cave of the Nymphs*.

¹⁴⁵ For example at Fr. 35.10 Des Places.

responsible for the interpretation of this allegory as a metaphor for the descent of the soul and the creation of the sensible world.¹⁴⁶

Fr. 39 (=Proclus, *In Timaeum*, II, 153, 17-25) goes on to explain the nature of soul:

“Τῶν δὲ πρὸ ἡμῶν οἱ μὲν μαθηματικὴν ποιοῦντες τὴν οὐσίαν τῆς ψυχῆς ὡς μέσσην τῶν τε φυσικῶν καὶ τῶν ὑπερφυσικῶν, οἱ μὲν ἀριθμὸν αὐτὴν εἰπόντες ἐκ μονάδος ποιοῦσιν, ὡς ἀμερίστου, καὶ τῆς ἀορίστου δυάδος, ὡς μεριστῆς, οἱ δ' ὡς γεωμετρικὴν ὑπόστασιν οὔσαν ἐκ σημείου καὶ διαστάσεως, τοῦ μὲν ἀμεροῦς, τῆς δὲ μεριστῆς· καὶ τῆς μὲν προτέρας εἰσὶ δόξης οἱ περὶ Ἀρίστανδρον καὶ Νουμήνιον καὶ ἄλλοι πλείστοι τῶν ἐξηγητῶν, τῆς δὲ δευτέρας Σευῆρος.”

“Amongst our predecessors, some make the essence of soul a mathematical entity, as an intermediary between physical realities and suprasensible realities; and this number they say to be that of the monad, in so far as it is indivisible, and of the indefinite dyad, in so far as it is divisible; since they saw in it a geometric entity, formed from limit and form, one indivisible, the other indivisible; of the first opinion are Aristander, Numenius and a host of other commentators; of the second opinion is Severus.”

Des Places notes that the indivisible monad is God, the indefinite dyad is matter.¹⁴⁷ There is nothing particularly unusual about regarding soul as a number principle. Numenius, according to the testimony of Proclus at any rate, views it also as a principle intermediate between the suprasensible and sublunar worlds. Again the stress here is on the geometric nature of soul. Just as Plutarch stresses the fact that the Demiurge continually engages in geometry, Numenius seems to regard ordering matter as some form of mathematical activity. However, it would appear that Proclus has distorted somewhat Numenius' actual theory. He cannot have regarded soul or even the soul-principle as a mixture between matter and the Monad, since soul is explicitly said to come from the First God. I think that Proclus, for whatever reason, glosses over the fact that Numenius posited a lower, irrational soul, which can be said to come from matter (this is the principle which imparts a motion to matter), but clearly even if the Numenian higher soul can be said to act as an intermediary between the two realms (which is probably true since it emanates from the First God and is implanted in matter by the Demiurge), it is wrong to regard it as merely a mixture of matter and of the First Principle.

¹⁴⁶ Edwards, M. J. (1990), 262.

¹⁴⁷ Des Places, E. (1973), 121.

Some further details concerning the nature of this incorporeal essence may be gleaned from Fr. 41 (Test 33.L=Iamblichus, Περὶ Ψυχῆς, ap. Stob. *Anthol.* I, 49, 32):

“Ἴθι δὴ οὖν ἐπὶ τὴν καθ' αὐτὴν ἀσώματον οὐσίαν ἐπανίωμεν, διακρίνουντες καὶ ἐπ' αὐτῆς ἐν τάξει τὰς περὶ ψυχῆς πάσας δόξας. Εἰσι δὴ τινες οἱ πᾶσαν τὴν τοιαύτην οὐσίαν ὁμοιομερῆ καὶ τὴν αὐτὴν καὶ μίαν ἀποφαίνονται, ὡς καὶ ἐν ὄπωϋν αὐτῆς μέρει εἶναι τὰ ὅλα· οἵτινες καὶ ἐν τῇ μεριστῇ ψυχῇ τὸν νοητὸν κόσμον καὶ θεοὺς καὶ δαίμονας καὶ τάγαθόν καὶ πάντα τὰ πρεσβύτερα ἐν αὐτῇ ἐνιδρύουσι καὶ ἐν πᾶσιν ὡσαύτως πάντα εἶναι ἀποφαίνονται, οἰκείως μέντοι κατὰ τὴν αὐτῶν οὐσίαν ἐν ἐκάστοις. Καὶ ταύτης τῆς δόξης ἀναμφισβητήτως μὲν ἐστὶ Νουμήμιος, οὐ πάντη δὲ ὁμολογουμένως Πλωτῖνος· ἀστάτως δ' ἐν αὐτῇ φέρεται Ἀμέλιος· Πορφύριος δ' ἐνδοιάζει περὶ αὐτῆν, πῆ μὲν διατεταμένως αὐτῆς ἀφιστάμενος, πῆ δὲ συνακολουθῶν αὐτῇ, ὡς παραδοθείση ἄνωθεν. Κατὰ δὲ ταύτην νοῦ καὶ θεῶν καὶ τῶν κρειπτόνων γενῶν οὐδὲν ἢ ψυχὴ διενηνόχε κατὰ γε τὴν ὅλην οὐσίαν.”

“So let us now turn to the incorporeal essence itself, distinguishing for it also, in order, all the opinions concerning the soul. Certain philosophers declare this essence, in its totality, homogenous, identical and of such a sort that in any one of its parts can be found the totality; these individuals go so far as to place in the soul the intelligible world, the gods, the daemons, the Good and all the superior species, and declare that all is the same in all things, even though, for each thing, the world appropriates the essence accordingly. Of this opinion was Numenius incontestably, Plotinus with reservations, Amelius held it without stability; Porphyry hesitated on this subject: sometimes he rejected it explicitly; sometimes he supported it as an ancient tradition. And so, according to this opinion, the soul, at least in its essence, does not differ at all from intellect, from the gods, from the superior species.”

Interestingly, this fragment attempts to find a location for the divinities in the soul of the intelligible world. The fragment comes from Iamblichus' Περὶ Ψυχῆς, and appears to contradict the fragment taken from Proclus quoted above, which alleges that Numenius regarded soul as a mixture between Monad and Dyad. According to Fr. 41, soul is equivalent to Intellect, which in Numenian terms would make it identical to the First God. However, it is stressed several times in the fragment that what we are discussing is not necessarily soul, but rather its essence. While Fragments 39 and 41 may not illuminate the issue of demiurgic causality considerably, taken together they can be useful for cautioning one not to place excessive credence on fragments which do not come from Eusebius, since they (may) have been distorted.

Proclus offers another interesting comment on the mixture of divinity with matter.¹⁴⁸

“Περὶ δὲ ἀπάντων τῶν κατευθυνόντων τὴν γένεσιν θεῶν λέγωμεν ὡς οὔτε τὴν οὐσίαν ἔχουσιν τῇ ὕλῃ συμμεμιγμένην, καθάπερ φασὶν οἱ ἀπὸ τῆς Στοᾶς...οὔτε τὴν μὲν οὐσίαν ἔχουσιν ἀμιγῆ πρὸς τὴν ὕλην τὰς δὲ δυνάμεις καὶ τὰς ἐνεργείας ἀναμειγμένας πρὸς αὐτήν, ὡς οἱ περὶ Νουμήμιον λέγουσιν.”

“Of all the gods who manage the sublunar world, let us say that their essence is not mixed with matter, as the Stoics say, nor that they have an essence without mixture with matter; but powers and activities which are mixed with it, as Numenius says”

This fragment indicates that Numenius did not view either the Demiurge or the Third God as being enmattered, although their activities are mixed with it; a clear indication that Numenius did not envisage the need for additional hypostases or an equivalent of Philo’s Logos-Cutter in order to insulate the deities that were engaged in sublunar activity from matter; probably because his First Principle is already separated from matter by the two lower gods (Fr. 46 (Test. 27b)).

Des Places also provides some more information on the manner in which the sensible world is informed by the Forms: “If, on the other hand, as Amelius writes and before him Numenius, there is also participation among the intelligibles, one should also find among them images”.¹⁴⁹ This would mean that all bodies are composed from matter and ἀσώματον,¹⁵⁰ although the idea that the sublunar world has a participation in the intelligible realm is rather commonplace and this fragment does not inform us further concerning the exact nature or manner of this participation. The only other fragment of interest concerning matter is Fr. 51 (Test 28L): “Numenius thought that all the elements are mixed and that no one of them is in a pure state”.¹⁵¹ Clearly, the Demiurge must then create (or order) the world by mixing the various elements in due proportion. In any case, in the Platonic system, the world is constructed from a mixture of elements, since unlike its Aristotelian counterpart, there is no room for the primacy of any one element.

¹⁴⁸ Fr.50 (Test. 26 L). Des Places = Proclus, *In Tim.* III 196, 12-19, Diehl

¹⁴⁹ “Εἰ δ', ὡς Ἀμέλιος γράφει καὶ πρὸ Ἀμελίου Νουμήμιος, μέθεξις ἐστὶ καὶ τοῖς νοητοῖς, εἶεν ἂν εἰκόνες καὶ ἐν αὐτοῖς” (Fr 46c).

¹⁵⁰ Des Places, E. (1973), 93 n. 1.

¹⁵¹ «Νουμήμιος μὲν οὖν πάντα μεμῖχθαι οἰόμενος οὐδὲν οἶεται εἶναι ἀπλοῦν».

Conclusion

Numenius, a Neopythagoreanising Platonist, attempted to combine elements from the great world religions with which he was familiar. In doing so, as far as can be observed from the surviving fragments, he creates an original account of demiurgic causality, while still claiming a Platonic provenance. He cites the Second Platonic Letter (312E) as evidence that the concept of three gods was actually the doctrine of Socrates and that Plato was the only one of his pupils astute enough to follow it. Valentinus and Justin Martyr both used this Epistle to advocate a similar view, but it is unclear who first devised this manoeuvre.¹⁵²

Evil enters Numenius' system not through any fault of the Demiurge, but due to an opposed evil principle. However, it does seem that Numenius believed in the existence of superlunary evil. Just as the Hermetists argue that the rational soul acquires accretions during its passage through the planetary sphere (e.g. *Corp. Herm.* I, 25f), Numenius argues that evil enters the soul “ἀπὸ τῶν ἑξωθεν προσφουμένων”. Calcidius states that Numenius located evil in the heavens, which Proclus regarded as an absurd opinion. It is unHellenic to believe in superlunary evil and it has been suggested that this may stem from Iranian influence where the sun and moon are the only beneficent planets.¹⁵³ However, such a problem can be resolved by considering Numenius' view of demiurgic causality. The superlunary evil he posits arises not due to the intention of the Demiurge as in the Gnostic systems, but rather as a result of matter, which he viewed as composing the stars.

In any case, such astral speculations lower Numenius' standing in Dodds' eyes:¹⁵⁴ Yet leading Neoplatonic philosophers are not in the habit of plagiarising from charlatans. Numenius propounded two postulates which became fundamental to Neoplatonism, both of which are linked to his view of demiurgic causality. Firstly, the notion that by participation in the intelligible world each thing possesses all things, though modified by its special characteristics, as expressed by Proclus' *Elements of Theology*, prop. 103 or Plotinus' “ἕξ ἔχει δ' ἐν ἑκάστῳ ἄλλο, ἐμφαίνει δὲ καὶ πάντα” (V8 [31] 4, 10). This argument was used by later Platonists to bridge gaps in their system.

¹⁵² Frede, M. (1987), 1056.

¹⁵³ Dodds, E. R. (1960), 54.

¹⁵⁴ Dodds, E. R. (1960), 11 (quoted above, p.73)

The second postulate was that of “undiminished giving”, whereby the transmission of divine goods does not impoverish the giver, just as fire transmits light without being diminished:

“τὰ δὲ θεία ἐστὶν οἷα μετὰδοθέντα, ἐνθενδε ἐκείθι γεγεννημένα,
ἐνθενδε οὐκ ἄπεληλυθε”. [1=23]

Plotinus uses the example of communicated knowledge (IV 9 [8] 5, 4-9). It is this Numenian postulate which prevents Neoplatonism becoming pantheism and ensures that Numenius’ status as a philosopher is much greater than that with which Dodds credits him.

Chapter 5- Philo

Introduction

Much scholarly debate has raged over the issue of Philo's philosophical allegiances, if any. It is a matter of utmost concern as it can shed considerable light on his account of creation and his adoption of the myth of the Demiurge to delineate what is effectively a Judeo-Christian form of *creation*. Philo can be referred to as a Middle Platonist with a great leap of the imagination by which one can speak of Californian champagne. In the technical sense of the word, of course, it is incorrect. Philo did not belong to a Middle Platonist institution or even owe his primary allegiance to Plato. It seems that he regarded the *ἀρεσις* to which he belonged as that of Mosaic philosophy (even if he does not express it in these terms with the frequency of Josephus). To assert, as Radice does¹⁵⁵, that Philo was the leading light in a Hellenistic-Jewish variant of Platonism, which subsequently merged with its mainstream counterpart, with Philo first positing the notion of the Forms as the thoughts of God and therefore the more philosophically important component of Middle Platonism, is surely to go too far.

Philo can be considered a Platonizing expositor, even if one has difficulties with considering him as a Platonist. *De Opificio Mundi* can be read together with Plutarch's *De Iside et Osiride* as realisations that the truths of Platonic philosophy could be found in other traditions. To paraphrase Sterling, if Moses offered a definitive statement concerning creation, this does not mean to say that it was an exclusive one.¹⁵⁶ It must be noted that Philo is operating within a different framework and with a different set of considerations in mind than the other Middle Platonists with which we are familiar. He does not seek to convert his readers to Platonism; rather he is using the structures of Greek philosophy to expound sacred Scripture.

As would naturally be expected, Philo forms an important link between Origen and the Platonic tradition. He is an important contributor to the concept of the hypostasis, and therefore an important exemplar of the trend of increasing separation between the First Principle and the demiurgic one. His greatest contribution could possibly be the notion of the Ideas as God's thoughts (though this is vehemently disputed). In any case, he does write extensively concerning the noetic cosmos. In this

¹⁵⁵ Radice, R (1989), *passim*.

¹⁵⁶ Sterling, G. (1993), 103.

postulation of the Logos as a divine creational aid, he prefigures Origen's system, without its Christian modifications.

An important question to address regarding Philo is whether he can be regarded as working within the framework of the demiurgic concept, rather than just expounding *Genesis* in language that by this stage had become common currency. After all, while Philo may compare God to an architect, *Gen. 2:4bff* refers to God as a potter or builder. One response is to discern the obvious legacy of the *Timaeus* in Philo's account. The Logos is clearly the counterpart of the Young Gods in its role as a mediating entity (although when described allegorically as a sword, it also parallels the Demiurge's mixing-bowl in the original *Timaeus* "myth", and in its assistance in God's continual governance of the cosmos, it fulfils the function of the World-Soul). The beautiful model of the *Timaeus* finds its counterpart in Philo's speculations on the noetic realm (though here a Jewish parallel may also exist). While "creation" may take the Judaeo-Christian form of production by an omnipotent divine being, it is evidently an ordering process, like demiurgy, evinced by the continual division of the Logos. Furthermore, it seems unlikely that an exegete of Platonic leanings should remain completely uninfluenced by the *Timaeus*.

This does, however, underline the importance of paying attention to the influences under which Philo operated in order to understand the history of ideas of the period. There are a number of indisputable facts: Philo is one of our major sources for Middle Platonism, whether we choose to classify him amongst them or not. Given his role in supplying a philosophical interpretation of *Genesis*, this means that he investigated thoroughly the nature of demiurgic causality, though he tends to obscure this with what can be termed "creation". In this respect, he could be hailed, as he sometimes is, as a proto-Gnostic.

Although certain modern scholars have cast doubt on whether Philo was a "Middle Platonist" (due in part to the emergence of a more nuanced understanding of what this might mean), in antiquity his zeal for Plato was well-attested. Eusebius claims that he surpassed his contemporaries in his enthusiasm for "κατὰ Πλατῶνα καὶ Πυθαγόραν ἄγῶγη".¹⁵⁷ Jerome cites the proverb "ἢ Πλατῶν φιλωνίζει ἢ Φιλῶν πλατωνίζει".¹⁵⁸ One of the first modern scholars to recognise the debt that Philo owed to Plato rather than just the Judaeo-Christian tradition, Johannes Albertus

¹⁵⁷ Runia, D. T. (1986), 27, *Hist. Eccl.* 2.4.2.

¹⁵⁸ *De. Vir. Inl.* Quoted at Runia, D. T. (1986), 28.

Fabricius, wrote in his important 1693 study *Exercitatio de Platonismo Philonis Iudaei* with reference to Philo's views on the *κοσμὸς νοητός* at *Conf.* 172:

“Qui Platonis legerit Timaeum, idem quoque minime dubitabit, hoc loco a Philone Platonium referri spiritalique doctrinam. Ipse Philo in libro de mundo incorruptibili Platonis verba, ne quis dubitet, in mediam affert.”

“Whoever reads Plato's *Timaeus* will not doubt that here Philo goes back to and refers to Platonic doctrine. Philo himself in the book concerning the incorruptible world, lest any one doubt it, uses the words of Plato.”

To a very great extent Philo can be regarded as a bridge between the various traditions surveyed in this study. In his doctrine of the Logos as an intermediary creative entity, which effectively allowed him to jettison the more Platonic scheme involving a World-Soul, he can be viewed as a forerunner of Origen. He also certainly owes a great deal to the Stoicising Platonism of figures such as Antiochus of Ascalon and Eudorus of Alexandria. Stoic, Aristotelian and Neopythagorean terminology is acquired as a means of modernising Plato, as was common in Middle Platonism. As H. Dörrie puts it, Philo inherited his “savoir s'exprimer” from the Stoics, which helps in part to account for the Stoic elements found particularly in his exposition of the Logos-Cutter.¹⁵⁹

Philo has also been regarded by some scholars (notably Jonas and Harvey) as a Gnostic, although, at the Messina colloquium, Jonas pointed out that one cannot regard Gnosticism in terms of a factory conveyor-belt.¹⁶⁰ The reason for regarding Philo as the Cro-Magnon Man of Gnosticism is that by linking Biblical exegesis with Platonism, he created the intellectual conditions responsible for the rise of (Christian) Gnosticism. This is a fallacious assumption for a number of reasons. Firstly, the assistant demiurges of *Opif.* are not in opposition to the supreme God. Secondly, Philo uses the refrain of *Genesis* “and God saw that it was good” to refer to the created world.¹⁶¹ Philo also refers to the cosmos as the younger Son of God (*Spec.* 1:96)¹⁶² and at *Deus* 31f. refers to the intelligible realm as God's older son.

The Middle Platonist tradition, because it advocated studying a *Plato dimidiatus*, a few of the more celebrated dialogues in full and selections from lesser known works, rather than surveying the Platonic corpus in its entirety, gave a

¹⁵⁹ Runia, D. T. (1986), 506.

¹⁶⁰ Wilson, R. Mcl. (1993), 85.

¹⁶¹ E.g. *Opif.* 21.

¹⁶² Cf. *Ebr.* 30 : “τὸν μόνον καὶ αἰσθητὸν υἱὸν, τὸνδε τὸν κόσμον” or *Migr.* 220 : “τὴν μέγιστον καὶ τελεώτατον ἄνθρωπον, τὸνδε τὸν κόσμον”.

disproportionate amount of influence to the *Timaeus*. In fact most of the First Principles were drawn from this dialogue alone. David Runia's work *Philo of Alexandria and the Timaeus of Plato* reflects the many correspondences between the Philonic corpus and this particular dialogue. The *Timaeus* and the *Phaedrus* were the dialogues most often utilised by Philo. However, in the entire *corpus Philonicum*, Philo only quotes, paraphrases or refers directly to the *Timaeus* twenty times, twelve in the philosophical treatises and seven in the exegetical group.¹⁶³ It might appear that these occurrences are relatively infrequent, but Philo quotes the *Timaeus* more often than the rest of Plato's other dialogues combined.

Rather than adopt Runia's method, which has been to analyse the correspondences between the *Timaeus* and the works of Philo and then synthesize the results, an undertaking which is clearly beyond the scope of this study, I wish to concentrate on the works most relevant for analysing Philo's views on the generation and (in)destructibility of the cosmos: *De Opificio Mundi* and *De Aeternitate Mundi*. In any case Runia's research has found that *De Opificio Mundi* contains the greatest use of the *Timaeus* (followed by the *Allegorical Commentary*).

Usage of the *Timaeus* is not uniform. Apart from use made of the travels of Solon and the Atlantis myth (17A-27D), which is irrelevant to the matter in hand, Philo draws mainly upon Timaeus' introductory speech (27D, 29D) and the section outlining the works of reason. In addition, Philo draws upon Plato's doctrines concerning man's psychology (69A-72D) and the τέλος of Man (89D-92C). Even within these areas usage is not uniform. The most important sections are those outlining fundamental philosophical principles (27D-29D), the creation-myth (29E-31B), time (37C-38B), the Demiurge's address to the "young gods" (41A-D), the creation of human reason (41B-44C) and the theory of vision (47A-E).¹⁶⁴

The Forms

The "orthodox" Platonic doctrine of three principles, a Demiurge, the Forms and matter, was largely replaced by the Middle Platonic period by two principles: the Demiurge or God, and matter. This could always be reconciled with Plato by claiming that the Forms were the thoughts of God. Philo adopts the latter position. He never refers to the Forms as ungenerated.¹⁶⁵ The noetic realm is contained in the

¹⁶³ Runia, D. T. (1986), 367, which also contains a complete list of these occurrences.

¹⁶⁴ Runia, D. T. (1986), 372.

¹⁶⁵ Wolfson, H. A: (1968), 208.

Logos, which undergoes two phases. As the noetic realm, it exists eternally. As a physical instantiation, it becomes immanent in the world, but both of these phases occur simultaneously.

One issue dominating recent Platonic scholarship concerns the extent of Philo's contribution to the Middle Platonic theory of the Forms. According to Wolfson, he is the first to apply the term κόσμος νοητὸς ("intelligible world") to the ensemble of the Forms.¹⁶⁶ The notion of a "noetic cosmos" may have been inspired by the opening of *Republic X*, where Socrates draws a distinction between three types of bed: a particular bed constructed by a carpenter, the image of a bed produced by a painter and the idea of the bed, produced by God. Plato had previously used the expression νοητὸς τόπος ("intelligible place" *Republic* 504D, 517B) or ὑπερουράνιος τόπος ("supercelestial place") at *Phaedrus* 247C, to refer to the place of the Forms. Wolfson sees Philo as altering these terms to refer to a noetic cosmos which does not exist eternally in the mind of God, but which only comes into being when He decides to create.¹⁶⁷ I would not be as prepared as Wolfson to regard Philo as father of the term κόσμος νοητὸς. I think in any case that there is a distinction in Philo between an eternally existing Logos and the noetic realm which it contains, which emerges simultaneously when God turns to demiurgy. (This is apparent from the famous image of the architect designing a city in *Opif.*; see my discussion below. The envisaged city is only created when the architect considers what he wished to construct; it does not exist otherwise.) What Philo may have contributed may be the notion that the κόσμος νοητὸς could only exist spatially, an idea he discredits in the example from *Opif.* given above. Indeed at *Opif.* 4, 17, Philo attacks the notion that "all which exists" "must be in some place (τινὶ τόπῳ) and filling some space",¹⁶⁸ clearly a break with *Timaeus* 52B-C.

This apparent limitation, that the noetic realm is the cosmos when God turns to create, actually enhances the Platonic living being which is a constant construct, but it is rather the "idea of ideas".¹⁶⁹ A text from Arius Didymus proves illuminating in this regard:

"As the particular archetypes so to speak precede the bodies which are perceived by sense, so the Idea which includes in itself all ideas, being the

¹⁶⁶Ibid. 227.

¹⁶⁷Ibid. 228.

¹⁶⁸Ibid. 240.

¹⁶⁹*Opif.* 25

most beautiful and most perfect, exists as model for this cosmos, for it (the cosmos) has been made similar to that idea by the Demiurge and produced in accordance with Providence out of the whole material.”¹⁷⁰

This passage is adapted by Alcinous at *Did.* 12.1, where he claims that God creates the cosmos by looking towards the idea of one.¹⁷¹ This notion of the Forms as the contents of the divine mind may owe something to the Jewish tradition, where God is said to have used the Torah as a model.¹⁷² This is instructive, since if God constructs the cosmos according to the Forms which are his thoughts, it leaves open the possibility that God has created according to (from our perspective) His own whims. However, since in reality, the world is constructed on rational principles to allow it to attain the greatest degree of excellence of which it is capable, it is not that far removed from the production of the Platonic Demiurge.

It is true to state that the term κόσμος νοητὸς occurs in Philo for the first time in extant Greek literature. However, terms which express a similar concept are used elsewhere. Timaeus Locrus § 30 mentions ὁ ἰδανικὸς κόσμος (“the ideal cosmos”), a phrase used also by Aëtius at *Ps.-Plutarch Plac.* 1.7 and 2.6.¹⁷³ Unfortunately, none of this proves that Philo could not have invented the doctrine. Plato himself, at times, comes close to expressing doctrines which could be viewed as having given rise to such a belief. At *Republic* 508C, he refers to “noetic place”, in the *Phaedrus* myth and at 247C1-2 to “things outside the cosmos”.¹⁷⁴

Radice goes further; for him Philo was the catalyst of the doctrine that the Forms are the thoughts of God. Clearly, the concept was not originally Plato’s, since in the *Timaeus*, the Demiurge is subordinate to the Forms, whereas for Philo, God produces the blueprint according to which he wishes to create the world. For Radice, Philo considers God as the “foundational” creator; that is the creator of the “positive foundations” of the world.¹⁷⁵ This is because He only creates true being (the physical instantiation of the Forms) and not the negative components (matter and evil) which

¹⁷⁰ Eusebius, *Praep. Ev.* III.23.6

¹⁷¹ Runia, D. (2001), 151

¹⁷² This notion comes across in the exegesis of Rabbi Hoshai’a of Caesarea, a friend of Origen: “The Torah declares: “I am the working tool of the Holy One, blessed be He.” In human practice, when a mortal king builds a palace he builds it not with his own skill but with the skill of an architect. The architect moreover does not build it out of his head, but employs plans and diagrams to know how to arrange the chambers and the wicket doors. Thus God consulted the Torah, and created the world while the Torah declares “in the beginning God created (1:1) “beginning” referring to the Torah...”(trans. Freedman & Simon 1951).

¹⁷³ Timaeus Locrus is generally dated to the mid-third century B.C.E., while Aëtius (50-100 C.E.) was slightly later than Philo.

¹⁷⁴ Runia, D (2001) 136.

¹⁷⁵ Radice, R. (1991), 127.

are non-existent and therefore could not be created. This is a break with the “semi-creationalism” of Plato (what I refer to as true demiurgy; ordering matter in conformity with the Forms.)

I agree that this distinction can be drawn regarding the function of the Demiurge in Plato and Philo. However, as Radice himself admits, attributing the origin of the doctrine that the Forms are the thoughts of God to Philo would create three main problems.¹⁷⁶ Firstly, Philo adopts this theory as part of his allegorical reading of the Bible, and no trace of this Biblical exegesis can be observed in Platonism subsequently. Secondly, it would imply that Philo was capable of exerting significant influence upon the subsequent Platonic tradition. Indeed, Radice even envisages a situation in which two co-existing Platonic traditions, the mainstream Greek one and a Hellenist-Jewish variant, merge after Philo, thereby explaining the means by which this Philonic theory could enter the mainstream tradition.¹⁷⁷ The third difficulty lies in Philonic interpretation; many scholars would view Philo as incapable of inventing a theory of this significance.

Radice adopts three responses. Philo never indicates a source for this doctrine in *Opif.* This is hardly reliable evidence, though, since he frequently avoids attributing specific doctrines even to Plato. Secondly, and more cogently, *Opif.* presents a more original account of creation than *De aet. mundi* (a dual exegesis of the Bible and the *Timaeus*) and so can be seen as closer to Philo’s own beliefs, while *De aet. mundi* presents a more traditional Greek account. Additionally *De Natura Mundi* from Timaeus Locrus, which is regarded as a standard exegesis of the *Timaeus* at this period, is close to *De aet. mundi* and never claims that the Forms are the thoughts of God. Furthermore, the first philosopher after Philo to discuss this theory is Seneca, who considers Philo’s discussion.¹⁷⁸

I do not feel, however, that the evidence is sufficient to postulate both that Philo was the first to use the term *κόσμος νοητός* and that he invented (as opposed to developed) the notion of the Forms as God’s thoughts. Given his position close to the beginnings of Middle Platonism, we must be careful not to foist originality upon Philo in our enthusiasm to fill in the gaps. That said, however, Philo probably displays originality in his utilisation of the Logos of God and in his location of the

¹⁷⁶ Radice, R. (1991), 129.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid. 130.

¹⁷⁸ Radice, R. (1991), 132.

noetic realm in this Logos. The Logos-Cutter is, in all probability, a Philonic contribution, given the fact, that in the absence of these notions in his philosophical predecessors, such concepts could easily have commended themselves to him from Scripture.

The Logos and the Logos Cutter

The image of the Logos as a tool is one of the predominant images presented by Philo in order to cast light on its functioning in the creation of the world. Additionally, the Logos can also be presented as a mediating entity.¹⁷⁹ A more obscure example has been noted by Dillon and does not seem to have received the attention which it deserves– the equation of the Logos with Ganymede.¹⁸⁰ Initially, this appears rather bizarre – Hermes normally represents the Stoic -Platonic Logos in later Platonism.¹⁸¹ Philo usually prefers to use Athena, given the nature of her birth (sprung from the head of Zeus), as at *Leg. All.* 1.15 or *Op.* 100.¹⁸² Obviously, Ganymede is not alluded to by name, though we could hardly expect Philo to do that, and indeed he avoids mentioning Athena by name in his equation of her with the Logos. On closer reflection, the equation of Ganymede need not appear so strange. As the wine-pourer (οἰνοχόος) of Zeus, he represents the flow of God’s (ordering) grace to the rest of creation, precisely one of the activities carried out by the Logos. Dillon cites two passages in which this image is used: *Quod Deus* 155-58 and *Spec. Leg.* I. 303.

“Οἷς δ’ ὁ θεὸς ἐπινίφει καὶ ἐπομβρεῖ τὰς ἀγαθῶν πηγὰς ἄνωθεν, ἐκ λάκκου πίνομεν καὶ βραχείας [καὶ] κατὰ γῆς λιβάδας ἀναζητοῦμεν, ὕοντος ἡμῖν ἀνεπισχέτως οὐρανοῦ τὴν νέκταρος καὶ ἀμβροσίας τῶν μεμυθευμένων ἀμείνω τροφήν;”...

“οὐκ ἂν οἶν ἐκ λάκκου πίοι, ᾧ δίδωσαι ὁ θεὸς τὰς ἀκράτους μεθύσματος πόσεις τοτὲ μὲν δία τινος ὑπηρετοῦντος τῶν ἀγγέλων, ὄν’ οἰνοχοεῖν ἤξιωσε, τοτὲ δὲ καὶ δι’ ἑαυτοῦ, μηδένα τοῦ διδόντος καὶ τοῦ λαμβάνοντος μεταξὺ τιθείς.”

¹⁷⁹ “To his Logos, his chief messenger, highest in age and honour, the Father of all has given the special prerogative, to stand on the border and separate the creature from the creator. This same Logos both pleads with the immortal as suppliant for afflicted mortality and acts as ambassador of the ruler to the subject. He glories in this prerogative and proudly describes it in these words: “And I stood between the Lord and you” (*Deut.* 5.5) – that is, neither uncreated as God, nor created as you, but midway between the two extremes, a surety to both sides: to the parent pledging the creature that it should never altogether rebel against the rein and choose disorder rather than order; to the child, warranting his hopes that the merciful God will never forget his own work.” *Heres* 205 (trans. Colson).

¹⁸⁰ Dillon, J. (1979)

¹⁸¹ Dillon points out that for Philo, Hermes is merely the planet Mercury, as for example at *Dec.* 54. Dillon (1979), 38

¹⁸² *Ibid.*

“Are we, upon whom God pours down like snow or rain, from above, the founts of his blessings, going to drink from a cistern, and seek out fiddling springs as of water from beneath the earth, when the heavens unceasingly rain down upon us a food superior to the nectar and ambrosia of the myths....” (*Quod Deus* 155)

“He is not, then going to drink from a cistern, to whom God has granted unmixed draughts of intoxication, either from the hand of one of his servants among the angels, whom he has designated to be his wine-pourer, or even from his own hand, without the mediation of anyone between the donor and receiver.” (*Quod Deus* 158)

This image of God raining down his blessings upon mankind is instructive of Philo’s view of the Logos. In the first place, it would appear that Philo is equating the Logos with an angel when he refers to one of the angels functioning as the winepourer of God. However, at *Heres* 205, Philo refers to the Logos as the chief messenger (ἀρχάγγελος). Philo elsewhere regards the Logos as an angel.¹⁸³ He is also the ἠνίοχος (charioteer) or ἔποχος (mount) of the powers (*Fug. et Inv.* 16)¹⁸⁴ and their father and guide.¹⁸⁵ At *Conf.*, the Logos is said to be the oldest of the angels. In the second instance, he contemplates the possibility that God dispenses benefits directly upon created matter without any mediation, without coming down in favour of one of his models of divine Providence. What is going on here?

The notion that benefits (as well as evils) are dispensed by angels, rather than by God directly, is found elsewhere in the Philonic corpus, as well as the understanding that God is capable of intervening directly upon the material world – He has no need of any entities to insulate Him from the phenomenal realm. In any case, it seems strange that Philo should attempt to portray the relationship between God and his Logos in (covert) homoerotic terms. Dillon notes the lack of surviving testimony to this allegory elsewhere, although he notes the possibility that it was conceived some time previously and so was more acceptable at the stage Philo came to use it.¹⁸⁶ A further indication of speculation in this regard is the identification of Ganymede with the Water-Carrier by Hellenistic times; leading one to believe that it was beginning to be regarded as a cosmic power.¹⁸⁷ In this context, Dillon mentions the demiurgic imagery of the Avestan tradition, in which Haoma, a spirit who

¹⁸³ *De Cherub.* 3 & 35, *Mut. Nom.* 87, *Fug.* 5, *Quod deus* 182.

¹⁸⁴ Billings, T. H. (1919), 45.

¹⁸⁵ *Somn.* 2. 185ff.

¹⁸⁶ Dillon, J. (1979), 39.

¹⁸⁷ *Homiliae Clementis* 5.17, *Ampelius* 2.11, *Ps.-Erasthstenes, Catast.* 26, 30, as mentioned by Dillon (1979), 39.

inhabits alcohol, is responsible for the blessings of humanity. This is similar to the second equation of the Logos as Ganymede at *Spec. Leg.* I. 303, as the fountain from which God pours forth the virtues.

This reveals the complex nature of Philo's conception of the Logos. It is more than a mere tool or knife used by God during creation. It is a mediating entity, which functions as a co-Creator and plays an active role in the universe after genesis, although it does not compromise God's unity and never, to my mind, seems independent enough to be regarded as a hypostasis. However, the conceptions of the Logos as a knife and as the wine-pourer of God can be regarded as related. As wine-pourer, the Logos is responsible for conveying divine benefits upon mankind; as cutter, it provides the greatest of benefits in terms of the ordering division of the created realm. The idea of the Logos as a continual outpouring from God evokes the Plotinian notion of a creative flow from the One. Furthermore, it underpins the role which it plays in a continual creation. Philo uses the term Logos to refer to *νοῦς*, quite possibly because he wished to draw a distinction between the divine Intellect and the human mind. In this sense, it can be regarded as containing the Forms. It is also referred to as the oldest and the most generic of created things (*Leg. All.* III, 61, 175), as well as "the first-born son of God" (*Agr.* 12, 51). This seems to have paved the way for the later identification of the divine Logos with Christ in subsequent Christian thinking. Furthering the notion that Philo's concept of the Demiurge can resemble a melting-pot of various philosophical genres, he even refers to the Logos in rather Numenian terms as a "second God, *secundus deus*"¹⁸⁸. Additionally, the Logos can resemble a proto-Gnostic Demiurge in so far as "it is called a god by those with imperfect knowledge of the real god."¹⁸⁹

This positing of the Logos does not undermine the unity of the Godhead, which remains indivisible for Philo:

“ὁ γὰρ θεοῦ λόγος φιλέρημος καὶ μονωτικός ἐν ὄχλῳ τῶ τῶν γεγονότων καὶ φθαρησομένων οὐχὶ φυρόμενος, ἀλλ’ ἄνω φοιτᾶν εἰθισμένος αἰεὶ καὶ ἐνὶ ὁπαδὸς εἶναι μόνῳ μεμελετηκῶς. ἄτμητοι μὲν οὖν αἱ δύο φύσεις, ἢ τε ἐν ἡμῖν τοῦ λογισμοῦ καὶ ἢ ὑπὲρ ἡμᾶς τοῦ θείου λόγου, ἄτμητοι δὲ οὔσαι μυρία ἄλλα τέμνουσιν.”

“For the Word, or Reason of God is a lover of the wild and solitary, never mixing with the medley of things that have come into being only to perish, but its wonted resort is ever above and its study is to wait on One and One only. So then the two natures, the reasoning power within us and the divine reason

¹⁸⁸ *Qu. In Gen.* II, 6, 2

¹⁸⁹ *Leg. All.* III, 73, 207 cf. *Somn.* I, 39, 229-230; 41, 238-239.

above us, are indivisible, yet indivisible as they are, they divide other things without number.” (*Heres* 234)

This is reiterated at *Heres* 236, where Philo indicates that not only is the Father indivisible, but that this characteristic is possessed by the Logos also.¹⁹⁰ It is particularly interesting that Philo should attempt to preserve this sort of “unity in the second degree”, since it indicates that the Logos is not based on the Platonic dyad. (Indeed, it is a masculine entity and has more in common with the World-Soul.) One of the advantages in numerous metaphysical systems for postulating secondary gods is that it allows postulation of further hypostases, but Philo, as a monotheist, is very keen on preserving a united godhead, even as regards secondary divine entities. In spite of Philo’s claim that the Logos is a *secundus deus*, it very clearly is not, in the original Numenian sense of the term. Numenius’ Second God is divided by matter, whereas although the Philonic Logos is the sole cause of the division of matter, Philo is at pains to point out that it is not divided by it.

On two occasions, Philo refers to the Logos as an instrument used by God in the creation of the world. At *Leg. All.* III, 31, 96, we are told that God “used it like an instrument when He was making the world (ἐκοσμοποιεῖ)” and “when He was fashioning the world (ἐκοσμοπλάσσει), He used it as an instrument, so that the arrangement of all the things He was completing might be faultless”. On three occasions, the role of the Logos as an instrument is implied. It is that “through which (δι’ οὗ) the world was produced (ἐδημιουργεῖτο) at *Sacr.* 3,8, *Spec.* I, 16, 81) or that “by which” God made the world at *Immut.* 12, 57.¹⁹¹ This is similar to the role played by Wisdom during creation. In *The Wisdom of Solomon*, the author treats Wisdom as equivalent to the Logos of God, although he refers to it as “God’s daughter”. Wisdom is equally “that through which (δι’ ἧς) the world came into existence”¹⁹² or “was

¹⁹⁰ “τοῦτο δὲ συμβαίνει διὰ τὴν πρὸς τὸν ποιητὴν καὶ πατέρα τῶν ὅλων ἐμφέρειαν· τὸ γὰρ θεῖον ἀμιγές ἄκρατον, ἀμερέστατον ὑπάρχον ἅπαντι τῷ κόσμῳ γέγονεν αἴτιον μίξεως, κράσεως, διαιρέσεως, πολυμερείας· ὥστε εἰκότως καὶ τὰ ὁμοιωθέντα, νοῦς τε ὁ ἐν ἡμῖν καὶ ὁ ὑπὲρ ἡμᾶς, ἀμερεῖς καὶ ἄτμητοι ὑπάρχοντες διαιρεῖν καὶ διακρίνειν ἕκαστα τῶν ὄντων ἐρρωμένως δυνήσονται.”

“This is the result of its likeness to the Father and Maker of all. For the Godhead is without mixture or infusion of parts and yet has become to the whole world the cause of mixture, infusion, division and multiplicity of parts. And thus it will be natural that these two which are in the likeness of God, the mind within us and the mind above us, should subsist without parts or severance and yet be strong and potent to distinguish everything that is.”

¹⁹¹ Wolfson, H. A. (1968), 266.

¹⁹² *Fug.* 20, 109.

brought to completion”.¹⁹³ Wisdom additionally is the title given to what seems to be the Philonic equivalent of the Receptacle at *Ebr.* 8, 31, where it is called the “mother and nurse (τιθήνη) of the all”.

The Logos functions in the typical role of a divine mediator, insulating God from the disorder (in Philo’s case, evil might be a little too strong) inherent in matter:

“ἔξ ἐκείνης γὰρ πάντ’ ἐγέννησεν ὁ θεὸς, οὐκ ἐφαπτόμενος αὐτός· οὐ γὰρ ἦν θέμις ἀπείρου καὶ πεφυρμένης ὕλης ψαύειν. τὸν εὐδαίμονα καὶ μακάριον – ἀλλὰ ταῖς ἀσωμάτοις δυνάμεσιν, ὧν ἔτυμον ὄνομα αἱ ἰδέαι, κατεχρήσατο πρὸς τὸ γένος ἔκλαστον τὴν ἀρμόττουσαν λαβεῖν μορφήν.

“When out of that [shapeless and qualityless matter] God produced all things, He did so without touching it himself, since it was not lawful for His nature, happy and blessed as it was, to touch indefinite and confused matter; but instead He made full use of the incorporeal powers, well denoted by the name of Forms, to enable each genus to take its appropriate shape”. (*Spec.* I. 329, trans. Wolfson).

This mode of creation is echoed when God calls upon his powers to aid Him in the forming of Man. These incorporeal powers which allow matter to take a shape do not themselves become enmattered (unlike the Man of the *Poimandres*: see below p.207). Although it may not be lawful for God to act directly upon matter, this does not prevent Him from dispensing benefits directly to mortals (*Leg. All.* III, 178). These incorporeal powers which assist in creation would seem to reflect the influence of the Stoic doctrine of efficient causes rather than the Platonic theory of Forms.

The image of the Logos as a cutter might well have suggested itself to Philo from the flaming sword of the Cherubim at *Gen.* 3: 24, once Philo had equated this with the Logos.¹⁹⁴ Among the Nag Hammadi texts, according to *The Testimony of Truth* 9.3, it is the Word (*logos*) which separates us from the error of the angels, where it is associated with the incarnate Son of Man.¹⁹⁵ In *The Teaching of Silvanus*, the Logos is also regarded as a cutting-agent, and an identification with the incarnate Christ is made explicit.¹⁹⁶ *The Gospel of Truth* compares the Logos to a drawn

¹⁹³ *Deter.* 16, 54.

¹⁹⁴ This is suggested by Harl, M. (1966) – *Quis rerum divinarum heres sit* (PM 15).

¹⁹⁵ “But the saw is the Word of the Son of Man which separates us from the error of the angels. But no one knows the God of the truth except the man alone, this one who will forsake all the things of the world since he has renounced the whole place having grasped the fringe of his garment”. (trans. Birger Pearson, as furnished by Hay (1973), 18.)

¹⁹⁶ “Knock on yourself that the Word (Logos) may open for you. For he is the Ruler of Faith and the Sharp Sword, having become all for everyone because he wishes to have mercy on everyone.” (trans. Peel & Zancle, Hay (1973), 19.)

sword.¹⁹⁷ However, just as in *The Teaching of Silvanus*, this cutting-action has a *soteriological*, rather than a *demiurgic* significance, evoking the Johannine conception of Incarnation, with the Word condemning some and saving others. The three Nag Hammadi texts quoted above date from the second century A.D.

This portrayal of the Logos as a saw or sword may either be influenced in some way (directly or indirectly) by Philo, or indicate a current in Judaeo-Christian philosophical thought, which Philo himself adopted. As Hay claims, it seems likely that the conception of the Logos in a *cosmological* sense originated with Philo, although he may have drawn upon the Jewish tradition's view of the divine word as a sword used for protection of the faithful and punishment of the wicked.¹⁹⁸ The Logos-cutter can be viewed as a Jewish response within the current of Greek philosophy, which attempted to explain the imposition of order upon a disordered universe using figures such as Hermes or Osiris as a personification of divine wisdom. As a divine mediator, the Logos appears at *Poimandres* 10 -11 and at Plutarch's *De Iside et Osiride* (53 – 54, 372E – 373C). Eudorus (of Alexandria) may also have expressed the combination of the monad and dyad as the thought or λόγος of a supreme One.¹⁹⁹ Tobin suggests that the Logos in Philo may reflect an element from the early stages of Alexandrian Middle Platonism, ignored by subsequent thinkers.²⁰⁰

A useful source for Philo's doctrine of the *Logos-Tomeus* is his commentary *Quis Rerum Divinarum Heres* ("Who is the Heir of Divine Things?"), an exegesis of *Gen. XV. 2-18*, concerning Abraham's sacrifice of the heifer, ram and birds. Although the concept of the Logos-Cutter is only fully developed in *Heres*, at *Fug.* 194-196 it is mentioned as a Divider. In an interesting philosophical insight, Philo portrays Yahweh as the inventor of Platonic *diairesis* by which he differentiates the various levels of the created realm. At *Heres* 132, Philo refers to Abraham's division of his sacrifice as symbolic of the Logos' division of our consciousness into rational and irrational soul, true and false speech and cognitive and non-cognitive impressions. We note in passing that Philo has no qualms here with adopting a twofold division of the soul, despite the more Platonic tripartite division, in favour of

¹⁹⁷ "...for this is the judgment that came forth from Heaven, having judged everyone, being a drawn sword of two edges cutting this way and that, when came into the midst the Word who is in the heart of those who speak it, it was not mere sound, but it became a *soma*."(trans. Grobel)

¹⁹⁸ Hay, D (1973), 19.

¹⁹⁹ Tobin, T. H. (1993), 149.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

Stoic tendencies. At *Heres* 133, Philo signals the link between *diairesis* and demiurgy:

“πολὺν δὲ καὶ ἀναγκαῖον ὄντα λόγον τὸν περὶ τῆς εἰς ἴσα τομῆς καὶ περὶ ἐναντιοτήτων, οὔτε παρήσομεν οὔτε μηκυνοῦμεν, ἀλλ’ ὡς ἔστιν ἐπιτέμνοντες, ἀρκεσθησόμεθα μόνοις τοῖς καιρίοις. καθάπερ γάρ ἡμῶν τὴν ψυχὴν καὶ τὰ μέλη μέσα διεῖλεν ὁ τεχνίτης, οὕτως καὶ τὴν τοῦ παντὸς οὐσίαν, ἠνίκα τὸν κόσμον ἐδημιούργει.”

“The subject of division into equal parts and of opposites is a wide one and discussion of it is essential. We will neither omit nor protract it, but abridge it as far as possible and content ourselves with the vital points only. Just as the great Artificer divided our soul and limbs in the middle, so too when he wrought the world, did he deal with the being of all that is.”

This notion of the Logos engaged in division is central to Philo’s notion of world-creation. It is hardly surprising that it is the Logos which is engaged in this sort of activity, as the human mind, which Philo also describes as a Logos, is occupied with much the same function on a smaller scale, when it is engaged in diairesis.²⁰¹ *Heres* 134 continues this concept of a creative division on the part of the Logos, based around the four main elements.

“λαβὼν γὰρ αὐτὴν ἤρξατο διαιρεῖν ὧδε· δύο τὸ πρῶτον ἐποίει τηήματα, τό τε βαρὺ καὶ κοῦφον, τὸ παχυμερὲς ἀπὸ τοῦ λεπτομεροῦς διακρίνων· εἶθ’ ἐκάτερον πάλιν διαιρεῖ, τὸ μὲν λεπτομερὲς εἰς ἀέρα καὶ πῦρ, τὸ δὲ παχυμερὲς εἰς ὕδωρ καὶ γῆν, ἃ καὶ στοιχεῖα αἰσθητὰ αἰσθητοῦ κόσμου ὡσανεὶ θεμελίους προκατεβάλετο.”

“This He took and began to divide as follows. First He made two sections, heavy and light, thus distinguishing the element of dense from that of rare particles. Then again He divides each of these two, the rare into air and fire, the dense into water and land, and these four he laid down as first foundations to be the sensible elements of the sensible world.”

The first task of the Logos-Cutter is division based on the elements. The activity of the Logos here parallels very closely the ordering through differentiation engaged in by the Demiurge of the *Timaeus*.²⁰² It is interesting that in spite of a certain adoption of Stoic elements, a great deal of Philo’s exposition of the Logos-Cutter is expressed

²⁰¹ This parallel is made more explicit at *Heres* 235 “ὁ τε γὰρ θεῖος λόγος τὰ ἐν τῇ φύσει διεῖλε καὶ διένειμε πάντα, ὅτε ἡμέτρος νοῦς, ἅττ’ ἂν παράλαβη νοητῶς πράγματά τε καὶ σώματα εἰς ἀπειράκις ἄπειρα διαιρεῖ μέρη καὶ τέμνων οὐδέποτε λήγει.”

“The divine Word separated and apportioned all that is in nature. Our mind deals with all the things material and immaterial which the mental process brings within its grasp, divides them into an infinity of infinities and never ceases to cleave them.”

²⁰² This notion is developed at *Heres* 135: “πάλιν δὲ τὸ βαρὺ καὶ κοῦφον καθ’ ἑτέρας ἔτεμνεν ιδέας, τὸ μὲν κοῦφον εἰς ψυχρὸν τε καὶ θερμόν· ἐπεφήμισε δὲ τὸ μὲν ψυχρὸν ἀέρα, τὸ δὲ θερμόν φύσει πῦρ, τὸ δὲ βαρὺ, εἰς ὑγρὸν τε αὔ καὶ ξηρὸν· ἐκάλεσε δὲ τὸ μὲν ξηρὸν γῆν, τὸ δὲ ὑγρὸν ὕδωρ.”

“Again He made a second division of heavy and light on different principles. He divided the light into cold and hot, giving to the cold the name of air and to the naturally hot the name of fire. The heavy He divided into wet and dry and He called the dry land and the wet “water”.

in terms generic to all the schools. Certainly Stoic, however, is the division of fire into two kinds at § 136; the useful variety and what amounts to the Stoic *pyr technikon*, set aside to preserve the heavens.²⁰³

At *Heres* 140, Philo makes it quite clear that God is the true Demiurge and the Logos is merely the means or tool by which He creates, rather than some kind of independently operating agent.

“οὕτως ὁ θεὸς ἀκονησάμενος τὸν τομέα τῶν συμπάντων αὐτοῦ λόγον διήρει τὴν τε ἄμορφον καὶ ἄποιον τῶν ὅλων οὐσίαν καὶ τὰ ἐξ αὐτῆς ἀποκριθέντα τέτταρα τοῦ κόσμου στοιχεῖα καὶ τὰ διὰ τούτων παγέντα ζῶα τε αὐτὰ καὶ φυτά.”

“Thus God sharpened the edge of His all-cutting Word, and divided universal being, which before was without form or quality, and the four elements of the world which were formed by segregation from it, and the animals and plants which were framed with them as materials.”

The Being which God divides here is *ousia* or the Stoic conception of matter, although God here is envisaged as ordering, rather than creating. The continual division of matter by the Logos can be viewed as Philo's version of the continual geometry engaged in by the Demiurge at *Quaest. Conviv.* 1002E, stressed at *Heres* 235 (quoted above), where the Logos is said to never cease to cleave matter. The passage describes the Logos as dividing matter into an infinity of infinities; for Philo, there was no such thing as an atom in the philosophical sense- it was always possible, even if only for the Logos, to subdivide matter eternally. The οὐδέποτε here, I would suggest, could be taken as “at no point” as well as “never”; the Logos never ceases to divide matter in the temporal sense, but equally in its continual care for the phenomenal realm, it is capable of infinite division, or at least to a point beyond that which can be comprehended by the human mind.

This notion of the Logos as a tool is echoed in a similar passage at §167: “these tables too were cut by the Divine Legislator and by Him only.” This notion of cutting suggests that the thought of God can be equated with the τομεὺς. The passage helps to reinforce the notion of the Logos-cutter as an instrument of the Demiurge, since the identification of a legislator with a Demiurge is an old one, as both can be regarded as imposing order upon disorder. Although Philo's image of the Logos-Cutter appears to be a unique contribution, *Heres* 146 reveals how much he owes to the Demiurge of the *Timaeus*:

“τούτων προὔποτυπωθέντων ἴδε πῶς μέσα διελὼν ἴσα διεῖλε κατὰ πάσας τὰς ἰσότητος ἰδέας ἐν τῇ τοῦ παντὸς οὐρανοῦ γενέσει.

²⁰³ Cf. SVF 1. 120.

ἀριθμῶ μὲν οὖν ἴσα τὰ βαρέα τοῖς κούφοις ἔτεμνε, δύο δυσί, γῆν καὶ ὕδωρ, τὰ βάρος ἔχοντα, τοῖς φύσει κούφοις ἀέρι καὶ πυρί, καὶ πάλιν ἓν ἐνὶ τῷ μὲν ξηρότατον τῷ ὑγροτάτῳ, γῆν ὕδατι, τὸ δὲ ψυχρότατον τῷ θερμοτάτῳ, πυρὶ ἀέρα, τὸν αὐτὸν δὲ τρόπον καὶ σκότος φωτὶ καὶ ἡμέραν νυκτὶ καὶ χειμῶνι θέρος καὶ ἔαρι μετόπωρον καὶ ὅσα τούτων συγγενῆ.”

“In the light of this preliminary sketch observe how God in “dividing in the middle” actually did divide equally according to all forms of equality, when he created the universe. First, as to equality of number, he made the light parts equal in number to the heavy parts, earth and water, which are heavy being two, and fire and air, which are naturally light being two also. Again by this division we have one and one in the driest and the wettest, that is earth and water, and in the coldest and the hottest, that is air and fire. In the same way, we have one and one in darkness and light, in day and night, in winter and summer, in spring and autumn, and in the other examples of the same nature.

This activity is similar to the separating action of the Receptacle (under the guidance of the Demiurge). The stress on division based on equality (i.e. rational principles) echoes the mixing together of the Same and the Different – Philo points to the rationality visible in the cosmos, as evidence that it must have been created by a rational principle.

This is echoed in the description of the equitable construction of the heavens at *Heres* 147:

“μεγέθει δ’ ἴσα ἐν οὐρανῷ μὲν τοὺς παραλλήλους κύκλους, τοὺς τε ἰσημερινούς, ἔαρινόν καὶ μετοπωρινόν, καὶ τοὺς τροπικούς, θερινόν τε καὶ χειμερινόν ἐπὶ γῆς δὲ ζώνας, δύο μὲν ἴσας ἀλλήλαις, αἱ πρὸς τοῖς πόλοις εἰσὶ κατεψυγμένοι καὶ διὰ τοῦτ’ ἀοίκητοι, δύο δὲ τὰς μεθόριους τούτων τε καὶ τῆς διακεκαυμένης, ἃς δι’ εὐκрасίαν φασὶν οἰκεῖσθαι, τὴν μὲν πρὸς τοῖς νοτίοις, τὴν δὲ πρὸς τοῖς βορείοις κειμένην.”

“For equality of the magnitude, he gave us the parallel circles in heaven, those of the equinox in spring and autumn, and those of the solstice in summer and winter, while on earth there are the zones two of which are equal to each other, namely those which adjoin the poles, frigid and therefore uninhabited, and two which are bordered by the last named and torrid zone, these two habitable, as we are told, because of their temperate climate, one of them on the south side and the other on the north.”

The description here is very similar to the construction of the heavens and the insertion of the World-Soul at *Timaeus* 35. Although Philo dispenses with the World-Soul, which becomes largely replaced by the Logos, he is prepared to adopt the imagery of the *Timaeus* for his own purposes.²⁰⁴ Dillon suggests that Philo may be

²⁰⁴ *Heres* 153 develops the notion that man is a compound generated by an equitable mixture of his components by the Logos: “καὶ τὰ περὶ ἡμᾶς μέντοι τέτταρα ξηρὸν, ὑγρὸν, ψυχρὸν τε αὐτὸ καὶ θερμὸν, τὴν δι’ ἀναλογίας ἰσότητα κερασσάμενην ἀρμόσασθαι, καὶ μηδὲν ἄλλο <ἡμᾶς> ἢ κρᾶσιν εἶναι τῶν τεσσάρων δυνάμεων ἀναλογίας ἰσότητι κραθειςῶν.”

using a Stoic handbook in delineating his concept of the Logos. In this context, he cites the presentation of Antiochus of Ascalon in Cicero's *Academica Posteriora*, where mention is made of an infinite "cutting" and "dividing" of matter.²⁰⁵ However, Cicero does not go into details of how this division contributes to the organisation of matter, or indeed any details at all.

“ταῦτα δ’ οὐκ ἀπὸ σκοποῦ διδάσκουσιν, ἀλλ’ ἔγνωσαν ὅτι ἡ τοῦ θεοῦ τέχνη, καθ’ ἣν ἐδημιούργει τὰ σύμπαντα, οὔτε ἐπίτασιν οὔτε ἄνεσιν δεχομένη. μένουσα δὲ ἡ αὐτὴ κατὰ τὴν ἐν ὑπερβολαῖς ἀκρότητα τελείως ἕκαστον τῶν ὄντων δεδημιούργηκε πᾶσιν ἀριθμοῖς καὶ πάσαις ταῖς πρὸς τελειότητα ιδέαις καταχρησαμένου τοῦ πεποιηκότος.”

“This pronouncement of theirs is not wide of the mark. Judge that the master art of God by which He wrought all things is one that admits of no heightening or lowering of intensity but always remains the same and that through its transcendent excellence it has wrought in perfection each theory that is, every number and every form that tends to perfectness being used to the full by the Maker.” (*Heres* 156)

Just like his Platonic predecessor, the Philonic Demiurge constructs the world based on significant numbers, which reveals the perfection of the cosmos. It is this that allows Philo to explain in philosophical terms creation in six/seven days – obviously there is no reason why an omnipotent deity should require a week to create the cosmos, since he would be capable, as Philo asserts, of creating it simultaneously – however, the importance of six and seven underline the perfection of what was created. This perfection of the created world is evoked by the menorah.²⁰⁶ This importance of six and seven is stressed subsequently at *Heres* 215.²⁰⁷

At *Heres* 157, it is evident the cosmos as a whole is good:

“κατὰ γὰρ τὸν μικρὸν καὶ κατὰ τὸν μέγαν, ὡς φησι Μωυσῆς, ἔκρινε γεννῶν καὶ σχηματίζων ἕκαστα, μήτε δι’ ἀφάνειαν ὕλης ὑφελῶν τι τοῦ τεχνικοῦ μήτε διὰ λαμπρότητα προσθείς.”

“They tell us, too, that our four constituents, dry, wet, cold and hot, have been mixed and harmonized by proportional equality and that we are nothing more than a compound of the four factors mixed on this principle.”

²⁰⁵ “infinite secari atque dividi”. *ap. Cicero, Acad. Post.* 27.

²⁰⁶ *Heres* 225: “ἐπίγειον οὖν βουληθεῖς ἀρχετύπου τῆς κατ’ οὐρανὸν σφαίρας ἑπταφεγγοῦς μίμημα παρ’ ἡμῖν ὁ τεχνίτης γενέσθαι πάγκαλον ἔργον προσέταξε, τὴν λυχνίαν, δημιουργηθῆναι. δέδεικται δὲ καὶ ἡ πρὸς ψυχὴν ἐμφέρεια αὐτῆς.”

“So the Craftsman, wishing that we should possess a copy of the archetypal celestial sphere with its seven lights, commanded this splendid work, the candlestick, to be wrought. We have shown too, its resemblance to the soul”.

²⁰⁷ “τὰ γὰρ λεγόμενα διχοτομήματα τριῶν ζῶων δίχα διαιρεθέντων ἕξ ἐγένετο, εἰκῶς ἑβδομον τὸν τομέα εἶναι λόγον, διαστέλλοντα τὰς τριάδας, μέσον αὐτὸν ἰδρυμένον.”

“What are called the half-pieces of the three animals when they are divided into two made six altogether and thus the Severer the Word, who separates the two sets of three and stationed himself in their midst, was the seventh.” Cf. *Heres* 219.

“For He judged equally about the little and the great”, to use Moses’ words (*Deut.* 1.17) when He generated and shaped each thing, nor was He led by the insignificance of the material to diminish, or by its splendor to increase, the art which He applied”. (*Heres* 157)

There can be no question of the recalcitrance of matter as an explanation of the existence of evil in the created realm: God, like the Platonic Demiurge, made the best kind of world possible, but unlike him, was in no way limited by the materials which He used. The prejudicial Platonic view of matter does come across at *Heres* 158, although not as a limitation on God’s bounty. Rather, matter is not responsible for the beauty of the cosmos, which must be attributed to the superior science of the Demiurge.²⁰⁸ At *Heres* 159, Philo indicates that in spite of what humans might think there is no dichotomy between an inferior or superior part of creation:

“τίμιον δ’οὐδέν τῶν ἐν ὕλαις παρὰ θεῶ· διὸ τῆς αὐτῆς μετέδωκε πᾶσι τέχνης ἐξ ἴσου. παρὸ καὶ ἐν ἱεραῖς γραφαῖς λέγεται· εἶδεν ὁ θεὸς τὰ πάντα ὅσα ἐποίησεν, καὶ ἰδοὺ καλὰ λίαν”, τὰ δὲ τοῦ αὐτοῦ τυγχάνοντα ἐπαίνου (*Gen.* i. 31) παρὰ τῷ ἐπαινοῦντι πάντως ἐστὶν ἰσότιμα.”

“But with God no kind of material is held in honour and therefore he bestowed upon them all the same art and in equal measure. And so in the holy Scriptures we read, “God saw all things which He had made and behold, they were very good” (*Gen.*i.3) and things which receive the same praise must be of equal honour in the eyes of the praiser.”

This passage seems to indicate the existence of different types of matter. But Philo perhaps uses ὕλη to refer to material in general, rather than “matter” in the technical sense. I think that Philo is influenced here by the *Genesis* account, in which man is created from a mixture of materials, such as mud and *pneuma*. The account echoes Plotinus’ comment at *Enn.* 3.2.11.6 that a craftsman could not make an animal only with eyes, even if these are its finest feature. The beauty of the cosmos lies in its instantiation of all possibilities, and even though some of these possibilities may appear better than others, God has applied the same skill in making everything.

This point is picked up at *De Prov.* 59 when Philo states that the creation of reptiles has not come into being by a direct act of Providence (“κατὰ πρόνοιαν”), but as an attendant circumstance (“κατ’ ἐπακολούθησιν”) Philo adopts the favored

²⁰⁸ *Heres* 158: “ἐπεὶ καὶ ὅσοι τῶν τεχνιτῶν εἰσι δόκιμοι, ἄς ἂν παραλάβωσιν ὕλας εἴτε πολυτελεῖς εἴεν εἴτε καὶ εὐτελέσταται δημιουργεῖν ἐθελουσιν ἐπαινετῶς. ἤδη δὲ τινες καὶ πολυτελεῖσιν εἰργάσαντο βουλευθέντες προσθήκη τοῦ ἐπιστημονικοῦ τὸ κατὰ τὴν ὕλην ἐνδέον ἐπαισιῶσαι.”

“For all craftsmen of repute, whatever materials they use, whether they be costly or of the cheapest, wish so to use them that their work shall be worthy of praise. In fact, people have been known to produce a higher class of work with the cheaper than the more costly substances: their feeling for beauty was enhanced and by additional science they wished to compensate for inferiority of material.”

response of the Christians in explaining why God has created wild animals (they encourage bravery) at *De Prov.* 56-58. Philo's response is more systematic, however. Worms and lice cannot be blamed on the Demiurge, but occur for scientific reasons (putrefaction in food and perspiration).²⁰⁹ Just as Plato asserts that only what is good can be attributed to God, Providence is only responsible for that which is created "out of its proper substance by a seminal and primary process of nature" ("ἐξ οἰκείας ὕλης κατὰ φύσιν σπερματικὴν καὶ προηγουμένην ἔχει γένεσιν"). Philo also adopts the Stoic approach that apparent evils, upon closer inspection, turn out to be beneficial, when he points out the utility of many venomous animals in medicinal processes at *De Prov.* 60f.

The Logos goes on to allocate various portions to humanity at *Heres* 180:

“ἐπισημῶν γε μὴν καὶ ἀσημῶν ὥσπερ νομισμάτων οὕτως καὶ πραγμάτων ὄντων ἐν τῇ φύσει πολλῶν ὁ ἀόρατος τομεὺς οὐ δοκεῖ σοι διελεῖν πάντ’ εἰς μοίρας ἴσας καὶ τὰ μὲν ἐπίσημα καὶ δόκιμα τῷ παιδείας ἐραστῇ, τῷ δὲ ἀμαθαίνοντι τὰ ἀτύπωτα καὶ ἄσημα προσνεῖμαι;”

“Further, nature abounds in things which bear some shape or stamp and others which do not, even as it is with coins and you may note how the indivisible severer divides them all into equal parts and awards those that are approved by their stamp to the lover of instruction, but those that have no stamp or mark to the man of ignorance.”

Once again Philo can be regarded as a proto-Gnostic here, in his view of a Demiurge who distributes two different qualities of goods to two different classes of humanity. I think that Philo is drawing a very Platonic distinction. The image of the stamp is similar to his use of the seal at *Opif.* , and refers to those elements of the phenomenal realm which are made after the image of the Logos (in Platonic terms, an instantiation of a Form). Therefore it seems that the Logos distributes to men of ignorance that which is purely material.

Philo seems to have a Stoicized reading of the *Timaeus* in mind at *Heres* 187-188, where he refers to the Logos as a bond holding together creation, though he uses the terms κόλλα and δεσμὸς, rather than the more Stoic ἔξις:

“μονὰς δὲ οὔτε προσθήκην οὔτε ἀφαίρεσιν δέχεσθαι πέφυκεν εἰκὼν οὔσα τοῦ μόνου πλήρους θεοῦ. χαῖνα γὰρ τὰ γε ἄλλα ἐξ ἑαυτῶν, εἰ δέ που καὶ πυκνωθεῖη, λόγῳ σφίγγεται θείῳ. κόλλα γὰρ καὶ δεσμὸς οὗτος πάντα τῆς οὐσίας ἐκπεπληρωκῶς· ὁ δ’ εἶρας καὶ συνυφήνας ἕκαστα πλήρης αὐτὸς ἑαυτοῦ κυρίως ἐστίν, οὐ δεηθεὶς ἑτέρου τὸ παράπαν.”

²⁰⁹ *De Prov.* 59.

“And a unit admits neither of addition nor subtraction, being the image of God who is alone in His unity and has fullness. Other things are in themselves without coherence and if they be condensed, it is because they are held tight by the divine Word, which is a glue and bond, filling up all things with His being. He who fastens and weaves together each separate thing is in literal truth full of his own self, and needs nothing else at all.

This echoes the portrayal of the Logos at *De Plantatione* 7-10, as a bond holding together opposites. There is an interesting parallel in the pseudo-Aristotelian *De mundo*, where Nature is regarded as responsible for the harmony of opposites. As in Philo, Heraclitus is regarded as the originator of this concept. Although no exact parallel of the Philonic Logos-Cutter (in a demiurgic sense) prior to Philo can be found, Heraclitus does mention a spiritual principle bounded by fire which he calls logos (the origin of the Stoic doctrine), and which contributes to world-order by combining opposites rather like Philo’s Logos at *Heres* 199:

“τὴν δὲ τούτων ἑμμελῆ σύνθεσιν τε καὶ κρᾶσιν τὸ πρεσβύτατον καὶ τελειότατον ἔργον ἅγιον ὡς ἀληθῶς εἶναι συμβέβηκε, τὸν κόσμον, ὃν διὰ συμβόλου τοῦ θυμιάματος οἶεται δεῖν εὐχαριστεῖν τῷ πεποιηκότι ἵνα λόγῳ μὲν ἢ μυρεψικῇ τέχνῃ κατασκευασθεῖσα σύνθεσις ἐκθυμιάται, ἔργῳ δὲ ὁ θεία σοφία δημιουργηθεὶς κόσμος ἅπας ἀναφέρηται πρῶτὸν καὶ δειλινηῖς ὀλοκαυτούμενος.”

“And the mixture thus harmoniously compounded proves to be that most venerable and perfect work, a work in very truth holy, even the world, which he holds under the symbol of the incense offering, gives thanks to its Maker, so that while in outward speech it is the compound formed by the perfumer’s art which is burnt as incense, in real fact it is the whole world, wrought by divine wisdom, which in fact is offered and consumed morning and evening in the sacrificial fire.”

This image of a cosmic mixture produced by the Demiurge could easily be inspired by Plato. However, Philo stresses that this mixture is harmonious, which is clearly not the case in the *Timaeus*, compounded as it is of the passive and the recalcitrant (Sameness and Difference). Indeed, at *Heres* 214 and *Quaest. Gen.* III 5, Philo points out that Heraclitus’ cosmology shares similarities with that of Moses. In the Hermetic tradition there is also a Logos-Cutter of sorts; Poimandres, who produces the cosmos through differentiation, and Hermes who is a combined Truth and Logos figure. Philo’s mention of Heraclitus does not indicate that he was father of a doctrine involving the Logos-Cutter. One can only conclude that the Logos-Cutter is an original contribution of Philo’s or he acquired it from a Hellenistic Jewish source.

The division of the Logos-cutter should not be viewed as a crude creational mechanism. As Radice has shown, the Logos engages in a very complex process.²¹⁰

1) It engages in actual division (*Heres* 133 – 140). 2) It engages in a secondary, equalising division (*Heres* 141 – 200). 3) Mediation (*Heres* 201- 206) is followed by 4) the placing of the divided components (*Heres* 207 -229) and finally 5) the non-division of noetic reality (*Heres* 230 -236). This creation is part of a whole sequence of the ordered and proportional construction of subordinate structures. For example, the heavy cosmic substance becomes separated into earth (dry) and water (wet), while the light forms air (cold) and fire (hot). Earth is divided into continents and islands, while water is drinkable and undrinkable. This reveals not just a continual division of cosmic substance, but a logical division that itself is responsible for cosmic structure.²¹¹

In this sense, the Logos is a mediator, not just between the First Principle and the rest of creation, but an equaliser in terms of size (§§ 147 -150; night and day, the equinoxes, both poles etc.) as well as in terms of proportion (§§ 152f; between the four elements in the cosmos or between the four constituent factors (dry, wet, cold and hot) in Man). This can, naturally, be viewed as a development of the notion of creation as a transition from disorder to order expressed at *Tim.* 30A (cf. *Her.* 133) and unity based upon the harmony of proportions reflected at *Tim.* 31 A – 32 A. To a great extent this notion of division is also echoed at *Sophist* 253 D-E.²¹²

This structured approach to creation by division is a metaphysical necessity in Philo's scheme. Although Philo does not recognise an atom, in the sense of a particle which cannot be further divided, he does recognise the absurdity of an infinite

²¹⁰ Radice, R. (1989), 67.

²¹¹ Radice, R. (1989), 70 presents a schema detailing the symmetrical structure inherent in this division by the Logos.

²¹²“ΞΕ: Τὸ κατὰ γένη διαιρεῖσθαι καὶ μήτε ταῦτὸν εἶδος ἕτερον ἡγήσασθαι μήτε ἕτερον ἡγήσασθαι ὃν ταῦτὸν μῶν οὐ τῆς διαλεκτικῆς φήσομεν ἐπιστήμης εἶναι;

ΘΕΑΙ: Ναί, φήσομεν.

ΞΕ: Οὐκοῦν ὁ γε τοῦτο δυνατὸς δρᾶν μίαν ἰδέαν διὰ πολλῶν, ἐνὸς ἐκάστου κειμένου χωρὶς, πάντα διατεταμένην ἰκανῶς διαισθάνεται, καὶ μίαν αὖ δι' ὅλων πολλῶν ἐν ἐνὶ συνημμένῃ, καὶ πολλὰς χωρὶς πάντῃ διωρισμένας· τοῦτο δ' ἔστιν, ἧ τε κοιωνεῖν ἕκαστα δύναται καὶ ὅπῃ μή, διακρίνειν κατὰ γένος ἐπίστασθαι.”

Stranger : “Shall we not say that the division of things by classes and the avoidance of the belief that the same class is another, or another the same, belongs to the science of dialectic ?

Theat: Yes, we shall.

Stranger: Than he who is able to do this has a clear perception of one form or idea extending entirely through many individuals each of which lies apart, and of many forms differing from one another but undivided in one greater form, and again of one form evolving by the union of many wholes, and of the many forms entirely apart and separate. This is the knowledge and ability to distinguish by classes how individual things can or cannot be associated with one another.”(Loeb Translation)

division on the part of the Logos. For this reason intellects and noetic reality are not divided by the Logos.²¹³ Philo finds Biblical justification for this approach in the comment on Abraham's sacrifice at *Gen.* 15. 10: "but the birds he did not divide". I think that this is what Philo means when he states that the Logos "never ceases to divide, for when it has gone through all sensible objects down to the atoms and what are called indivisibles, it begins from them again to divide those things contemplated by reason into inexpressible and indescribable parts." (*Heres* 26). By things contemplated by reason, Philo is not referring to the noetic realm, rather sub-atomic particles which although they may not be humanly divisible can still be reduced by the Logos

This system of creation is complemented by agricultural imagery at *De Plantatione*.²¹⁴ This is drawn from the notion of God as a cultivator at *Republic* X 597C –D8. The cosmos can be considered like a living creature or farm which requires continual tending on the part of God. However, that this image is not a model for an alternative type of creation, but only an alternative explanation of creation is illustrated by the fact that this creation is still fundamentally one of transition from order to disorder (εἰς τάξιν ἐξ ἀταξίας, *Plant.* 3). If the earth is composed of the heavier elements (water and earth) at the centre, and the lighter ones (water and fire) at the exterior, this leads to the question of how these elements do not neutralise one another through their close proximity.²¹⁵ This is the effect of the mediating presence of the Logos.²¹⁶

De Opificio Mundi

The *De Opificio Mundi* is Philo's most detailed account of creation. Essentially, this treatise can be viewed as attempting to rewrite the *Timaeus* in terms of the cosmology of *Genesis* (or vice-versa). Philo attempts to show how the original great cosmological account was compiled by Moses, superior to that of the philosophers, not only on account of its antiquity, but also because it was based upon

²¹³ Radice, R. (1989), 75.

²¹⁴ *Plant.* 2: "ὁ μὲν τοίνυν τῶν φυτουργῶν μέγιστος καὶ τὴν τέχνην τελειότατος ὁ τῶν ὄλων, ἡγεμών ἐστι, φυτὸν δὲ αὐτὸ περιέχον ἐν ἑαυτῷ τὰ ἐν μέρει φυτὰ ἅμα παμμύρια καθάπερ κληματίδος ἐκ μιᾶς ἀναβλαστάνοντα ῥίζης ὅδε ὁ κόσμος."

²¹⁵ *Plant.* 4.

²¹⁶ 15 *Plant.* 8 "λόγος δὲ ὁ αἰδῖος θεοῦ αἰωνίου τὸ ὀχυρώτατον καὶ βεβαιοτάτον ἔρεισμα τῶν ὄλων ἐστίν". "and it is the eternal Logos of the eternal God, the most solid and the firmest support of the whole" (my translation).

divine revelation. Runia suggests that the philosophical (as opposed to thematic) influence of the *Timaeus* is weaker than that of other dialogues (such as the *Republic*, the *Symposium* and the *Phaedrus*).²¹⁷ This is evident from the system expounded here which does not envisage any role for the Platonic World-Soul. Part of this eclipse of the *Timaeus* may stem from Philo's aversion to the use of myth when discussing God, which he shares with other Hellenistic-Jewish writers.²¹⁸ Philo is also opposed to what he regards as a Chaldaean view of the cosmos (cosmos-worship), which was also to be found in other Platonists such as Numenius.²¹⁹

The main problem Philo faces is trying to reconcile temporal *creatio ex nihilo* with Greek philosophy which could not countenance such a position. He resolves this by putting forward a defence akin to that initially advanced by Speusippus and Xenocrates, that God generated (from eternity) the intelligible archetypes²²⁰, which are the contents of His Intellect (Logos), which are then projected onto matter. This is atemporal "for we must think of God as doing all things simultaneously".²²¹ The sequence is a logical one, with heaven listed first because it ranks first in degree of excellence. Philo claims that on the first day the κόσμος νοητός was created. Being allotted an entire day merely to create the intelligible world helps to stress a degree of separation from the visible cosmos (it seems that this is the underlying reason behind the semantic debate concerning the first day and day one). To a great extent, Philo is absolved from the necessity of presenting the mechanism of God's creative activity; merely His Will suffices (which cannot be understood by Man). However, this does not prevent Philo from providing a detailed analysis in order to render this creative activity comprehensible to the faithful.

It is no coincidence, however, that God should be said to have created in six days. (Incidentally, there is scope for debate here: did God create the world in six days (Hebrew text of *Genesis*) or finish creating on the seventh (*Septuagint*)?)

²¹⁷ Runia, D. (1991), 33.

²¹⁸ *Spec.* I. 28-31 where Philo rejects the gods whom the makers of myth have deceived people with. Cf. Aristobulus frg. 2, (10.2), Josephus *Ant.* I, 14.

²¹⁹ "[Χαλδαῖοι γὰρ] τὴν ὄρατὴν οὐσίαν ἐσέμνουν τῆς ἀοράτου καὶ νοητῆς οὐ λαβόντες ἔννοιαν ἀλλὰ τὴν ἐν ἐκείνοις τάξιν διερευνώμενοι...κατὰ τὴν τῶν οὐρανίων πρὸς τὰ ἐπίγεια συμπάθειαν τὸν κόσμον αὐτὸν ὑπέλαβον εἶναι θεόν, οὐκ εὐαγῶς τὸν γενόμενον ἐξομοίωσαντες τῷ πεποιηκότι."

"They (the Chaldaeans) glorified visible existence and had no conception of what was invisible and intelligible, but in exploring the order in numbers...and the sympathy between heaven and earth, they supposed that the cosmos itself was god, thereby unlawfully likening what has come into existence to the one who made it." (*Abr.* 69)

²²⁰ Dillon, J. M. (2003), 10.

²²¹ *Opif.* §13.

“ Εξ δὲ ἡμέραις δημιουργηθῆναι φησι τὸν κόσμον, οὐκ ἐπειδὴ προσδεῖτο χρόνων μήκους ὁ ποιῶν – ἅμα γὰρ πάντα δρᾶν εἰκὸς θεόν, οὐ προστάττοντα μόνον ἀλλὰ καὶ διανοούμενον- ἀλλ’ ἐπειδὴ τοῖς γινομένοις ἔδει τάξεως. τάξει δὲ ἀριθμὸς οἰκειον, ἀριθμῶν δέ, φύσεως νόμοις, γεννητικώτατος ὁ ἕξ.” (*Opif.* 13)

“He says that the cosmos was fashioned in six days, not because the maker was in need of a length of time –for God surely did everything at the same time, not only in giving commands but also in his thinking-, but because things that come into existence required order. Number is inherent in order, and by the laws of nature the most generative of numbers is the six.”(trans. Runia)

Moses’ indication that the cosmos was created in six days underpins the rational structure which underlies it. Philo draws upon Pythagorean numerology to illustrate that it is the first perfect number, since it is the product of its factors ($1 \times 2 \times 3 = 6$), as well as their sum ($1 + 2 + 3 = 6$). It is also the sum of its half, its third and its sixth ($3 + 2 + 1 = 6$).²²² It is a combination of the odd (3 was considered the first odd number) and the even (2), as well as of male (3) and female (2). In this way 6 indicates the bountiful nature of the cosmos, since the male and the female are necessary for its perpetuation. The fact that the world was created in six days indicates its perfection and that it consists of all possibilities. Just as Plato does, Philo views the cosmos as a wondrous production emanating from God’s goodness.²²³ In passing, it is worth noting that the Judaic cosmogony is the only one in the ancient world which envisaged creation as taking place in seven days. In this context, it is possible that comments such as that expressed at *Theol. Arith.* 50. 8-10: “Because the perfection of the cosmos falls under the six, the excellence of the demiurgic god is rightly thought to be hexadic”, or indeed the Pseudo-Iamblichean tradition concerning the six may owe something to Philo.

Philo’s argument against the creation in six days is weak. Just as an omnipotent God could easily create the world instantly, it is equally possible to envisage a situation in which He might wish to create the world in six days, as an indication of the rationality pervading the cosmos. Unfortunately, Philo here is subjecting his omnipotent Demiurge to human reason.

²²² *Opif.* 13.

²²³ “σπείρει μὲν οὖν οὗτος, τὸ δὲ γέννημα τὶ ἴδιον, ὃ ἔσπειρε, δωρεῖται· γεννᾷ γὰρ ὁ θεὸς οὐδὲν αὐτῷ, χρεῖος ἄτε ὧν οὐδενός, πάντα δὲ τῷ λαβεῖν δεομένῳ”

“ God sows, but what is engendered is God’s gift ; for God engenders nothing for Himself, since he is in need of nothing, but everything for the one who needs to receive it.” *Cher.* 44 (cf. *Leg.* 3.14; *Post.* 4:)

It seems that Philo imposes a further restriction upon his divine creator when considering his work-processes:

“προλαβὼν γὰρ ὁ θεός, ἅτε θεός, ὅτε μίμημα καλὸν οὐκ ἂν ποτε γένοιτε δίχα καλοῦ παραδείγματος, οὐδέ τι τῶν αἰσθητῶν ἀνυπαίτιον, ὃ μὴ πρὸς ἀρχέτυπον καὶ νοητὴν ιδέαν ἀπεικονίσθη, βουλευθεὶς τὸν ὄρατον κόσμον τουτουὶ δημιουργῆσαι, προεξετύπου τὸν νοητὸν, ἵνα, χρώμενος ἀσωμάτῳ καὶ θεοειδεστάτῳ παραδείγματι, τὸν σωματικὸν ἀπεργάσῃται, πρεσβυτέρου νεώτερον ἀπεικόνισμα, τοσαῦτα περιέξοντα αἰσθητὰ γένη ὅσαπερ ἐν ἐκείνῳ νοητά.” (*Opif.* 16)

“For God, because he is God, understood in advance that a beautiful copy would not come into existence apart from a beautiful model and that none of the objects of sense-perception would be without fault, unless it was modelled on the archetypal and intelligent idea. Therefore, when he had decided to construct the visible cosmos, he first marked out the intelligible cosmos, so that he could use it as an incorporeal and most god-like paradigm and so produce the corporeal cosmos, a younger likeness of an older model, which would contain as many sense-perceptible kinds as there were intelligible kinds in the other one.”(trans.Runia)

Even though it is a central tenet of Platonic philosophy that a noetic realm exists, Philo here regards it as something which his all-powerful creator cannot do without.²²⁴ Of course, the Demiurge’s dependence upon the noetic realm (as a model for the production of the world) is a feature commonly found within Platonism. It is noteworthy that Philo, as a Jewish philosopher, adopts this notion, since such a model is not found in *Genesis* (though the Torah in the rabbinic tradition is sometimes portrayed as God’s model). This illustrates that we really are discussing demiurgy here, as opposed to merely parallel speculations regarding the origin of the world. Furthermore, Philo does break away from the imagery frequently found in Platonism which assigns a specific location (supra- and sublunar) to each of the two realms. This leads Philo to introduce his famous comparison of the Demiurge with a king founding a city at *Opif.* 17. Once the king has decided upon construction, the architect mentally draws up the plans. The means by which he replicates this mental conception in the material realm echoes what the Demiurge accomplishes.²²⁵ The

²²⁴ Cf. *Opif.* 19 “τὰ παραπλήσια δὴ καὶ περὶ θεοῦ δοξαστέον, ὡς ἄρα τὴν μεγαλόπολιν κτίζειν διανοηθεὶς ἐπενόησε πρότερον τοὺς τύπους αὐτῆς, ἐξ ὧν, κόσμον νοητὸν συστησάμενος, ἀπετέλει καὶ τὸν αἰσθητὸν, παραδείγματι χρώμενος ἐκείνῳ.”

“The conception we have concerning God must be similar to this, namely that when he had decided to found the great cosmic city, he first conceived its outlines. Out of these he composed the intelligible cosmos, which served him as a model when he completed the sense-perceptible cosmos as well.

²²⁵ “εἶθ’ ὡσπερ ἐν κηρῷ τῇ ἑαυτοῦ ψυχῇ τοὺς ἐκάστων δεξάμενος τύπους, ἀγαματοφορεῖ νοητὴν πόλιν, ἧς ἀνακινήσας τὰ εἶδωλα μνήμη τῇ συμφύτῳ καὶ τοὺς χαρακτῆρας ἔτι μᾶλλον ἐνσφραγισάμενος, οἷα δημιουργὸς ἀγαθός, ἀποβλέπων εἰς τὸ παράδειγμα, τὴν ἐκ λίθων καὶ ξύλων ἀρχεται κατασκευάζειν, ἐκάστη τῶν ἀσωμάτων ιδεῶν τὰς σωματικὰς ἑξομοιωῶν οὐσίας”.

Logos, then, contains the noetic realm, as the mind of the Demiurge, but it is not true to state that it has a physical place.²²⁶ This is the world of Forms as God is actually engaged in creation, but as Philo considers God as continually engaging in the process of creation, no fine distinction need be made concerning this point.²²⁷

Philo blurs the distinction between the king and the architect. This may be an attempt to preserve God's transcendence. Another reason may be that he did not wish to open speculation concerning an ontological chain of demiurgic intermediaries. It indicates that the function of Demiurge does not exhaust God's being –it is only one of his roles. Philo drew a distinction between God as θεός and as κύριος. Secondly, Philo presents the architect as envisaging the future city mentally, when in point of fact he would use written plans- however, this would not suit Philo's contention that the noetic realm does not occupy physical space. Philo's Demiurge is upwardly-mobile with this promotion to architect, perhaps in response to sniping comments passed by other philosophical groups.²²⁸

The reason for creation is God's beneficence. The explanation for the apparently uneven distribution of goods is that God confers them in proportion to the capacity of the recipient.²²⁹ Even Moses was rebuffed: "You shall see what is behind me but my face you shall not see" (*Ex.* 33: 18-23). To know the οὐσία of God would place Man on a par with God.

“ἀλλ’ οὐ πρὸς τὸ μέγεθος εὐεργετεῖ τῶν ἑαυτοῦ χαριτῶν ἀπερίγραφοι γὰρ αὐταί γε καὶ ἀτελεύτητοι-, πρὸς τὰς τῶν εὐεργετουμένων δυνάμεις· οὐ γὰρ ὡς πέφυκεν ὁ θεὸς εὖ ποιεῖν, οὕτως καὶ τὸ γινόμενον εὖ πάσχειν, ἐπεὶ τοῦ μὲν αἱ δυνάμεις ὑπερβάλλουσι, τὸ δ’, ἀσθενέστερον ὄν ἢ ὥστε δέξασθαι τὸ μέγεθος αὐτῶν, ἀπέειπεν εἰ μὴ διεμετρήσατο σταθμησάμενος εὐαρμόστως ἕκαστῳ τὸ ἐπιβάλλον”.

Opif. 18 “Then taking up the imprints of each object in his own soul like in wax, he carries around the intelligible city as an image in his head. Summoning up the representations by means of his innate power of memory and engraving their features even more distinctly on his mind, he begins as a good builder, to construct the city out of stone and timber, looking at the model and ensuring that the corporeal objects correspond to each of the incorporeal Ideas.”(trans. Runia).

²²⁶ *Opif.* 20.

²²⁷ *Opif.* 24: “τὸν νοητὸν κόσμον οὐδὲν ἄλλο εἶναι ἢ θεοῦ λόγον ἤδη κοσμοποιούντος· οὐδὲ γὰρ ἡ νοητὴ πόλις ἕτερον τί ἐστίν ἢ ὁ τοῦ ἀρχιτέκτονος λογισμὸς ἤδη τὴν [νοητὴν] πόλιν κτίζειν διανοουμένου.

“ the intelligible cosmos is nothing else than the Logos of God as he is actually engaged in making the cosmos. For the intelligible city is nothing else than the reasoning of the architect as he is actually engaged in the planning of the foundation of the city.”(trans.Runia)

²²⁸ For example the Epicurean at *ND.* 19 mockingly states “What power of mental vision allowed your master Plato to envisage the vast and elaborate architectural process adopted by God in constructing the world? What method of engineering was employed? What iron tools and levers and cranes?”” (trans. LCL modified)

²²⁹ *Opif.* 23.

“But he does not confer his blessings in proportion to the size of his own powers of beneficence –for these are indeed without limit and infinitely great–but rather in proportion to the capacities of those who receive them. The fact is that what comes into existence is unable to accommodate these benefits to the extent that God is able to confer them, since God’s powers are overwhelming, whereas the recipient is too weak to sustain the size of them and would collapse, were it not that he, measuring them accordingly, dispensed with fine tuning to each thing its allotted portion.” (Opif. 23, trans. Runia)

This is similar to the situation regarding matter, which has to partake of God’s goodness in order to sustain the weight of creation. Philo uses Plato’s argument that the cosmos can only be beautiful if the Demiurge follows an immutable model. There is an important distinction, however, between Philo’s “noetic cosmos” and Plato’s Forms. Plato’s model seems only to consist of *genera* and *species* (but not the totality of creation, which appears to be the case with Philo). Although the question of the Forms has already been dealt with above, here I wish to revisit the relationship between the ideal world and the Demiurge. It is clear, given the image of the architect, that Philo’s Demiurge is actually involved in the design of the cosmos, though it is unclear whether this is the case with the Demiurge in the *Timaeus* (most probably not, since the model is pre-existent). The image of the seal imprinting itself upon matter as upon wax introduced at § 16 reinforces the image of matter as a passive recipient of the Forms, rather than as a principle in its own right.

The theme of the inexhaustibility of God suggests that Philo envisaged divine infinitude. This is clearly not the case with the limited but well-intentioned Demiurge of the *Timaeus* or the god of Aristotle. Divine infinitude first emerges in developed form in Gregory of Nyssa, who was heavily influenced by Philo. This is related to the “overdose of being” which also comes across when Moses wishes to see God at *Spec.* I.43-44.²³⁰ There are few parallels in Greek philosophy outside of Philo; a possible similarity can be drawn with Alcinous *Did.* 9.1.²³¹

The Mechanism of Creation

Philo reserves the right to interpret the Biblical account of creation in a non-literal fashion. “Beginning” does not have a temporal sense. His views at *Opif.* 26 are

²³⁰ “I graciously bestow what is in accordance with the recipient. For not everything that I can give is within humankind’s power to accept. Hence I extend to the person worthy of grace all that he is capable of receiving. But the understanding of me (i.e. the essence) neither the nature of the human being nor the entire heaven or cosmos is able to sustain.”

²³¹ “The idea is considered in relation to God as his thinking; in relation to us as the primary object of thought, in relation to matter as the measure in relation to the sense-perceptible cosmos as the model, and in relation to itself as the essence.”

compatible with both *creatio simultanea* and *creatio aeterna*.²³² In favour of *creatio simultanea*, one can point to §§7-12 which makes much better sense in terms of a simultaneous temporal beginning of the cosmos and of time itself. Secondly, at *Aet.* 14, Philo is opposed to a non-literal interpretive tradition of the *Timaeus*. As Radice comments, this type of creation is a necessary postulate in order to remove anthropomorphism from the image of God, as well as quashing the possibility of an idle Demiurge.²³³ The whole reason for claiming that the world is actually created is largely to stress its complete dependence upon God (rather than determining a particular point of time at which it came to be).²³⁴ Temporal creation would be unacceptable to Philo, since it would go against the immutability of God's nature, so Philo resorts to the Platonic notion of the simultaneous commencement of time and the cosmos. God might continually have a demiurgic role to fulfil, but creation is also simultaneous "for we must think of God as doing all things simultaneously."²³⁵

The creation which God engages in throughout *Opif.* evokes the division of the Logos-cutter delineated in *Heres*. The primary division is between heaven and earth, followed by air and void and then water, spirit and light.²³⁶ A subsequent division between light and darkness produces day and night.²³⁷ Light and darkness appear to be physically confined to particular regions of the cosmos. By void here, Philo implies (following Plato and Aristotle) that the cosmos occupies all available physical space.²³⁸ Philo opposes the Stoic notion of extra-cosmic void (to accommodate for fluctuations in the size of the cosmos) at *Her.* 228, though not at *Prov.* 2.55f. The seven items listed in the initial creation include the four elements

²³² *Opif.* 26: "Φησὶ δ'ὡς "ἐν ἀρχῇ ἐποίησεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν," τὴν ἀρχὴν παραλαμβάνων, οὐχ ὡς οἴονται τινες, τὴν κατὰ χρόνον· χρόνος γὰρ οὐκ ἦν πρὸ κόσμου, ἀλλ' ἢ σὺν αὐτῷ γέγονεν ἢ μετ' αὐτόν· ἐπεὶ γὰρ διάστημα τῆς τοῦ κόσμου κινήσεως ἐστὶν ὁ χρόνος, προτέρα δὲ τοῦ κινουμένου κίνησης οὐκ ἂν γένοιτο, ἀλλ' ἀναγκαῖον αὐτὴν ἢ ὕστερον ἢ ἅμα συνίστασθαι, ἀναγκαῖον ἄρα καὶ τὸν χρόνον ἢ ἰσῆλικά κόσμου γεγονέναι ἢ νεώτερον ἐκείνου· πρεσβύτερον δ' ἀποφαίνεσθαι τολμᾶν ἀφιλόσοφον."

"When he says that in the beginning God made the heaven and the earth, he does not take the (term) beginning, as some people think, in a temporal sense. For there was no time before the cosmos, but rather it either came into existence with the cosmos or after it. When we consider that time is the extension of the cosmos' movement, and that there could not be any movement earlier than the thing that moves but must necessarily be established either later or at the same time, then we must necessarily conclude that time too is either the same age as the cosmos or younger than it. To venture to affirm that it is older is unphilosophical."

²³³ Radice, R. (1989), 116.

²³⁴ Runia, D. (1993), 134.

²³⁵ *Opif.* 13 "ἅμα γὰρ πάντα δρᾶν εἰκὸς θεόν, οὐ προστάττοντα μόνον ἀλλὰ καὶ διανοούμενον".

²³⁶ *Opif.* 29.

²³⁷ *Opif.* 33.

²³⁸ Cf. *Plant.* 6-8, *QE* 2.68.

(heaven = fire). Void is the Platonic receptacle; Philo clarifies that it is created by God, unlike Plato who leaves this point vague. Since the Forms and the void into which these Forms are instantiated are both created by God, matter must also be a product of God. I note at this point that Philo does not actually explicitly identify the Receptacle with the void.

God then creates the firmament, a situation which proves problematic for Philo since he is unable to reconcile his Hellenised cosmology with the Mosaic version. At *Heres* 283, Philo discusses the material which forms the heavens.

“τὰ μὲν σωματικὰ ταῦτα, τὸ δὲ νοερὸν καὶ οὐράνιον τῆς ψυχῆς γένος πρὸς αἰθέρα τὸν καθαρώτατον ὡς πατέρα ἀφίξεται. πέμπτη γάρ, ὡς ὁ τῶν ἀρχαίων λόγος, ἔστω τις οὐσία κυκλοφορητικὴ τῶν τεττάρων κατὰ τὸ κρείττον διαφέρουσα, ἐξ ἧς οἱ τε ἀστέρες καὶ ὁ σύμπας οὐρανὸς ἔδοξε γεγενῆσθαι, ἧς κατ’ ἀκόλουθον θετέον καὶ τὴν ἀνθρωπίνην ψυχὴν ἀπόσπασμα.”²³⁹

These all belong to the body, but the soul whose nature is intellectual and celestial will depart to find a father in aether, the purest of the substances. For we may suppose that, as the men of old declared, there is a fifth substance, moving in a circle, differing by its superior quality from the four. Out of this they thought the stars and the whole of heaven had been made and deduced as a natural consequence that the human soul also was a fragment thereof.”

Origen claimed that at the end of the world human souls would become aether; his position appears to be a more refined version of the one that Philo expresses here. Philo adopts the Aristotelian fifth element and asserts that it is the substance of which the heavens are composed. More interesting is his assertion that the soul is a fragment of heaven; this is a rather weaker form of the Gnostic view that the soul was a trapped fragment of the godhead.

At *Opif.* 36, Philo runs into difficulties in trying to make the Mosaic account compatible with a hellenised cosmology:

“Ὁ μὲν οὖν ἀσώματος κόσμος ἤδη πέρας εἶχεν ἰδρυθεὶς ἐν τῷ θείῳ λόγῳ, ὁ δ’ αἰσθητὸς πρὸς παράδειγμα τούτου ἐτελειογονεῖτο. καὶ πρῶτον αὐτοῦ τῶν μερῶν, ὃ δὴ καὶ πάντων ἄριστον, ἐποίει τὸν οὐρανὸν ὁ δημιουργός, ὃν ἐτύμως στερέωμα προσηγόρευσεν ἅτε σωματικὸν ὄντα· τὸ γὰρ σῶμα φύσει στερεόν, ὅτι περ καὶ τριχῆ διαστατόν.”

“Now that the incorporeal cosmos had been completed and established in the divine Logos, the sense-perceptible cosmos began to be formed as a perfect offspring, with the incorporeal serving as model. As first of its parts, which indeed was also the very best of all, the creator proceeded to make the heaven which he correctly named firmament, inasmuch as it is a bodily object; for the

²³⁹ ἀπόσπασμα appears to be a Stoic term, occurring in Zeno (x3), Chrysippus and Epictetus, although it also occurs in Plutarch and Philo seven times (T. L. G.).

body is by nature solid, because it is extended in three directions.” (trans. Runia)

Philo cannot fit waters above and below the firmament into a hellenised version and so simply ignores this aspect of the Biblical account. There is no place for supracosmic waters, since this region is already occupied by the heavenly bodies. However, Philo mentions water subsequently, portraying it as a sort of cosmic “glue”. This is the nearest that Philo gets to positing moisture that lies beneath the cosmos.

“τῆς τοῦ γλυκέος νοτίδος ἐναπολειφθείσης εἰς διαμονὴν· κόλλα γάρ τίς ἐστίν ἢ μεμετρημένη γλυκεῖα νοτὶς τῶν διεστηκότων· καὶ ὑπὲρ τοῦ μὴ παντάπασιν ἀφαναιθεῖσαν αὐτὴν ἄγονον καὶ στεῖραν γενέσθαι, καὶ ὅπως οἷα μήτηρ μὴ μόνον θάτερον εἶδος τροφῆς βρῶσιν, ἀλλ’ ἐκάτερον ὡς ἂν ἐκγόνοις βρῶσιν τε καὶ πόσιν, παρέχη.”

The moisture of the sweet water was left behind in it for the sake of preservation – for the sweet moisture when measured out acts as a kind of glue for binding together opposed elements – both so that the earth would not be completely parched and so become childless and sterile, and so that like a mother it would offer not just one kind of nourishment, namely food, but would furnish, as if to its offspring, both food and drink.” (*Opif.* 38)

The Demiurge creates by apportioning everything in due measure. Philo’s description of the sweet water here, which has been separated from its salty counterpart and which goes on to form the sea, echoes this division of water into sweet and salty elsewhere (e.g. at *Her.* 36 or *Somn.* I.1.18). The notion of the moisture retained by earth as a binding element was common in Greek philosophy e.g. Aristotle *Meteor.* 4.4, 382b (citing Empedocles) or Plotinus *Enn.* 2.1.6. It is, however, missing from *Genesis*. Philo draws upon Greek philosophy as a means of “modernising” the Mosaic account. A similar parallel can be found at *Quod Deus* 35, where cohesion (ἔξις) is only one mechanism by which God holds together the world.²⁴⁰ At *Opif.* 131, this moisture is vital for holding the earth together in the preliminary stages of creation, but becomes supplemented by the “unificatory spirit”.

²⁴⁰“τῶν γὰρ σωμάτων τὰ μὲν ἐνεδήσατο ἔξει, τὰ δὲ φύσει, τὰ δὲ ψυχῇ, τὰ δὲ λογικῇ ψυχῇ. λίθων μὲν οὖν καὶ ξύλων, ἃ δὴ τῆς συμφύσεως ἀπέσπασται, δεσμὸν κραταιότατον ἔξιν εἰργάζετο· ἡ δὲ ἐστὶ πνεῦμα ἀναστρέφον ἐφ’ ἑαυτό· ἄρχεται μὲν γὰρ ἀπὸ τῶν μέσων ἐπὶ τὰ πέρατα τείνεσθαι, ψαῦσαν δὲ ἄκρας ἐπιφανείας ἀνακάμπει πάλιν, ἄχρις ἂν ἐπὶ τὸν αὐτὸν ἀφίκηται τόπον ἀφ’ οὗ τὸ πρῶτον ὠρμήθη.”

“Among the various kinds of bodies the Creator has bound some by means of cohesion, others by a principle of growth (*physis*), others by soul, and others yet by rational soul. Thus, in stones and timber that has been detached from its organic growth, he made cohesion a truly powerful bond. The latter is a spirit returning to itself: for it begins to extend itself from the centre of its body to its boundaries and when it has reached the outermost surface it bends back on its course till it arrives at the very place from which it first set out.” (trans. Runia).

This could be the Logos, since Philo refers to it as “the glue and the bond” (*Heres* 188) or the “unbreakable bond of the universe” (*De Plant.* 9).

Another interesting passage is to be found at *Opif.* 43, describing the creation of plants and animals. God creates these merely by ordering it. Philo, in keeping with the *Genesis* account, posits the creation of animals prior to that of Man, rather than viewing it as a secondary creation to provide Man with what is necessary for survival. This later forces him to justify the location of the creation of Man in his account.

“ὁ μὲν δὴ προστάττει τῇ γῆ ταῦτα γεννηῆσαι· ἡ δὲ, ὡσπερ ἐκ πολλοῦ κυοφοροῦσα καὶ ὠδίνουσα, τίκτει πάσας δὲ τὰς δένδρων, ἔτι δὲ καρπῶν ἀμυθήτους ιδέας. ἀλλ’ οὐ μόνον ἦσαν οἱ καρποὶ τροφαὶ ζώοις, ἀλλὰ καὶ παρασκευαὶ πρὸς τὴν τῶν ὁμοίων ἀεὶ γένεσιν, τὰς σπερματικὰς οὐσίας περιέχοντες, ἐν αἷς ἀδηλοὶ καὶ ἀφανεῖς οἱ λόγοι τῶν ὄλων εἰσὶ, δῆλοι καὶ φανεροὶ γινόμενοι καιρῶν περιόδοις.”

“He thus gives orders to the earth to generate all these things. The earth, like a woman who has been pregnant for a long time and is now in travail, gives birth to every kind of sown plant, every kind of tree, and also countless kinds of fruit. But the fruit was not only ready to serve as food for living beings. It was also equipped for the perpetual genesis of what is similar in kind containing as it does spermatik substances in which the distinct and invisible patterns of the entire organisms are found. These patterns become distinct and visible as the cycles of the season proceed.”

The earth appears to be like a machine which can just keep functioning once it has been installed without too much direct intervention by God. The *spermatikoi logoi* mentioned by Philo are a Stoic innovation. They regarded the seed as containing the generic pattern necessary for the continued reproduction of the organism, although it could not be seen and had to be logically inferred. Philo mentions this theory elsewhere at *Leg. All.* 55 and *De Animalibus*, 20 & 96.

Philo invests a great deal of energy in attempting to expound the level of rational design which underpins the created world. The creation of heaven on the fourth day has considerable metaphysical significance, especially since it can be equated with the nature of the solid (*Opif.* 49). It is this order which reveals the beauty inherent in creation. The importance of four in the Greek philosophical tradition is illustrated by the comment of Alexander of Aphrodisias (*Comm. Met.* 38. 10-16) that δικαιοσύνη (usually “justice”, but here probably “fairness”) could be found in numbers, and was the first number equal to the multiplication of itself.²⁴¹ Therefore, four can be identified with equality (as it was by the Pythagoreans) and by extension, indicating the fair distribution God engaged in during creation. Philo

²⁴¹ Runia, D. (1991), 194.

mentions the mathematical properties of the four at *Opif.* 51, and although he does not explicitly identify it with δικαιοσύνη, the tradition seems to have been too well known for him not to have been conscious of it when he introduced it in this context. At §89-128, this numerical symbolism is expanded further, when Philo begins to discourse on the merits of the number seven. At § 97, he comments that it represents the right-angled triangle that is the ἀρχή (“starting-point”) of the (Timaeian) universe. The significance of the number seven is underpinned by the fact that it “neither begets nor is begotten” (§100). Philo means that seven is a prime number which is incapable of generating any philosophically important number.

There are seven zones of heaven (§112). The Ἄρκτος, the most important constellation for navigation, is composed of seven stars (§114). Like six, seven contains the universe because it is composed of three (irregularity) and four (disorder) (§97). There are seven parts of the visible body and seven viscera (§118). There are seven parts of the head and seven entrances and exits from the body (§119 – an allusion to *Timaeus* 75D). This is somewhat expedient, though, since the mouth is the source of three – entrance for food and drink and the exit for words. Following the *Timaeus*, there are seven motions. The Latin word for seven, *septem*, is etymologised by Philo as a derivation of σεμνός (reverend) and σεβασμός (reverence).

I think that what may be going on here is a combination of Philo’s attempt to illustrate rational design in the cosmos, in Platonic style, but also the importance of the number seven in Jewish culture. Plato glimpsed the truth in assessing numerical importance, but Philo utilises Judaic “wisdom-figures” in addition to Plato’s Pythagorean ones. Seven is important because it symbolises the Logos of God.²⁴² As Runia notes, although Philo introduces the τόπος of the rational order of creation, this remains subordinate to the theme of God’s beneficence.²⁴³ For example, at *Opif.* 53, he introduces the Timaeian motif of the creation of the heavenly bodies in order to encourage mankind to engage in the study of philosophy.

On day five, Philo alters the Biblical version of the creation of land animals, ignoring the division into two days. He prefers to allocate day six to the creation of the cosmos in its entirety, rather than to completion of the creation of land-animals. It is not immediately apparent what would remain for God to create on day six, since everything by this stage would appear to have already approached completion. Runia

²⁴² Dillon, J. M. (1977), 160

²⁴³ Runia, D. (1991), 199.

regards Philo's anthropocentric emphasis as responsible for this alteration, since it allows him to set the human creation apart from that of other land-animals.²⁴⁴ It is worth noting that Philo regards animals as having been designed to fit the environment in which they live and the first generation enters the world at the period of reproductive maturity.

His creational sequence has a different structure to Plato's, which is one of continual ontological descent (Young Gods, humans, creatures of the sky, land and finally sea). Philo is very vague concerning the actual beings created on the fifth and sixth days. At *QG* 1.19, he responds to the difficulty concerning the double creation of days five and six. He is unwilling to commit himself (his response begins with "perhaps"), but proposes that during the preceding six days, only incorporeal, generic images (ἰδεαί) of animals were created, and on the final day, the sensible likeness is produced.

The Creation of Man

At *Heres* 231, Philo considers the archetype of Man:

“ἔποίησε” γάρ φησιν “ὁ θεὸς τὸν ἄνθρωπον” οὐχὶ εἰκόνα θεοῦ, ἀλλὰ “κατ’εἰκόνα”. ὥστε τὸν καθ’ ἕκαστον ἡμῶν, νοῦν, ὅς δὴ κυριῶς καὶ πρὸς ἀληθειαν ἄνθρωπος ἔστι, τρίτον εἶναι τύπον ἀπὸ τοῦ πεποιηκότος, τὸν δὲ μέσον παράδειγμα μὲν τοῦτου, ἀπεικόνισμα δὲ ἐκείνου.”

“For God, he says, made man not “the image of God” but “after the image” (*Gen.* i. 27). And thus the mind in each of us, which in the true and full sense is the “man” is an expression at third hand from the Maker, while between them is the Reason which serves as model for our reason, but itself is the effigy or presentiment of God.”

Man as he is physically created is inferior to the blueprint from which he has been made. As Philo states at *Opif.* 69, the similarity which Man shares with God is not one of the body, since God should not be envisaged as adopting a physical form. Rather, it is the mind or intellect which is the image referred to. It is unclear what sort of creation Philo regards as taking place; whether Man is created in one fell swoop, or whether only the intellect is created in this stage and then it is inserted from outside (similar to the insertion of the soul into the heavenly bodies posited by Origen). This double creation would parallel that posited by Philo in the case of animals. I think

²⁴⁴ Runia, D. (1991), 211.

that the difficulty here reflects Philo's source text, with the double account of creation at *Gen* 1:26-27 and again at 2:7.

At *Opif.* 72, Philo considers why God did not make man alone. The problem is introduced by the Septuagint passage "Let us make Man" ("ποιήσωμεν ἄνθρωπον").²⁴⁵ Evidently, God does not actually require help to create man, after He has already single-handedly constructed the entire cosmos. Philo solves this problem by pointing out that there are three categories of created beings (§73): plants and animals which partake neither of goodness or evil, other creatures, such as the heavenly beings, which are good only, and humanity, which possesses a mixed nature. On account of this, it is not completely appropriate that God should make man.

This differs from the creation of man in the *Timaeus*. There the Demiurge does not produce man single-handedly because otherwise he would be immortal, not because he is capable of being immoral. Secondly, the Platonic Demiurge profits from the opportunity to announce his retirement (*Tim.* 42 E5-6). God, on the other hand, calls upon unnamed assistants, but does not sub-contract the task. Plato's Demiurge is only responsible for the rational soul, while the irrational soul and the body are produced by the Young Gods; in Philo there is no clear division of labour. Indeed, God could conceivably play a role in the creation of the human body. Winston, however, argues that God is not responsible for anything corporeal.²⁴⁶

Yet God (through the agency of his Logos) still creates the mortal genera of the fifth and sixth days and he is responsible for the human body at *Gen.* 2:7. If it is not beneath God's dignity to create animals then there is no reason why He might not create the human body. (Philo's statement concerning morality appears unsatisfactory, since God can claim complete credit for a lower order of life, but only partial praise for a higher one, although this is a highly "speciesist" argument). Philo does not go into graphic detail of which body part was created by which entity, as can be found in certain Gnostic texts; however, from the context, I feel that it would not be forcing the issue to conclude that the element in man which is capable of engaging in evil activities cannot be the product of God. The assistants of the *Timaeus* are the planetary gods; in Philo they are unnamed. There is no reason for assuming that Philo

²⁴⁵ "Ἀπορήσειε δ' ἂν τις οὐκ ἀπὸ σκοποῦ, τί δήποτε τὴν ἀνθρώπου μόνου γένεσιν οὐχ ἐνὶ δημιουργῶ καθάπερ τὰλλα ἀνέθηκεν, ἀλλ' ὥσανεὶ πλείοσιν."

"It would not be off the mark to raise the difficulty as to why only in the case of the human being he attributed his coming into existence not to a single creator as in the case of the other creatures but as if to a plurality."

²⁴⁶ Cf. *Spec.* I. 329.

is following Plato here. I think it more likely that Philo envisages the angels as helpers, in keeping with rabbinic teaching.²⁴⁷

This part of Philo's account of the creation of man has encouraged many scholars to read proto-Gnostic tendencies into Philo's work. For example, Fossum thought that attributing a portion of the creation of the human body to angels indicates that they are a source of evil.²⁴⁸ It is true that the human co-created by God and the angels is inferior to the man envisaged by God himself, but it is important to note that this is a part of the divine plan, not the result of some sort of conspiracy on the part of the angels. Unfortunately, God's reason (the provision of a scapegoat when humans engage in morally-incorrect choices) does not seem to be particularly praiseworthy.²⁴⁹ At *Opif.* 134, Philo outlines the creation of earthly man:

“Μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα φησιν ὅτι “ἔπλασεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν ἄνθρωπον χοῦν λαβὼν ἀπὸ τῆς γῆς, καὶ ἐνεφύσησεν εἰς τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ πνοὴν ζωῆς” (*Gen.* ii. 7). ἐναργεστάτα καὶ διὰ τούτου παρίστησιν ὅτι διαφορὰ παμμεγέθης ἐστὶ τοῦ τε νῦν πλασθέντος ἀνθρώπου καὶ τοῦ κατὰ τὴν εἰκόνα θεοῦ γεγονότος πρότερον· ὁ μὲν γὰρ διαπλασθεὶς αἰσθητὸς ἡδὲ μετέχων ποιότητος ἐκ σώματος καὶ ψυχῆς συνεστῶς, ἀνὴρ ἢ γυνὴ φύσει θνητός· ὁ δὲ κατὰ τὴν εἰκόνα ἰδέα τις ἢ γένος ἢ σφραγὶς νοητός, ἀσώματος, οὔτ’ ἄρρεν οὔτε θῆλυ, ἀφθαρτος φύσει.”
“After this he says that God moulded the human being taking clay from the earth and he inbreathed onto his face the breath of life. By means of this text too he shows us in the clearest fashion that there is a vast difference between the human being who has been moulded now and the one who previously came into being after the image of God. For the human being who has been moulded as sense-perceptible object already participates in quality, consists of body and soul, is either man or woman and is by nature immortal. The human being after the image is a kind of idea or genus or seal, is perceived by the intellect, incorporeal neither male nor female, and is immortal by nature.”
(*Opif.* 134, trans. Runia)

God is portrayed as the one actually doing the moulding, while no mention is made of the extent of the angelic contribution. The distinction here is not between a rational and irrational component in man, but rather between the archetype and the prototype. At *Conf.* 179, Philo avoids interpreting this collaboration in terms of the

²⁴⁷ I note in passing, however, the association of the angels with the planets.

²⁴⁸ Runia, D. (1991), 238

²⁴⁹ *Opif.* 75: “ἵνα ταῖς μὲν ἀνεπιλήπτοις βουλαῖς τε καὶ πράξεσιν ἀνθρώπου κατορθοῦντος ἐπιγράφηται θεὸς ὁ πάντων ἡγεμών, ταῖς δ’ ἐναντίας ἕτεροι τῶν ὑπηκόων· ἔδει γὰρ ἀνάτιον εἶναι κακοῦ τὸν πατέρα τοῖς ἐκγόνοις κάκον δ’ ἡκακία καὶ αἱ κατὰ κακίαν ἐνέργειαι.”

“...whenever the human being acts rightly in decisions and actions that are beyond reproach, these can be assigned to God's account as universal Director, whereas in the case of their opposites they can be attributed to others who are subordinate to him. After all, it must be the case that the Father is blameless of evil in his offspring and both wickedness and wicked activities are certainly something evil.”

production of parts of the soul, although at *Fug.* 69, he regards God as responsible for creating the rational part, while the powers make the part which is subordinate (presumably irrational). *Conf.* 171-174 also mentions three possible collaborators with God; his powers, the heavenly bodies or the angels.

Philo lists four possible explanations for mankind's late creation. The first is that all the necessities of life might already be available (*Opif.* 76-78). Secondly, an ethical lesson is provided, since when he is in a state of innocence, there is an abundance of food. It is only once he falls from this state that he has to engage in agriculture (*Opif.* 79-81). The third reason is that creation is framed by the construction of heaven and of the human being, who can be viewed as a miniature heaven. The final reason is that Man is the king of creation and his sudden appearance at the final moment might overawe the beasts. For Philo, the entire cosmos has been created principally for the benefit of humanity (for example, he even suggests that the heavenly bodies were created earlier than mankind, so that they would be available for mankind to contemplate when it was created). In this respect, he resembles Origen; even though they accept the Hellenic superiority of the heavenly beings. (Philo refers to the heavenly gods as God's ἔκγονοι, although here he is only following Plato's lead at *Timaeus* 41A - 42D), they both regard the heavenly bodies as being created primarily in order to serve humanity.

At *Opif.* 89 -128, Philo digresses into an excursus on the hebdomad, provided with this opportunity by his account of the seventh day of creation. In fact, here again Philo digresses from the Biblical account. God does not create the world in seven days, but in six (and rests on the seventh, *Gen.*2:2-3), a situation ignored by Philo, (though not at *Leg.All.* I. 5-7, 16).²⁵⁰ Instead, Philo posits the peculiar notion of the birthday of the cosmos, which is inspired by *Gen.* 2:3 (God blesses the cosmos) and which may be unique to him.²⁵¹ The Hebrew Bible differs with the LXX, since at *Gen.* 2.2, it indicates that God only finished creating on the seventh day. As Runia notes, the Samaritan Pentateuch, *Jubilees* 2:16, *Vetus Latina* and the *Peshitta* have the same reading as LXX.²⁵² This passage is parallel to the Demiurge's retirement at *Tim.* 42E when he appears to abdicate responsibility to the "Young Gods". At *Leg.* 1.

²⁵⁰ Runia, D. (1991), 257.

²⁵¹ The concept of a seven day week was unique to Judaism at this period and was only officially instituted by the Emperor Constantine in 321 A.D., though the 3rd century writer Censorinus composed a text concerning time entitled "On the birthday."

²⁵² Runia, D. (1991), 267.

5-7, Philo comments that Moses doesn't use ἔπαυσατο (middle voice) which would imply divine activity, but κατέπαυσεν ᾧ ἤρξατο (active voice) "He caused to rest those (creatures) which He had begun".²⁵³ The seventh day was given as a day of rest by God to His creatures, not something that he required himself. Philo is influenced by the Aristotelian view that God can engage in endless activity and complete his tasks effortlessly. It is this ceaseless but effortless ἐνέργεια that is God's rest. Philo believes that God's creatorship does not exhaust His being but is continuous.

At *Opif.* 135, there is no mention of the anonymous collaborators assisting in the creation of the soul:

“τοῦ δ' αἰσθητοῦ καὶ ἐπὶ μέρος ἀνθρώπου τὴν κατασκευὴν σύνθετον εἶναι φησιν ἕκ τε γεώδους οὐσίας καὶ πνεύματος θείου· γεγενῆσθαι γὰρ τὸ μὲν σῶμα, χοῦν τοῦ τεχνίτου λαβόντος καὶ μορφήν ἀνθρωπίνην ἐξ αὐτοῦ διαπλάσαντος, τὴν δὲ ψυχὴν ἀπ' οὐδενὸς γεινητοῦ τὸ παράπαν, ἀλλ' ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ ἡγεμόνος τῶν πάντων· ὃ γὰρ ἐνεφύσησεν, οὐδὲν ἦν ἕτερον ἢ πνεῦμα θεῖον, ἀπὸ τῆς μακαρίας καὶ εὐδαίμονος φύσεως ἐκείνης ἀποικίαν τὴν ἐνθάδε στείλαμενον ἐπ' ὠφελεία τοῦ γένους ἡμῶν, ἵν' εἰ καὶ θνητόν ἐστι κατὰ τὴν ὀρατὴν μερίδα, κατὰ γοῦν τὴν ἀόρατον ἀθανατίζηται.

“He says that the sense-perceptible and individual human being has a structure which is composed of earthly substance and divine spirit, for the body came into being when the Craftsman took clay and moulded a human shape out of it, whereas the soul obtained its origin from nothing which has come into existence at all, but from the Father and Director of all things. What he breathed in was nothing else than the divine spirit, which has emigrated here from that blessed and flourishing nature for the assistance of our kind, in order that, even if it is mortal with regard to its visible part, at least with regard to its invisible part it would be immortalised. (trans. Runia)

Here again Philo is vague concerning the details of distribution of labour between God and his powers in the creation of the soul. Philo also breaks with Plato's account here, since it is evident that he plays a role in the creation of the human body, unlike the Demiurge of the *Timaeus*.

Philo posits a dual creation- rather like the situation he envisages with the universe as a whole; hardly surprising given his Platonic conviction that Man is a miniature cosmos. This “double creation” had a long career in the Platonic “underworld”.²⁵⁴ For example, the Hermetic *Poimandres* (12-15) recounts the creation first of Essential Man, before that of ordinary man. There are five main

²⁵³ Trans. Runia, D. T. (1986), 257.

²⁵⁴ Dillon, J. M. (1977), 176.

differences between the human created at this point and the one created earlier. One is created after the image of God (*Gen.* 1:27), the other is moulded (*Gen.* 2.7). The archetypal human is an object of thought while the other is an object of sense-perception. The first evidently is an archetype is one of the Forms, while the second is an instantiation of the Form. The archetypal human is without sexual differentiation; obviously this is not the case for its younger counterpart. The archetype is immortal, while the later human, as a compound of body and soul, has only been allotted a certain lifespan.²⁵⁵ Whatever significance this set of contrasts may have meant to Philo, he does not elaborate.

Another difficulty with interpreting this passage is identifying how many humans Philo envisages here. Some scholars posit a distinction between a “plasmatic” human at 134 and a “pneumatic” one at 135. For example, Baer posited three separate entities: generic heavenly man (the man after the image), generic earthly man (the man moulded at 134) and the first empirical man (emerges at 135). Radice identifies only two figures; “plasmatic” man who is the sense-perceptible counterpart of the heavenly archetype and “pneumatic” man, who is the individualisation of the generic Form. Philo addresses this issue at *QG* 4, where he draws a distinction between sense-perceptible (“moulded”) man and incorporeal man, made after the image and a copy of the original seal, which he identifies with the Logos.

Another point of interest is the πνεῦμα which God is said to have inbreathed at 135. Interestingly, Philo refers to it as πνεῦμα, a more scientific term, rather than πνοῆ. In Stoicism, it was the active divine principle which played a role in the structuring of matter and for Aristotle, it was a substance which allowed the soul to act upon the body. It really is not a technical Platonic term at all (when it is used in Platonic circles, it is usually as a result of external influence). Origen picked up on this distinction at *Hom. Gen.* I. 13, where he claims that the human made after the

²⁵⁵ This comes out in the context of man’s composite nature at *Heres* 282: “καθάπερ γὰρ ὀνόματα καὶ ῥήματα καὶ τὰ λόγου μέρη πάντα συνέστηκε μὲν τῶν τῆς γραμματικῆς στοιχείων, ἀναλύεται δὲ πάλιν εἰς ἔσχατα ἐκεῖνα, τὸν αὐτὸν τρόπον ἕκαστος ἡμῶν συγκριθεὶς ἐκ τῶν τεττάρων καὶ δανεισάμενος ἀφ’ ἐκάστης οὐσίας μικρὰ μόρια, καθ’ ὠρισμένας περιόδους καιρῶν ἐκτίνει τὸ δάνειον, εἰ μὲν τι ξηρὸν εἶη, ἀποδιδούς γῆν, εἰ δὲ τὸ ὑγρὸν, ὕδατι, εἰ δὲ ψυχρὸν, ἀέρι, εἰ δ’ ἔνθερον, πυρί..”

“Just as nouns and verbs and all parts of speech which are composed of the “elements” in the grammatical sense are finally resolved into the same, so too each of us is composed of the four mundane elements, borrowing small fragments from the substance of each, and this debt he repays when the appointed time-cycles are completed, rendering the dry in him to earth, the wet to water, the cold to air, and the warm to fire.”

image is not corporeal, since the shape of the body does not contain the image of God, and the human is described as moulded, not made.

It seems that the soul enters Man as a result of this inbreathing. However, at *De. Gig.* 6-18, it seems that in the case of subsequent generations, souls (which he identifies with the angels of Moses and the *daimones* of the philosophers) can chose to either remain in heaven, become sanctified and assist God in his governing of men, or to descend. Of these, the philosophers finally learn to release themselves from bodily concerns.²⁵⁶

This original human being was superior to subsequent generations.²⁵⁷ Philo supplies three reasons: 1) materialistic – since the earth had just been newly separated from the sea, the material used to create man was the purest possible. 2) teleological (*Opif.* 137): God would not have taken the first piece of earth that came to hand, but would have located the best part “taking from pure matter the purest and utmost refined part which was especially suited for the construction.”²⁵⁸ 3) theological (138); Philo regards this reason as being the most important. God constructed the first man with the most perfect proportions, so that everything should form a symmetrical and harmonious whole. The soul is also excellent, since it is modelled on the divine Logos (*Opif.* 139). Subsequent generations are inferior, not in the Gnostic sense of having become corrupted by the Archons, but rather because a copy of a copy will always be inferior.

In this context, it is useful to cite an important Philonic text: *QG* 2.62:

“For nothing mortal can be modelled on the highest Father of the universe, but only on the Second God, who is his Logos. For it was necessary that the rational stamp in the human soul be imprinted by the divine Logos, since the God who is anterior to the Logos is superior to all rational natures. It is not permitted for any created being to be assimilated to God beyond the Logos who is established in a most excellent and exceptional form.”

Here Philo mentions a Second God, which seems to be similar to the Numenian Second God, since the First God in both cases remains absolutely

²⁵⁶ This certainly has connotations of a fall: “ἐκείναι δ’ ὡς περ εἰς ποταμὸν τὸ σῶμα καταβάσαι ποτὲ μὲν ὑπὸ συρμοῦ δίνης βιασοτάτης ἀρπασθεῖσαι κατεπόθησαν, ποτὲ δὲ πρὸς τὴν φορὰν ἀντισχεῖν δυνηθεῖσαι τὸ μὲν πρῶτον ἀνενήξαντο, εἶτα ὅθεν ὤρμησαν, ἐκεῖσε πάλιν ἀνέπτησαν.”

“The others, after descending into the body as into a river at times are ceased and drawn down as by the suction of a most violent whirlpool, at times again through their ability to resist the current they at first swim up, then soar aloft to the place from whence they came.” (*De. Gig.*, 13).

²⁵⁷ *Opif.* 136.

²⁵⁸ Trans. Runia.

transcendent. Furthermore, the Second God Philo mentions here seems to have a demiurgic function, since it is the creator of the rational element in the human soul. It is quite rare in Philo to find an explicit declaration of which particular component of humankind was created by which power, but it seems that the rational part of the soul must have been created by a power, rather than the Father. However this still cannot mean that the Logos is the unnamed collaborator to whom God says “let us make man”, since it is only by means of the Logos that the Father actually creates. Therefore, this imprinting by the Logos needs to be understood in terms of instrument rather than of agent.

Philo proceeds to describe the creation of women. Following the Mosaic account leads to a more logical sequence than that of the *Timaeus*, since both sexes are present in the first generation. At *Opif.* 151, Philo points out that man would have resembled God more closely, if it had not been for the subsequent “moulding” of woman. At *Opif.* 152, Philo, using the imagery of Aristophanes *Symposium* 191A-193, adopts a more balanced stance, recognising the value of procreation for the perpetuation of the species.²⁵⁹

Philo differs from most of the other traditions studied, which tend to view mankind as capable of living an immoral life without the help of women as must have been the case with some members of the first generation of Plato’s *Timaeus*. Woman is not responsible for the fall of souls in Origen, although the fall of Man in the *Poimandres* or the error of Sophia in the Gnostic tradition would seem to be caused by female error. The female responsibility for the fall of Man in Philo appears disproportionate in view of the Mosaic account he is following, where it is the serpent who is the cause of all the trouble (§157). For Philo, the serpent represents pleasure: he is sunk prone on his belly, consumes earth with his food and by nature he destroys those whom he has bitten.

The creation of woman is based on *Gen* 2:21 -25, but from this point on, Philo strays away from the biblical account of creation. In fact, he engages in an excursus

²⁵⁹“ἔρως δ’ ἐπιγενόμενος καθάπερ ἑνὸς ζώου διττὰ τμήματα διεστηκότα συναγαγὼν εἰς ταῦτόν ἀρμόττεται, πόθον ἐνιδρυσάμενος ἑκατέρω τῆς πρὸς θάτερον κοινωνίας εἰς τὴν τοῦ ὁμοίου γένεσιν· ὁ δὲ πόθος οὗτος καὶ τὴν τῶν σωμάτων ἡδονὴν ἐγέννησεν, ἥτις ἐστὶν ἀδικημάτων καὶ παρανομημάτων ἀρχή, δι’ ἣν ὑπαλλάττονται τὸν θνητὸν καὶ κακοδαίμονα βίον ἀντ’ ἀθανάτου καὶ εὐδαιμόνου.”

“The love that ensues brings together the two separate halves of a single living being, as it were, and joins them into unity, thereby establishing in both a desire for union with the other in order to produce a being similar to themselves. But this desire also gave rise to bodily pleasure, which is the starting-point of wicked and law-breaking deeds, and on its account they exchange the life of immortality and well-being for the life of mortality and misfortune.”

upon the moral decline of mankind. Interestingly, he makes no attempt to explain the creation of Woman from Adam's rib (he never actually mentions Adam by name in *Opif.*), although he allegorises the serpent. However, at *QG* 27, he provides an exegesis of *Gen.* ii. 21 – Philo believes that the creation of Woman from the side of Man is an indication that she is inferior in age and in honour to him. He also views it as a sign that Man is bound to protect Woman since she is a necessary part of him, but that she is bound to serve him as a whole.

Philo's main problem regarding the creation of Woman appears to be that once she is created, Man can no longer imitate God's solitary existence.²⁶⁰ This appears to be an exaggerated reading of the importance of unicity in relation to the cosmos and its model mentioned by Plato at *Timaeus* 30C – 31B.

At *Opif.* 165, Philo allegorises Eve's temptation:

“Τὰς δὲ γοητείας καὶ ἀπάτας αὐτῆς ἡδονὴ τῷ μὲν ἀνδρὶ οὐ τολμᾶ προσφέρειν, τῇ δὲ γυναικὶ καὶ διὰ ταύτης ἐκείνῳ, πάνυ προσφυῶς καὶ εὐθυβόλως.”

“Pleasure does not venture to bring her wiles to bear on the man, but on the woman, and by her means on him”.

He propounds this view because he regards mind as corresponding to man and the senses to woman (§165), and it is the senses which are first to succumb to pleasure. Philo regards this schema as applying to all of humanity; in the context of his moral allegory, Adam and Eve represent respectively archetypal male and female characteristics. He views soul, as a female element, as being influenced to a greater extent by the physical than the male element (mind). In concluding his account, Philo compares demiurgy to a political system, attacking polytheism, since he views it as a form of divine ochlocracy.²⁶¹ At *Opif.* 171, he argues that since God would only create something like himself, He must have only created one cosmos. Clearly, in light of Philo's comments concerning the creation of Man, this would seem to be a particularly weak argument, since despite the similarity between Man and God, God still created multiple humans. In keeping with the *Timaeus*, Philo argues that God's beneficence is adequate guarantee that he would never allow the cosmos to be destroyed.

Reproduction occurs at *Tim.* 91a-d, but Philo does not deal with this aspect subsequent to the creation of Man at *Opif.* Parents are the mortal counterparts of the “Young Gods” of *Tim.* 41C, E4 and 42D4. They imitate God by creating something

²⁶⁰ *Opif.* 143 -144.

²⁶¹ *Opif.* 171.

new. Like the “Young Gods”, they receive the immortal part “from outside” (*Opif.* 6, *Her.* 184) and only “mimic God in framing life” (ἐν τῷ ζωοπλαστεῖν *Decal.* 120). The Demiurge’s speech is equated to God’s exhortation on reproduction at *Gen.* 1. 11-13, 20-23, 28-30. Parents as ἐμφανεῖς θεοί (*Decal.* 120) are accessory causes, while God is the true cause.

Matter

The question of matter in Philo is an interesting one, given his move from the three principles: God, Forms and matter of the *Timaeus*, to subsuming the Forms under the First Principle. This would seem to pave the way for a dualistic philosophy, but matter for Philo cannot be regarded as a principle in its own right.²⁶² Philo is not influenced solely by Platonism. *Opif.* §8-9 is important in terms of illustrating Philo’s debt to the Stoa. He also uses Stoic terminology, even referring to τὸ παθητόν, but the passive element lacks causality.²⁶³ He tends to use terms which emphasise its passivity: ἄμορφος (shapeless)²⁶⁴, though at the same time mentioning its disorder; it is ἀνείδεος (formless) at *Mut.* 23, 135, and ἀσχημάτιστος (figureless) at *Somn.* II, 6, 45.²⁶⁵

There is also opposition between the active cause (νοῦς) and ὕλη– they are not complementary. At *Opif.* 22 in the account of creation, οὐσία is described as “τροπήν δὲ καὶ μεταβολὴν ἐδέχετο τὴν εἰς τὰναντία καὶ τὰ βέλτιστα. The Receptacle is not a “realm of pre-cosmic chaos” but rather the “space” in which creation happens. Matter is neither an Aristotelian substrate nor the Stoic passive principle. It is defined negatively through the use of alpha-privatives (ἄτακτος, ἄποιος, ἄψυχος). It lacks the positive characteristics of the Platonic Receptacle (οὐχ ἡσυχίαν ἄγον πλημμελῶς). Philo also characterises matter as ἄψυχος, in contrast to the Middle Platonist tradition which based its view on *Timaeus* 30A.²⁶⁶ Philonic

²⁶² Cf. *Opif.* 8: “Μωσῆς...ἔγνω δὴ, ὅτι ἀναγκαιότατόν ἐστιν ἐν τοῖς οὖσι τὸ μὲν εἶναι δραστήριον αἴτιον, τὸ δὲ παθητόν καὶ ὅτι τὸ μὲν δραστήριον ὁ τῶν ὄλων νοῦς ἐστιν εἰλικρινέστατος καὶ ἀκραιφνέστατος, κρείττων ἢ ἀρετῇ καὶ κρείττων ἢ ἐπιστήμῃ καὶ κρείττων ἢ αὐτὸ τὸ ἀγαθὸν καὶ αὐτὸ τὸ καλόν, τὸ δὲ παθητόν ἄψυχον καὶ ἀκίνητον ἐξ ἑαυτοῦ....”

“Moses...understood that it was most essential that among the things that exist there be an active cause and a passive object, and that the former is the mind of the universe, supremely pure and undefiled, superior to excellence and superior to knowledge and even superior to the Good itself, whereas the passive object was without its own source of life and movement...?” (trans. Runia).

²⁶³ *Opif.* 8-9.

²⁶⁴ *Her.* 27, 140, *Spec.* I, 60, 328.

²⁶⁵ Wolfson, H. A. (1968), 309.

²⁶⁶ Runia, D. T. (1986), 143.

matter lacks disorderly motion, although it does contain potentiality, an Aristotelian feature. (δυναμένη πάντα γίνεσθαι). At *Opif.* § 8-9, Moses recognises that reality consists both of τὸ δραστήριον αἴτιον (Nous) and τὸ παθητόν. Philo adopts the Timaeian account, but he is not in favour of the Stoic two-aspect theory, since this would place God and matter on the same level.²⁶⁷

One problem here is whether Philo regarded God as creating matter. Wolfson points out that void (κενόν §29) and empty space (“κενήν χωρὰν §32) are not identical for Philo.²⁶⁸ The Receptacle in which creation takes place is also not identical to the matter “out of which” creation takes place. Philo followed the Stoa in regarding space not as an aspect of matter but of place and body.²⁶⁹

Philo doesn't explicitly say that God made the world out of nothing; since this would be a new concept to both Greek philosophy and Jewish thought, one might be forgiven for expecting him to. I think that the idea would, in any case, be repugnant to Philo. If God is the source of order, he would hardly create matter that is disorderly and then order it.²⁷⁰ It would also imply that God is responsible for evil, previously explained by the recalcitrance of matter. Philo emphasises the material (ἐξ ὅου) aspect of the Timaeian Receptacle, without really accounting for the spatial (ἐν ᾧ) aspect, and that seems to be responsible for some of the difficulty in the interpretation. At *Somn.* 1:76, the implication is that matter is created (“οὐ μόνον δημιουργὸς ἀλλὰ καὶ κτιστής”), but this is contradicted by other passages (*Opif.* 9, *QG* 1:55, *Somn.* 2:45, *Spec. Leg.* 1:329)

God, according to Philo, is superior to the human craftsman as He was capable of calculating the precise quantity of matter required for creation.

“Περὶ δὲ τοῦ ποσοῦ τῆς οὐσίας, εἰ δὴ γέγονεν ὄντως, ἐκεῖνο λεκτέον. ἐστοχάσατο πρὸς τὴν τοῦ κόσμου γένεσιν ὁ Θεὸς αὐταρκεστάτης ὕλης ὡς μήτ' ἐνδεοὶ μήθ' ὑπερβάλλοι. καὶ γὰρ ἄτοπον ἦν τοῖς μὲν κατὰ μέρος τεχνίταις, ὅποτε τι δημιουργοῖεν, καὶ μάλιστα τῶν πολυτελῶν, τὸ ἐν ὕλαις αὐταρκες σταθμήσασθαι, τὸν δ' ἀριθμοὺς καὶ μέτρα καὶ τὰς ἐν τούτοις ἰσότητας ἀνευρηκότα μὴ φροντίσαι τοῦ ἱκανοῦ. λέξω δὴ μετὰ παρρησίας ὅτι οὐτ' ἐλάττονας οὔτε πλέονος οὐσίας ἔδει τῷ κόσμῳ πρὸς κατασκευὴν, ἐπεὶ οὐκ ἂν ἐγένετο τέλειος, οὐδ' ἐν πάσι τοῖς μέρεσιν ὀλόκληρος· εἶ δὲ δεδημιουργημένος ἐκ τελείας οὐσίας ἀπετελέσθη· πανσόφου γὰρ τὴν τέχνην ἴδιον, πρὶν ἄρξασθαι τινος κατασκευῆς, τὴν ἱκανὴν ἰδεῖν ὕλην.”

²⁶⁷ Runia, D. T. (1986), 144.

²⁶⁸ Runia, D. T. (1986), 288.

²⁶⁹ Illustrated by *Fug.* 75, *Somn.* 1.62, *SVF* 2.503-505.

²⁷⁰ Runia, D. T. (1986), 289.

“As to the quantity of the substance, assuming that it was really created, what we have to say is this. God estimated for the creation of the world just sufficient matter that there should be neither deficiency or excess. For it would be monstrous to suppose that while particular craftsmen when framing something, especially anything costly, estimate what material is just sufficient, he who invented numbers, measures and equality in them had no thought for what was adequate. I will say indeed with all confidence that the world needed neither less nor more substance for its construction, since otherwise it would not have been made perfect nor complete in all its parts, whereas actually it was made excellently out of a perfect substance. For it is a characteristic of a complete master of his art to see before he begins any constructive work that he has sufficient material.” (*Prov. I, 625-626*, trans. Colson)

This draws upon Plato’s assertion that all matter was used up in the act of creation, although unlike Plato, it implies that God created matter at an earlier stage. This raises a number of interesting points. Firstly, Philo is responding to Alexander’s question that if God created the world, why did He use a given quantity of matter and only four elements. According to Colson, Philo is here conceding that God may not have created matter for the purposes of argument, but that this would not prevent it from being ruled or ordered by divine Providence.²⁷¹ (This would of course differ from the approach of Origen who regards matter as unsuitable to be ordered by divine Providence if it has not been created by divine wisdom). What is difficult to understand here is Philo’s assumption that matter may be really created. It seems that he should be conceding the opposite – that matter has not been really created. Since this position could be one he adopts merely for the purposes of argument, one can not cite this text as evidence of Philo’s belief in a matter created by God.

The term that Philo uses for matter here is οὐσία, rather than ὕλη. Zeller views this as indicative that Philo has adopted a more Stoic view of matter, regarding it as identical to body.²⁷² This does not really help matters, since Plato did believe in a material substratum; it is just that he did not use the term οὐσία to refer to matter. For Plato, phenomena cling to οὐσία, rather than that they are composed of οὐσία. I do not think anything serious can be read in Philo’s adoption of this term.

De Aeternitate Mundi

One must proceed with caution when using *De Aeternitate Mundi* as a core text for analysing some of Philo’s views. There has been some dispute as to its

²⁷¹ Colson, F.H. (1941), 454.

²⁷² Zeller, *Phil. Der Griech.* Vol. III (1919-1923), part II, 387.

authenticity. It is not mentioned in Eusebius' list, although it has always been included in the *corpus Philonicum*. It expresses viewpoints that would prove problematic if attributed to Philo. He is usually hostile to the view that the world is uncreated and indestructible: a thesis that this work appears to propound. It contains other curiosities, breaking away from Philo's usual practice of citing the doctrines of Greek philosophers anonymously; here it mentions them by name. The second half of the *Aet.* contradicts Philo's belief in God's creation of the cosmos. The treatise also appears incomplete or at least to require a sequel.

The scholar Bernays (1863, 1876, 1882) viewed the work as unPhilonic, while Cumont (1891) asserted that linguistically the treatise was unmistakably Philonic".²⁷³ He concluded that the *Aet.* was a *Jugendschrift*, while Bousset (1915) claimed that it was a *Schulüberlieferung*.²⁷⁴ The treatise may in fact have other parallels. *De Plantatione*, an adaptation of a Greek philosophical treatise, dealing with the drunkenness of Noah at *Gen. 9: 20-21*, has a similar structure. It consists of an introduction recounting the main opinions held on the issue, a section containing arguments in favour of the proposition and the third section arguing against the proposition. Another parallel is *περὶ τοῦ πότερον ὕδωρ ἢ πῦρ χρησιμώτερα*" from the corpus of Plutarch's *Moralia*, which contains this structure also.

Runia argues that *De Aeternitate Mundi*, like these other two work, is a *θέσις/ quaestio infinita*.²⁷⁵ What makes *Aet.* difficult is that it discusses the merits of three δόξαι, not two (§7). The cosmos is either ἀγέννητος and ἄφθαρτος, γενητός and φθαρτός, or γενητός and ἄφθαρτος. The first δόξα is propounded by Democritus and Epicurus and by the Stoics (§8-9). For Philo, the Stoic doctrine is on a higher level than that of the mechanistic atomists. They at least regard God as the creator of the cosmos. Their *ekpyrosis* is followed by rebirth, which indicated belief in Divine Providence, although Philo does not suggest that God is responsible for *ekpyrosis*.

At § 83-84, Philo, like Boethus of Sidon, asks what God is doing during the period of *ekpyrosis*, when it is the Stoics themselves who claim that he is in perpetual activity. Philo regards *ekpyrosis* as illogical. If the universe is resolved into fire, nothing will remain from which to reconstruct the universe (§85-88). Earlier Stoics

²⁷³ Runia, D. T. (1981), 107.

²⁷⁴ Ibid. 108.

²⁷⁵ Ibid. 116.

may have regarded God as the fire destroying the universe at *ekpyrosis*, but for Philo this would be blasphemous. *Ekpyrosis* is contrary to belief in equality of reciprocation of the elements (§107 – 112).²⁷⁶

For Philo, Aristotle is superior to the Stoics since he appreciated the order of the cosmos. In advocating the second proposal, that the cosmos is γένητος καὶ ἄφθαρτος, Philo draws heavily upon *Tim.* 41a7-b6. Plato reached a higher level of truth than Aristotle, since he recognised that the cosmos is not autonomous, but was created due to God's goodness. Plato also recognised that the cosmos is not eternal in an absolute sense, but it gains its eternity from God's βούλησις. At § 14, Philo expresses his preference for the literal interpretation of the *Timaeus*. § 17 even goes so far as to assert that Hesiod is the father of Plato's doctrine. This is not because Philo wishes to denigrate Plato; rather, in antiquity, the older a belief, the more reputable it was.²⁷⁷

At § 19, Philo ascends to the highest level by dealing with the views of Moses. This introduces the τοπός of the "theft of the philosophers", a common Jewish apologetic device. The doctrine that the cosmos is γενητὸς καὶ ἄφθαρτος ultimately came from Moses and this in turn ensures its accuracy. This also helps to explain why it appears that part of the θέσις is missing. Philo, instead of developing two δόξαι as is standard in a θέσις, expounds three, refuting the first with the second and the second with the third.²⁷⁸

Philo makes the debt he owes to the *Timaeus* clear at the outset of *Aet.* He invokes God in a manner reminiscent of *Timaeus* 27C, where Timaeus invokes the gods before speaking on such a great matter as whether the cosmos is created or uncreated. At § 25 Philo quotes *Timaeus* 32C and § 38 quotes *Timaeus* 33C concerning the autarchy of the earth. But not all of Philo's use of the *Timaeus* is to be commended. His version at § 74 of the description of the intestinal tract at *Tim.* 73 A is particularly unfortunate. His use of the myth of periodic destructions of human populations described at *Laws* III 676 and *Timaeus* 22A at *Aet.* 146-150 is merely superficial, although this may be composed under the influence of Stoic *ekpyrosis* and the Jewish *dies irae*. Overall, *De Aeternitate Mundi* reveals more about the

²⁷⁶ Colson & Whitaker (1941), 181.

²⁷⁷ Runia, D. T. (1981), 127.

²⁷⁸ Runia, D. T. (1981), 138.

intellectual environment in which Philo was working than it does about his own conception of the Demiurge.

Conclusion

Philo's vision of the Demiurge is undoubtedly a complex one, leading him to adopt nuanced or highly qualified positions on a number of issues. His independence of mind (to a large extent due to his Jewish background, which would render some of the assumptions of Greek philosophy unpalatable to him) has led to difficulties in attempting to classify him. On the creation of the world his view is in general terms that of *Genesis*, though a *Genesis* illuminated more by the Demiurge of Plato's *Timaeus* and the questions of Middle Platonism than those of Jewish wisdom.

This is illustrated by his investigation into the origin of the world. He mentions three possibilities: the Aristotelian position (the world is uncreated and indestructible)²⁷⁹, the Stoic (the world is created and destructible, but this world is only one of a series)²⁸⁰ and the Platonic one (created and not destructible).²⁸¹ The Aristotelian notion of uncreatedness is rejected (what does it leave for God to do?),²⁸² although Philo only challenges the grounds for Aristotelian cosmic indestructibility (a corollary of its uncreatedness).²⁸³ Philo rejects the Stoic position (*Aet.* 5. 20 – 9, 51) in favour of the Platonic one (*Ibid.* 5. 19).

Although Philo follows the Biblical account of creation he draws heavily upon demiurgic imagery. He most frequently refers to God as δημιουργός, τεχνιτής, ποιητής, κοσμοπλάστης, or uses a compound with πλάσσω. God is frequently portrayed as engaged in demiurgic activity: he divides (*Her.* 133ff), shapes and sculpts (*Her.* 156, *Prov.* 2.48-50) and builds (*Cher.* 126).²⁸⁴ Philo upgrades the demiurgic imagery by portraying God as an architect. This is related to his social upgrading of the term δημιουργός, referring to its meaning as a magistrate in certain Greek states (*Somn.* 2.187). More importantly, this alteration of God from craftsman to architect is related to the difference between the Philonic and Platonic conceptions of the Demiurge. Since for Philo, the Forms are the thoughts of God, He designs the pattern that he brings to creation, rather than following independently-existing Forms,

²⁷⁹ *Aet.* 3,7, 10-12; *Opif.* 2-7, *Conf.* 23, 114 ; *Somn.* II, 43, 283.

²⁸⁰ *Aet.* 3, 8-9.

²⁸¹ *Aet.* 4, 13-16.

²⁸² *Opif.* 2, 7 -14.

²⁸³ Wolfson, H. A. (1968), 295.

²⁸⁴ Runia, D. T. (1986), 421.

like the Platonic Demiurge. However, although Philo refers to God as both a Demiurge and a Creator (κτίστης), this does not seem to necessarily imply that God created matter, rather that He created the noetic realm.

However, the notion of a Demiurge is only one model of creation and Philo regards others as compatible. This is chiefly due to his notion that his exegesis or indeed any particular exegesis cannot do justice to the richness of Scripture or explain it fully. God is also a planter (φυτουργός, *Conf.* 38, 196). Indeed, so important is this model of creation in Philo that Radice in *Platonismo e Creationismo* devotes a whole chapter to it. This agricultural creation is related to the creation of plants and trees in the *De Opificio Mundi*. They are created at the period of sexual maturity, not just that everything might be ready in advance of the coming of Man, but more importantly as a visible symbol that all fertility is attributable to God as primary cause. The biological image of creation is also drawn upon. God is the Parent (γεννητής, *Spec. Leg.* II 32, 98), Father (πατήρ, *Opif.* 24, 74) and also Cause (αἴτιος, *Somn.* I, II, 67). This paternal notion enters Philo from Scripture (*Deut.* 32.6, “πατήρ ἐποίησέ σε”, 18 τὸν γεννήσαντά σε, *Gen.* 2:8 “ἐφύτευσεν ὁ θεὸς”, but also *Timaeus* 25). God’s intercourse with Sophia (His Wisdom and daughter, rather than the youngest aeon) produces His younger son; the visible cosmos.²⁸⁵

The co-existence of these various creational mechanisms is complementary; there is no contradiction between a demiurgic God and one who is actually the parent of what He creates. Indeed, Wolfson notes that one cannot draw a distinction between Philo’s use of the terms “Creator” or “Craftsman”, pointing out that certain medieval Jewish philosophers see no contradiction between the Biblical account of creation and a pre-existent, uncreated matter.²⁸⁶ This makes a definitive statement on Philo’s views on a *creatio ex nihilo* difficult. Still, it would seem that Philo does envisage God as a “creator” rather than a Demiurge, since He does create the noetic realm, rather than merely using a pre-existent model.

Finally, the concept of the Logos-cutter is Philo’s major contribution to metaphysical speculations concerning creation. The Logos that Philo envisages appears to incorporate numerous functions, from being a tool used by God to produce the world to His cup-bearer (figuratively speaking). These multitudinous functions might seem at first glance to indicate the lack of a coherent concept. However, this

²⁸⁵ Runia, D. T. (1986), 422. This allegory is found at *Ebr.* 30.

²⁸⁶ Wolfson, H. A. (1968), 302.

can be viewed as a direct corollary, both of the multiple models of creational and demiurgic activity to be found in Philo, as well as the breadth of functions attributed to the Logos by Scripture, where it is viewed as a mechanism for creating or governing the world as well as facilitating prophecy. This allowed Philo to use it in order to refer to the demiurgic mind, rather than using the term “νοῦς”. Philo possesses an elaborate concept of demiurgy, in spite of, or perhaps because of, being a Platonising expositor rather than a Platonist, given his self-appointed mission to do justice to the richness of scriptural thought. It is this very complexity which not only makes it difficult to categorise him in terms of philosophical allegiance, but coupled with his chronological position at the advent of Middle Platonism, can make him appear as the prototype of a few different intellectual traditions.

Chapter 6: Hermetism

Introduction

The most striking appropriation of Hermetism from the Platonic tradition is the equation of *Nous* with the demiurgic entity. As with Gnosticism, it is an interesting tradition to study, due to its reliance upon an alternative creational myth, which at points takes on a character of its own. While the main Hermetic texts do not appropriate specific passages or episodes of the *Timaeus*, as is the case with, for example, Philo or Plutarch, they do borrow the synthesised mass of Platonising interpretations of the dialogue. The *Nous* of the *Poimandres* produces a second demiurgic *Nous*, which owes more to Numenius than to Plato. This secondary *Nous* generates the world on behalf of the First *Nous*. The Governors are associated with the planetary gods of the *Timaeus*. Like Gnosticism, Hermetism has a heritage which lies outside the realm of Greek philosophy, and this explains why the correspondences between this tradition and the Platonic one are not as strong as in other branches which drew inspiration from the *Timaeus*. However, in the rest of the *Poimandres* myth, the Demiurge appears largely redundant. Though he does produce the world, the focus is on the descent of Man, in order to explain how the high point of world-generation (the creation of mankind or more specifically the entrapment of that part of the godhead which goes on to become the human soul).

Of particular interest regarding Hermetism is the manner in which various features of the demiurgic myth could be incorporated. There is a considerable difference in perspective between the Hermetic myths and philosophical interpretations. Firstly, it is devoid of the notion of a Demiurge who is continually active in the sense of continually ordering matter to prevent some kind of cosmic collapse. World-generation occurs as the result of an error leading to division within the godhead, resulting in a less desirable state within the *supralunar* realm and Hermetism envisages, indeed aspires to, a return to this state. Unlike the philosophical traditions, the interaction of immaterial entities upon material ones does not require explanation, and in fact the position they occupy within the myth can provide an impetus, which alters their metaphysical function. Examples include the redundant Demiurge or the position of Logos between the lighter and heavier elements in the *Poimandres* (although this could also be interpreted in terms of mediation). Again, Logos is redundant due to the existence of the Second *Nous*.

Hermetism welcomes Platonic elements into a structure developed out of the Egyptian religious tradition. Hermetism, rather than developing the metaphysical aspect of the demiurgic concept, marshals the entities of philosophical discussions on the topic and uses them to people its myths. Hermetism welcomes such familiar features, as the concept that the cosmos is the Son of God (*CH* IV.8), who aids God in world-generation (*CH* X.1.9), the role of Necessity in the *Asclepius*, or envisaging demiurgy as the differentiation of unordered nature. What makes it particularly noteworthy is that it is the only tradition here analysed that posits a Demiurge, who is largely irrelevant to its structure (the Gnostic Demiurge at least occupies a central position in the myth of Sophia), and testifies to how pervasive the concept was at this period with regard to speculations on the origin of the cosmos.

The revelations of Hermes Trismegistus to his son Tat form part of the same intellectual current from which Gnosticism emanates. The fourteen treatises of the *Corpus Hermeticum* were attributed by the Greeks to the god Hermes. They were rediscovered in Western Europe when the manuscript containing them was brought to Florence in 1460 by Leonardo of Pistoia. Cosimo de Medici ordered Marsilio Ficino to suspend his project on the dialogues of Plato to translate them and it was via this translation that these texts became the basis of the speculations in astrology and alchemy that were at the core of Renaissance Hermeticism, a fact which reduced scholarly interest in Hermetism until recently by stripping it of intellectual respectability.

The influence of Hermetism was weakened in 1614 by the discovery of the Genevan Calvinist Casaubon that the *Corpus Hermeticum* should be dated after the beginning of the Christian era, thus denuding it of the lustre of its perceived antiquity. The Nag Hammadi corpus offered a better Coptic version of sections of the Hermetic *Asclepius*.²⁸⁷ This has led to a realisation that certain Hermetic doctrines could be significantly older than the corpus in which they are contained. For example, the view that the world emanates as an overflow from God could be an ancient Egyptian one.²⁸⁸ The “Throne Mysticism” of esoteric Judaism is another case in point; the seven initiated palaces of Heaven behold the “Kabod” (The glory of God in the guise

²⁸⁷ Salaman *et al.* (1999), 12.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

of Man).²⁸⁹ In addition, Jewish mysticism contains numerous speculations about Adam Qadmon (archetypal Man). In this light, Casaubon's views become less cogent.

Hermetism differs from Gnosticism in the use to which salvational knowledge can be put. It is possible for God to be revealed to the Hermetist through contemplation during life rather than for this "knowledge" to be only of real benefit after death, as is the case with Gnosticism. Rather than stressing that the nature of man is alien to the world, the Hermetist expresses his oneness with God, which tends to lead to a less severe anti-cosmic stance than is found in Gnosticism. Finally, Hermetism is not an elaborate metaphysical system, but a mechanism for achieving spiritual progress, which is rather sparse on technical metaphysical elements. Gnosticism, or at least certain systems thereof, had certain quasi-philosophical pretensions and this explains the greater emphasis on theoretical speculations.

The *Hermetica* have traditionally been divided into two classes: the philosophical *Hermetica* and the "popular", or perhaps more correctly, the technical *Hermetica*. Although I am not in principle in favour of drawing such a sharp distinction between the two, as has been done by the earlier scholars working in this area, such as Festugière, nevertheless only the philosophical texts need concern us here. As Fowden has shown, since the Hermetic texts cater for initiates at different levels of spiritual growth, attempts to categorize various sections of the corpus are doomed to fail. Yet for the purposes of analyzing demiurgic causality in the Hermetic tradition, it is, I feel, justifiable to adopt the stance of Scott concerning the technical *Hermetica*:

"another class of documents...concerning astrology, magic, alchemy and kindred forms of pseudo-science...[which] differ fundamentally [from the theoretical treatises]...The two classes of writers agreed in ascribing what they wrote to Hermes, but in nothing else...They were of different mental caliber...We are therefore justified in...ignoring the masses of rubbish which fall under [this]...head". (Scott I 1)

The Poimandres

Of particular interest for understanding the issue of demiurgic causality is the *Poimandres*; actually only the first tract of the *Corpus Hermeticum*, although when the Corpus was rediscovered in Western Europe, Marsilio Ficino was mistakenly led to believe that the title referred to the entire corpus. This is perfectly understandable.

²⁸⁹ Ibid.

Poimandres not only plays a pivotal role in the first Hermetic treatise, but is referred to implicitly in the eleventh and is mentioned twice (by name) in *CH. XIII*. As Kingsley notes, it appears that the figure of *Poimandres* was much better known in antiquity than emerges from the surviving remnants of Hermetic literature.²⁹⁰ It is important to bear in mind that Hermetism is not “serious philosophy”, but a spiritual conviction, which contains philosophical elements. In the *Poimandres*, then, we have an example of revelation literature, in which Poimandres, the creator of the world, reveals the truth concerning the structure of the universe to Hermes; rather than a heavyweight metaphysical analysis.

The role of Poimandres as a key, not merely to understanding the tract, but also other elements of the Hermetic corpus is evinced by the concentrated efforts, not only during antiquity, but also in more recent scholarship, to discover the etymology of the name. In the thirteenth treatise, *nous* is portrayed in the role of a shepherd (*poimainein*), while Zosimus provides an etymology, revealing Poimandres to be the ποιμήν (shepherd) of men (ἄνδρες).²⁹¹ However, an accusative Poimenandra would imply a nominative Poimenâner and following the normal evolution of Greek etymology, we need Poimandros, Poimānor or Poimenanōr. It is clear, then, that the Greek etymologies of the name are folk- or secondary etymologies, and to understand the name Poimandres we need to look for an Egyptian origin.²⁹²

“P” is the masculine singular definite article which has been constructed using the name of a divinity. Res is probably a Greek transcription of Re.²⁹³ It is proposed that Poimandres is actually a corruption of *P-eime n-rē* – “The intelligence of Re”. Parallels for a shift in Coptic “ei” to Greek “oi” exist and the genitive *nterē* could easily have been altered to *-ndres* in Greek. This would make Poimandres a philosophical abstraction. When he identifies himself: “I am Poimandres, the intelligence of the supreme authority”, his title explains his name. In this text he parallels *Pi-nous nte-pîot*, “the intelligence of the father” found in the *Gospel of Truth* or *T-Pronoia n-t-authenteia*, “the foreknowledge of the Supreme” found in the *Apocryphon of John*.²⁹⁴ It is usually considered a Greek trait to personify abstract philosophical ideas, but there are also Egyptian parallels, such as *Sia* “Intelligence”

²⁹⁰ Kingsley, P. (1993), 1.

²⁹¹ M. Berthelot and C. E. Ruelle, *Collection des anciens alchimistes grecs*, Paris, 1887 - 88, ii. P.245, 6-7 = *Zosimo di Panopoli, Visconi e risvegli*, ed. A. Tonelli, Milan, 1988, pp. 120.28 – 122.2

²⁹² Kingsley, P (1993), 3.

²⁹³ Kingsley, P. (1993), 4.

²⁹⁴ Kingsley, P. (1993), 5.

and *Hu* “Word”. These two figures can in a sense be viewed as responsible for demiurgic causality in the *Poimandres*, where *Nous* and *Logos* are responsible for the creation of the world. During the Graeco-Roman period, *Sia* was often equated with *Thoth*, who is usually identified with *Hermes Trismegistus*, or else viewed as the initial revealer of Hermetism, while *Hermes* was its translator into Greek. One of *Thoth*’s titles was *’ib nRa*, “the heart of *Re*”, which made him the First Principle’s creative Intelligence. *Poimandres* must be another title of *Sia* or *Thoth* cast in the same role as a creative Intelligence. The etymology of the name is important in terms of understanding who exactly *Poimandres* is, which can help to clarify certain strange elements which make no sense in terms of the Greek philosophical tradition, as will become apparent later on.

Initially, one is struck by the differences between the *Poimandres* and other Gnostic/Hermetic texts. The Demiurge may be separate from the supreme principle, but there is no indication that he is in any way opposed to it. Indeed, the division of the godhead, which can be seen as a fall, since it makes the godhead less perfect, can be blamed on the supreme principle itself, since it seems to be partially responsible for it. It is also difficult to be sure how radically dualist one should consider the treatise. It is not entirely clear whether matter is the product of the First Principle, which of necessity would be less radically dualist than treatises which posit pre-existent matter. However, in the *Poimandres* matter is actually real, as opposed to the *Gospel of Truth* where it is only real as long as one deems it real, which is a more dualistic stance. In the *Poimandres*, the material world is only inferior to the immaterial one; it is not actually described as evil. It could be argued that creation in the *Poimandres* actually fulfils a positive role, allowing the improvement of the godhead, as each of the parts of divinity trapped in the material world finally return to compose a more united godhead. However, it could equally be argued that with the restoration of the godhead, we return to the stage before creation; and therefore creation, in fact, accomplishes nothing.

The *Poimandres* is rich in material which helps to elucidate the nature of demiurgic causality, especially the cosmological section of the treatise (4-11). *Poimandres* first of all identifies himself:

“τὸ φῶς ἐκέينو, ἔφη, ἐγὼ Νοῦς, ὁ σὸς θεὸς, ὁ πρὸ φύσεως ὑγρᾶς τῆς ἐκ σκότους φανείσης· ὁ δὲ ἐκ Νοῦς φωτεινὸς λόγος υἱὸς θεοῦ.”
(CH.I 6.15)

“I am the light you saw, mind, your god,” He said, “who existed before the watery nature that appeared out of darkness. The shining reason-principle (emanation) from Intellect is the ‘Son of God’ .”²⁹⁵

This primordial light gives way to darkness, and has often been interpreted in dualist terms as can be observed by the subsequent comment on §4: “εἶτα βοή, ἐξ αὐτῆς ἀσυνάρθως ἐξεπέμπετο, ὡς εἰκάσαι φωνῇ πυρός” (“Then he uttered a cry of appeal, without articulation, such as I would compare to a voice of fire”). Festugière regards this as the mark of opposition between a brutal elemental character, as evinced by the cry, and the sanctity of Logos, which he regards as speech denoting Reason. This cry, rather than denoting opposition, may in fact be a sign of some sort of attachment between Light and Darkness; existing in the dramatic time before the opening of the treatise, as this creation myth commences *in medias res*. This attachment could explain why the Light becomes involved in the material realm; perhaps creating the world by ordering matter as some kind of compassionate response.

However, these passages make very little sense in terms of Greek philosophy, and should, I feel, be read in terms of the Egyptian religious tradition. There is no strife between light and darkness; in fact the light turns into darkness and the fire (again a form of light) arises out of the darkness. This can be explained in terms of the Egyptian notion of cosmology paralleling the daily appearance of the sun, where darkness is not just the opposite of light, but also its primeval form. Since God is equated with the light and light is everything, God and the world are one: God is not actually a transcendent deity.²⁹⁶

“τοῦτο εἰπὼν ἡλλάγη τῇ ιδέᾳ, καὶ εὐθέως πάντα μοι ἦνοικτο ῥοπή, καὶ ὁρῶ θεῶν ἀόριστον, φῶς δὲ πάντα γεγεννημένα, εὐδίον τε καὶ ἰλαρόν, καὶ ἠράσθη ἰδών. καὶ μετ' ὀλίγον σκότος κατωφερὲς ἦν, ἐν μέρει γεγεννημένον, φοβερόν τε καὶ στυγνόν, σκολιῶς, ἐσπειραμένον, ὡς <ὄφει> εἰκάσαι με· εἶτα μεταβαλλόμενον τὸ σκότος εἰς ὑγρᾶν τινα φύσιν, ἀφάτως τεταραγμένην καὶ καπνὸν ἀποδιδοῦσαν, ὡς ἀπὸ πυρός, καὶ τινα ἦχον ἀποτελοῦσαν ἀνεκκλήτητον γοῶδη· εἶτα βοή ἐξ αὐτῆς ἀσυνάρθως ἐξεπέμπετο, ὡς εἰκάσαι φωνῇ πυρός,[5] ἐκ δὲ φωτὸς...λόγος ἅγιος ἐπέβη τῇ φύσει, καὶ πῦρ ἄκρατον ἐξεπήδησεν ἐκ τῆς ὑγρᾶς φύσεως ἄνω εἰς ὕψος· κοῦφον δὲ ἦν καὶ ὀξύ, δραστικὸν δὲ ἅμα, καὶ ὁ ἀήρ ἐλαφρὸς ὣν ἠκολούθησε τῷ πνεύματι, ἀναβαίνοντος αὐτοῦ μέχρι τοῦ πυρός ἀπὸ γῆς καὶ ὕδατος, ὡς δοκεῖν κρέμασθαι αὐτὸν ἀπ' αὐτοῦ γῆ δὲ καὶ ὕδωρ ἔμενε καθ' ἑαυτὰ συμμεμιγμένα, ὡς μὴ θεωρεῖσθαι <τὴν γῆν> ἀπὸ τοῦ ὕδατος· κινούμενα δὲ ἦν διὰ τὸν ἐπιφερόμενον πνευματικὸν λόγον εἰς ἀκοήν.”

²⁹⁵ All translation in this chapter are taken from Copenhaver, B. (1992).

²⁹⁶ Segal, R. A. (1986), 24.

“[4] Saying this, he changed his appearance, and in an instant everything was immediately opened to me. I saw an endless vision in which everything became light - clear and joyful - and in seeing the vision I came to love it. After a little while, darkness arose separately and descended - fearful and gloomy - coiling sinuously so that it looked to me like a <snake>. The darkness changed into something of a watery nature, indescribably agitated and smoking like a fire; it produced an unspeakable wailing roar. Then an inarticulate cry like the voice of fire came forth from it. [5] But from the light...a holy word mounted upon the <watery> nature, and untempered fire leaped from the watery nature to the height above. The fire was nimble and piercing and active as well, and because the air was light it followed after spirit and rose up to the fire away from earth and water so that it seemed suspended from the fire. Earth and water stayed behind, mixed with one another, so that <earth> could not be distinguished from water, but they were stirred to hear by the spiritual word that moved upon them.

The Light is the First Principle which then gives way to Darkness, the irrational, disorderly element, matter. I do not think that matter is created by the Light, since it arises separately. There is no indication that it actually arises out of the Light. Darkness must therefore have existed prior to its appearance. The plaintive cry indicates a prior attachment of darkness to the Light and the agitation it experiences seems to be a kind of primordial chaos. A dualism is set up through the opposing states of Light and Darkness, or the nature it becomes. Light is serene (εὐδιδιος) and happy (ιλαρός), while Darkness is ἀφάτως τεταραγμένον and στυγνόν. Light produces the hypostasis, Logos, by means of which it orders matter in order to produce the elements. It appears to be a compassionate response on the part of the light to the agitation experienced by Darkness. Logos enables Nature to release fire and air, though it is unclear whether Logos acts as a mate or a midwife. In any case, their birth is equivalent to their differentiation from unordered Nature and so Logos is the mechanism of God's creation. In this sense it is equivalent to Philo's Logos-cutter. However, the author of the *Poimandres* did not need to postulate such an entity in order to insulate God from matter, since he later postulates the existence of a separate Demiurge. It seems that he adopts the terminology and personified abstractions of Greek philosophy, in order to adapt them to his mythological framework, but without actually understanding the reason for their introduction in the first place.

Fire and air, the lighter elements, attempt to reach the Light, and even though they fail in their attempt, they ascend above the Logos. This appears like a precursor to the entrapment of Man. The Logos is produced out of the Light and by the Light alone, while fire and air are produced out of Nature and so the Logos should occupy a

position closer to God than they do. Logos can be viewed as mating with Nature, just as subsequently Man does. Logos is in a sense entrapped in matter, since even though fire and air form the supralunar realm, this is still a material realm. Earth and Water, as the heavier elements, sink to form the sublunar realm.²⁹⁷ This leaves Logos as a separative element between the supra- and sublunar worlds.

Earth and Water, for the moment, however, remain undifferentiated, their intermingling is only ended later (§11). In terms of Stoic cosmology, which shares numerous parallels with the creation account of the *Poimandres*, this is incomprehensible, but the same situation occurs in *Gen.* 1. The separation of Word from God by Fire and Air is strange in the context of §6: “This is what you must know: that in you which sees and hears is the word of the Lord, but your mind is God the Father; *they are not divided from one another, for their union is life*”. Here Word and Mind are portrayed as united, but perhaps this refers to the union within the individual. Yet, since man is the microcosm of the universe, if Word and Mind are united within him, they should also be united in the overall metaphysical scheme, which is clearly not the case.

CHI.7 presents the role of fire during creation:

“ἀνανεύσαντος δέ, θεωρῶ ἐν τῷ νοί μου τὸ φῶς ἐν δυνάμει
ἀναριθμήτοις ὄν, καὶ κόσμον ἀπεριόριστον γεγενημένον, καὶ
περίσχεσθαι τὸ πῦρ δυνάμει μεγίστη, καὶ στάσιν ἐσχηκέναι
κρατούμενον.”

“But when he raised his head, I saw in my mind the light of powers beyond number and a boundless cosmos that had come to be. The fire, encompassed by great power and subdued, kept its place fixed.”

The countless powers in the light must be the Forms. The relationship between the Forms and the Fire is unclear. It is also unclear what exactly the great

²⁹⁷ A similar creation myth is mentioned by Copenhaver, B. (1992), 97-8 which he finds in the first part of PGM XIII (“Eighth Book of Moses”): “When the god laughed, 7 gods were born (who encompass the cosmos...). When he laughed first, Phōs-Augē [Light-Radiance] appeared and irradiated everything and became god over the cosmos and fire.... Then he laughed a second time. All was water. Earth, hearing the sound, cried out and heaved, and the water came to be divided into three parts. A god appeared; he was given charge of the abyss [of primal waters], for without him moisture neither increases nor diminishes. And his name is ESCHAKLEO....When he wanted to laugh a third time, Nous or Phrenes [Mind or Wits] appeared holding a heart, because of the sharpness of the god. He was called Hermes; he was called SEMESILAM. The god laughed the fourth time, and Genna [Generative Power] appeared, controlling Spora [Procreation]...He laughed the fifth time and was gloomy as he laughed and Moira [Fate] appeared...But Hermes contested with her.... And she was the first to receive the sceptre of the world....He laughed the sixth time and was much gladdened, and Kairos [Time] appeared holding a scepter, indicating kingship, and he gave over the sceptre to the first-created god, [Phōs]....When the god laughed a seventh time, Psyche [Soul] came into being, and he wept while laughing. On seeing Psyche, he hissed, and the earth heaved and gave birth to the Pythian serpent who foreknew all things...”

Lines 161-205 (Betz., pp. 176-8).

power which subdues the fire is. The Demiurge is subsequently presented as lord over the fire and so he is one candidate. Unfortunately, he does not exist at this stage. As elsewhere in the *Poimandres*, the interaction of an immaterial entity upon a material one is not properly explained.

CH 1.8 has an interesting passage on the question of *creatio ex nihilo*:

“τὰ οὖν, ἐγὼ φημι, στοιχεῖα τῆς φύσεως πόθεν ὑπέστη;· πάλιν ἐκεῖνος πρὸς ταῦτα, Ἐκ βουλῆς, θεοῦ, ἡτις λαβοῦσα τὸν Λόγον καὶ ἰδοῦσα τὸν καλὸν κόσμον ἐμιμήσατο κοσμοποιηθεῖσα διὰ τῶν ἑαυτῆς στοιχείων καὶ γεννημάτων ψυχῶν”.

“ ‘The elements of nature – whence have they arisen?’, I asked. And he answered: ‘From the counsel of god, which, having taken in the word and having seen the beautiful cosmos, imitated it, having become a cosmos through its own elements and its progeny of souls’.”.

Here, it seems to be implied that the Demiurge does not produce the archetype of the sensible world, but it does seem that he actually creates the elements (though he may accomplish this merely by ordering pre-existent matter, like the Demiurge of the *Timaeus*), since it is claimed that they arise from the desire of God. The question here is whether βουλή can be regarded as an hypostasis of God. It may actually have the force of “Will”. In any case, it is clearly a female creative principle, perhaps part of the Sophia figure in Philonic terms. It may be another term for Nature, which is also female.²⁹⁸ Like Nature, Will receives the Word of God. However, it is not clear that Nature actually arose out of God, while the Will must have. The Will and the Word cannot be identical; aside from the fact that Word is masculine and Will is feminine, they are described as mating with each other. Will must be an entity that already exists, rather than an unmentioned entity which arises along with Word, and so this leaves Nature as the only suitable candidate.

The highest principle then proceeds to produce a second demiurgic Nous, rather like the system found in Numenius:

“ὁ δὲ Νοῦς ὁ θεὸς ἀρρενόθηλος ὢν ζωὴ καὶ φῶς ὑπάρχων, ἀπεκύησε λόγῳ ἕτερον Νοῦν δημιουργόν, ὃς θεὸς τοῦ πυρὸς καὶ πνεύματος ὢν, ἐδημιουργησε διοικητὰς τινὰς ἑπτὰ, ἐν κύκλοις περιέχοντας τὸν αἰσθητὸν κόσμον, καὶ ἡ διοίκησις αὐτῶν εἰμαρμένη καλεῖται.”(CH.I.9)
“The mind who is god, being androgyne and existing as life and light, by speaking gave birth to a second mind, a craftsman, who, as god of fire and spirit, crafted seven governors; they encompass the sensible world in circles, and their government is called fate”.

²⁹⁸ Segal, R. (1986), 30.

Here we have a standard Gnostic explanation for the role played by Destiny in the governance of the world, as the creation of the governors. The term ἡ διοίκησις τοῦ κόσμου is a standard Stoic expression for the “government” of the world. It is the Demiurge who produces the planets (“governors/heavenly gods”), although it is not explicitly stated who creates the sensible world. I think that we must assume that it is the Demiurge, since the Governors only seem to encircle or take control of what was already there. In any case, the situation is clarified further on in the text:

“ἐπήδησεν εὐθὺς ἐκ τῶν κατωφερῶν στοιχείων [τοῦ θεοῦ] ὁ τοῦ Λόγος εἰς τὸ καθαρὸν τῆς φύσεως δημιουργήματα καὶ ἠνώθη τῷ δημιουργῷ Νῶ (ὁμοῦσιος γὰρ ἦν), καὶ κατελείφθη [τὰ] ἄλογα τὰ κατωφερῆ τῆς φύσεως στοιχεία, ὡς εἶναι ὕλην μόνην. ὁ δὲ δημιουργὸς Νοῦς σὺν τῷ Λόγῳ, ὁ περίσχων τοὺς κύκλους καὶ δινωὶν ῥοίζῳ ἔστρεψε τὰ ἑαυτοῦ δημιουργήματα καὶ εἶασε στρέφεσθαι ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς ἀορίστου εἰς ἀπέραντον τέλος· ἀρχεται γάρ, οὐ λήγει· ἡ δὲ τούτων περιφορά, καθὼς ἠθέλησεν ὁ Νοῦς ἐκ τῶν κατωφερῶν στοιχείων ζῶα ἠνεγκε ἄλογα (οὐ γὰρ ἐπέιχε τὸν Λόγον), ἀπὸ δὲ πετεινὰ ἠνεγκε, καὶ τὸ ὕδωρ ιηκτά· διακεχώρισται δὲ ἀπ’ ἀλλήλων ἡ τε γῆ καὶ τὸ ὕδωρ, καθὼς ἠθέλησεν ὁ Νοῦς, καὶ <ἡ γῆ> ἐξῆνεγκεν ἀπ’ αὐτῆς ἃ εἶχε ζῶα τετράποδα <καὶ> ἔρπετά, θηρία ἄγρια καὶ ἡμερα.” (CH I.10-11)

“[10] From the elements [] that weigh downwards, the word of god leapt straight up to the pure craftwork of nature and united with the craftsman-mind (for the Word was of the same substance). The weighty elements of nature were left behind, bereft of reason, so as to be mere matter. [11]The craftsman-mind, together with the word, encompassing the circles and whirling them about with a rush, turned his craftworks about, letting them turn from an endless beginning to a limitless end, for it starts where it stops. Revolving as mind wished them to, the circles brought forth from the weighty elements living things without reason (for they no longer kept the word with them); and the air brought forth winged things; the water things that swim. Earth and water had been separated from one another as mind wished, and <earth> brought forth from herself the living things that she held within, four-footed beasts <and> crawling things, wild animals and tame”.

According to this, the First Nous remains the sovereign cause of creation (cf. § 12 παρέδωκε τὰ ἑαυτοῦ πάντα δημιουργήματα), even though he acts via his son, the Nous Demiurge.²⁹⁹ This is seen in the constant emphasis on everything occurring according to the desire of mind. The Word seems to be another hypostasis of the First mind, which is closely associated with the Demiurge. The collaboration between Word and the Demiurge in creation is perhaps to be explained as a remnant of the role played in creation by Sia (Intelligence of the First Principle) and Hu (Word of the

²⁹⁹ Nock & Festugière, (1983), 21 n. 33.

First Principle) rather than in Greek metaphysical terms. It seems that the author may have perhaps had enough knowledge of Greek philosophy to posit a divine Logos to separate his First Principle from matter, but then goes on to posit a second demiurgic Nous which renders this principle redundant.

I think that the *Poimandres* is attempting to integrate two rival cosmological traditions and that is the reason for two separate demiurgic figures. Since the Demiurge is described as ἕτερος νοῦς, he functions as the mind of the material world, much as God acts as the mind of the immaterial one. The Demiurge is more of an independent entity than the Word, which is really just a tool of God. Unlike Word, although the Demiurge descends, he does not sink below the realm of fire. The manner in which Word leaps out of earth to unite with him echoes the manner in which fire and air escaped from Nature. It also implies that Word was trapped in matter and needed to be rescued. Such a reading would at least have the benefit of providing a good reason for the creation of the Demiurge; though it is still unclear how an instrument of God could become entrapped. Yet it seems that the Demiurge arises to create the material world out of the elements released by Word, and Word utilises this opportunity to escape, rather than that the Demiurge was created in order to release the Word. The Demiurge also appears morally better than Man since he never sinks into the material world. The evilness of his creation cannot be reconciled with his presentation here. He never appears as evil or even ignorant in the *Poimandres*. If he is merely following God's orders, then the evilness of the material world has to be blamed on God, rather than on him. By setting the planets in rotation, the Demiurge impels Earth and Water to separate and bring forth living beings. This mode of creation is only indirect.

“ὁ δὲ πάντων πατήρ ὁ Νοῦς, ὡν ζωὴ καὶ φῶς ἀπεκύησεν” Ἀνθρώπων αὐτῷ ἴσον οὗ ἠράσθη ὡς ἰδίου τόκου· περικαλλῆς γάρ, τὴν τοῦ πατρὸς εἰκόνα ἔχων· ὄντως γὰρ καὶ ὁ θεὸς ἠράσθη τῆς ἰδίας μορφῆς, παρέδωκε τὰ ἑαυτοῦ πάντα δημιουργήματα. καὶ κατανοήσας δὲ τὴν τοῦ Δημιουργοῦ κτίσιν ἐν τῷ πυρί, ἠβουλήθη καὶ αὐτὸς δημιουργεῖν καὶ συνεχωρήθη ἀπὸ τοῦ πατρὸς γενόμενος ἐν τῇ δημιούργικῃ σφαίρᾳ, ἔξω τὴν πᾶσαν ἐξουσίαν, κατενόησε τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ τὰ δημιουργήματα· οἱ δὲ ἠράσθησαν αὐτοῦ, ἕκαστος δὲ μετεδίδου τῆς ἰδίας τάξεως· καὶ καταμαθὼν τὴν τούτων οὐσίαν καὶ μεταλαβὼν τῆς αὐτῶν φύσεως ἠβουλήθη ἀναρρῆξαι τὴν περιφέρειαν τῶν κύκλων, καὶ τὸ κράτος τοῦ ἐπικειμένον ἐπὶ τοῦ πυρὸς κατανοήσαν”

“ [12] Mind, the father of all, who is life and light, gave birth to a man like himself whom he loved as his own child. The man was most fair: he had the

father's image; and God who was really in love with his own form, bestowed on him all his craftworks.”

[13] “And after the man had observed what the Demiurge had created with the father's help, he also wished to make some craftwork, and the father agreed to this. Entering the Demiurge's sphere, where he was to have all authority, the man observed his brother's craftworks; the governors loved the man, and each gave a share of his own order. Learning well their essence and sharing in their nature, the man wished to break through the circumference of the circles to observe the rule of the one given power over the fire.”

Perhaps surprisingly, the highest principle is here identified as Nous (in Gnosticism, Nous is normally only the highest aeon). Outside the *Poimandres* the only other parallel, to my knowledge, is the Naasseneen νόμος ἢν γενικὸς τοῦ παντὸς ὁ πρωτότοκος νοῦς.³⁰⁰ However, there are stronger connections within Greek philosophy. Anaxagoras posited Nous as the highest God: καὶ ὅσα γε ψυχὴν ἔχει καὶ τὰ μείζω καὶ τὰ ἐλάσσω, πάντων νοῦς κρατεῖ. Plato expresses the same idea at *Phileb.* 28c6: πάντες γὰρ συμφωνοῦσιν οἱ σοφοί, ὡς νοῦς ἐστὶ βασιλεὺς ἡμῖν οὐρανοῦ τε καὶ γῆς. The identification is also found in Middle Platonism (cf. Alcinous X2 and Numenius f. 17 des Places). The tendency is also observable in the Church Fathers. Clement of Alexandria at *Strom.* 4.25 (317.11 Stählin) states: Πλάτων τὸν τῶν ιδεῶν θεωρητικὸν θεὸν ἐν ἀνθρώποις ζήσεσθαί φησὶ· νοῦς δὲ χώρα ιδέων, νοῦς δὲ ὁ θεός.

This passage is problematic, since unlike in other systems which posit a fall which occurs within the godhead itself, such as Valentinianism, where a lower entity is responsible, here the First Nous is responsible for the fall as the result of an act of narcissism. God falls in love with Man, because he sees in man the reflection of his own beauty. God has to create Man, since if he was created by the Demiurge, he could only be his equal, not better than him. Word and the Demiurge are both subordinate to God. The Demiurge is another Mind. However, Man is God's equal (ἴσος §12). Even though God brings forth (ἀποκυέω) both the Demiurge and Man, it is only Man who bears the image of his father and whom God loves as his son. Since God is perfect, it is acceptable for him to love Man, although the sense here is sexual (ἐράω §12). What is wrong is that in his love of Man, God forgets that Man is only a part of God, not a separate entity, and it is this that allows God to grant Man permission to separate from the godhead, which necessarily results in a less perfect order than that which existed before.

³⁰⁰ Hipp. Ref. V 10 ; 102, 23 W.

Man here is clearly the ancestor of archetypal man. If the Demiurge has already created the material world, it is unclear what remains for Man to create. Furthermore, there seems to be an element of rivalry in Man's desire to create in order to emulate the Demiurge. It seems rather as if he is to oversee his brother, since he was to have all authority in the craftsman's sphere. It is not apparent why God should hand over creation to Man and dispossess the Demiurge from a philosophical perspective; this can only be explained, I think, as a result of God's love for Man.

Another problem concerns the gifts of the Governors. Normally, in the Gnostic tradition this is negative; the mechanism by which the Governors trap Man. But that is quite clearly not the case here. The Governors act out of love and since they are the creations of the Demiurge, I think that they must do this with his consent. This problem is linked to why God lets Man create in the first place. If Man is ensnared by the machinations of the Governors, then the First Principle cannot be held completely responsible for the fall of Man. From § 13, it seems that the error may not have been Man's initial descent, but his second descent into the realm of fire, which I interpret to mean the sublunar realm, since he does not do this with the permission of the First Principle, and it seems to be motivated by nothing other than idle curiosity. In trying to trace the point at which the error that involved creation, or the creation of Man at any rate, occurred, it is useful to turn to the eschatological section of the *Poimandres*:

“καὶ οὕτως ὁρμᾶ λοιπὸν ἄνω διὰ τῆς ἀρμονίας, καὶ τῆ πρώτῃ ζώνῃ δίδωσι, τὴν αὐξητικὴν ἐνέργειαν καὶ τὴν μειωτικὴν, καὶ τῆ δευτέρῃ, τὴν μηχανὴν τῶν κακῶν, δόλον ἀνενέργητον, καὶ τῆ τρίτῃ τὴν ἐπιθυμητικὴν ἀπάτην ἀνενέργητον, καὶ τῆ τετάρτῃ τὴν ἀρχοντικὴν προφανίαν ἀπλεονέκτητον, καὶ τῆ πέμπτῃ τὸ θράσος τὸ ἀνόσιον καὶ τῆς τόλμης τὴν προπέτειαν, καὶ τῆ ἕκτῃ τὰς ἀφορμὰς τὰς κακὰς τοῦ πλοῦτου ἀνενέργητους, καὶ τῆ ἑβδόμῃ ζώνῃ τὸ ἐνεδρεῦον ψεῦδος”.

“[25] Thence the human being rushes up through the cosmic framework, at the first zone surrendering the energy of increase and decrease; at the second evil machination, a device now inactive; at the third the illusion of longing, now inactive; at the fourth the ruler's arrogance, now freed of excess; at the fifth unholy presumption and daring recklessness; at the sixth the evil impulses that come from wealth; now inactive; and at the seventh zone the deceit that lies in ambush.”

The shedding of the “gifts” of the Governors as the soul ascends towards salvation, as well as the description of what the “gifts” actually are indicates that they are evil. This contrasts with §13 describing the bestowal of the gifts. If Man's fall began with his descent into the sublunar realm, than to be saved he only needs to

return to the supralunar realm; he does not need to shed the gifts of the Governors. The fact that he does indicates that these played a role in his fall.

“καὶ τότε γυμνωθεὶς ἀπὸ τῶν τῆς ἀρμονίας ἐνεργημάτων γίνεται ἐπὶ τὴν ὀγδοατικὴν φύσιν τὴν ἰδίαν δύναμιν ἔχων, καὶ ὑμνεῖ σὺν τοῖς οὖσι τὸν πατέρα· συγχαίρουσι δὲ οἱ παρόντες τῇ τούτου παρουσίᾳ, καὶ ὁμοιωθεὶς τοῖς συνοῦσι ἀκούει καὶ τινῶν δυνάμενων ὑπὲρ τὴν ὀγδοατικὴν φύσιν φωνῇ τῇ ἡδεῖα ὑμνουσῶν τὸν θεόν· καὶ τότε τάξει ἀνέρχονται πρὸς τὸν πατέρα καὶ αὐτοὶ εἰς δυνάμεις ἑαυτοῦ παραδιδόασιν, καὶ δυνάμεις γενόμενοι ἐν θεῷ γίνονται, τοῦτο ἐστὶ τὸ ἀγαθὸν τέλος τοῖς γνώσιν ἐσχηκόσι, θεωθῆναι.”

“[26] And then, stripped of the effects of the cosmic framework, the human enters the region of the ogdoad, he has his own proper power, and along with the blessed he hymns the Father. Those present there rejoice together in his presence, and having become like his companions, he also hears certain powers that exist beyond the ogdoadic region and hymn God with sweet voice. They rise up to the Father in order and surrendered themselves to the powers, and having become powers, they enter into God. This is the final good for those who have received knowledge: to be divinised.”

The First Principle is transcendent, since he is located beyond the ogdoadic region. The return of the human soul to the godhead is the restoration of Man to his rightful place in the cosmic scheme. Certain scholars, such as Segal, have been tempted to see in this a denial of the validity of creation, since it marks a return to the position before creation. But surely, the material world would continue to exist – it is just that humanity would no longer possess a material form. All that would be undone would be the fall of Man, which was not foreseen or intended by the First Principle. This indicates that the descent of Man in order to create was a mistake, and along with the fact that he casts off the gifts of the Governors in order to return to God, reveals that his fall occurred with his desire to create, not with his entry into the sublunar region.

This is in keeping with the treatise’s denunciation of the material world, since it means that Man’s desire to create (not just the jealousy that motivates this desire) is evil. Segal goes a step further, claiming that Man’s fall may in fact begin with his separation from God,³⁰¹ that is to say with his birth, in which case the First Principle is actually culpable on two accounts: for the creation of Man, which seems to be utterly pointless in terms of demiurgic causality and motivated by nothing other than narcissism, and secondly, for consenting to man’s desire to create. Perhaps this

³⁰¹ Segal, R. (1986), 37.

scheme was meant to be along the lines of the Numenian one, with the First Principle handing over all of creation to Man, in order to retire and contemplate the Intelligibles. However, there is no evidence for this in the text, and there is no reason why God should hand over creation to Man, rather than to the Demiurge. It seems, then, that no justification can be found for the creation of Man.

“καὶ ὁ Ἄνθρωπος τοῦ τῶν θνητῶν κόσμου καὶ τῶν ἀλόγων ζῶων ἔχων πᾶσαν ἐξουσίαν διὰ τῆς ἀρμονίας παρέκυψεν, ἀναρρήξας τὸ κύτος, καὶ ἔδειξε τῇ κατωφερῇ φύσει τὴν καλὴν τοῦ θεοῦ μορφήν, ὃν ἰδοῦσα ἀκόρεστον κάλλος <καὶ> πᾶσαν ἐνέργειαν ἐν ἑαυτῷ ἔχοντα τῶν διοικητόρων τὴν τε μορφήν τοῦ θεοῦ ἐμειδίασεν ἔρωτι, ὡς ἄτε τῆς καλλίστης μορθῆς τοῦ Ἀνθρώπου τὸ εἶδος ἐν τῷ ὕδατι ἰδοῦσα καὶ τὸ σκίασμα ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς. ὁ δὲ ἰδὼν τὴν ομοίαν αὐτῷ μορφήν ἐν αὐτῇ οὔσαν ἐν τῷ ὕδατι, ἐφιλησε καὶ ἠβουλήθη αὐτῷ οἰκεῖν· ἅμα δὲ τῇ βουλῇ ἐγένετο ἐνέργεια, καὶ ὤκησε τὴν ἄλογον μορφήν· ἡ δὲ φύσις λαβοῦσα τὸν ἐρώμενον περιεπλάκη ὅλη καὶ ἐμίγησαν. ἐρώμενοι γὰρ ἦσαν. ”

[14] “Having all authority over the cosmos of mortals and unreasoning animals, the Man broke through the vault and stooped to look through the cosmic framework, thus displaying to lower nature the fair form of God. Nature smiled for love when she saw him whose fairness brings no surfeit <and> who holds in himself all the energy of the governors and the form of God, for in the water she saw the shape of man’s fairest form and upon the earth its shadow. When the Man saw in the water a form like himself as it was in nature, he loved it and wished to inhabit it; wish and action came in the same moment, and he inhabited the unreasoning form. Nature took hold of her beloved, hugged him all about and embraced him, for they were lovers”.

Nature’s love is understandable- she is drawn to a superior entity, as Man is the final emanation of the supreme principle, who resembles it in form. It seems that what we have here is some attempt by the inferior world to order itself in response to what is above. This union between man and Nature symbolises the descent of the most perfect creature of the First God into matter.

However, Man’s love is less noble than that of φύσις. He initially falls in love not with Nature, but with his own reflection. In this sense, he parallels the Father of All, Nous, who falls in love with Man, as the reflection of his own image. In the *Poimandres*, this marriage of Man with Matter can be viewed in cosmological terms; explaining the manner in which the human form became enmattered; although here it is through no fault of the Demiurge’s. In later accounts of the myth, focus tends to be more on anthropological aspects; explaining the dual nature of humanity (immortal and mortal elements). This was possibly borrowed from Persian speculation.

Bousset³⁰² records a poem of the Emperor Julian concerning the Attis myth.³⁰³ Here a similar situation is observable. Attis lusts after the Nymph and sinks into matter as a result of this love. This sets into motion the creation of the world. The divine Mother is angry at this and Attis has to abandon the Nymph and return to her. This parallels the *Poimandres* in its postulation of a return of the divine part of Man to the godhead, and can be interpreted as the desire of Primeval Man to escape from Matter. Again, this postulates an anthropological interpretation, even though the myth also has a cosmological role, explaining as it does the events that set world-creation in motion.³⁰⁴

The actual mating of Man with Nature is problematic. Nature is attracted to Man, not just because of his beauty, but also because of his power (ἐνέργεια § 14). Segal claims that Man sees Nature himself, not his projection of himself onto her. Upon the sight, he then spontaneously projects this image onto her, which then becomes enmattered in Nature. Segal regards this as the moment of Man's entrapment.³⁰⁵ However, I think that Man sees a projection of himself (his reflection in the water) and falls in love with it. Once he formulates this desire, he becomes spontaneously embedded in Nature, since his wish and action are simultaneous.

This descent into Nature is motivated by Man's sexuality. However, Man's initial descent is motivated by his desire for power; to either emulate or replace his brother, the Demiurge. Man is the "Son of God" and Nature is female. Since the result of this union is archetypal Man, who is androgynous, Man must surely be an androgyne. This means that he should not really experience sexual desire (in the sense of the "desire for the missing half" illustrated by Aristophanes' speech in the *Symposium*). In any case, as an immaterial entity, he should be asexual (unless sexual desire is interpreted as some sort of spiritual lust; Sophia's desire to know the Father

³⁰² Bousset, W. (1907), 184f.

³⁰³ Poem of the Emperor Julian Εἰς τὴν Μητέρα τῶν θεῶν in Hepding, H. *Attis, seine Mythen und sein Kult*, 51ff." "Ἡ μὲν οὖν Μητέρα τῶν θεῶν ζωογόνος ἐστὶ θεὰ καὶ δια τοῦτο Μητέρα καλεῖται, ὁ δὲ Ἄττις τῶν γιγνομένων καὶ φθειρομένων δημιουργός· καὶ δια τοῦτο παρὰ τῷ ἄλλῳ λέγεται εὐρεθῆναι. ποταμῷ. Ὁ γὰρ Γάλλος τὸν γαλαξίαν αἰτίπτεται κύκλου... ἔρᾳ δὲ ὁ Ἄττις τῆς νύμφης· αἱ δὲ νύμφαι γενέσεως ἔφοροι... Ἐπεὶ δὲ ἔδει στήναι τὴν γένεσιν καὶ μὴ τῶν ἐσχάτων γενέσθαι τὸ χεῖρον, ὁ ταῦτα ποιῶν δημιουργός, δυνάμεις γονίμους ἄφεις εἰς τὴν γένεσιν, πάλιν συνάπτεται τοῖς θεοῖς." [Hepding, 58].

³⁰⁴ Julian himself explains the situation as follows: ὁ δὲ (Attis) ἐπειδὴ προῖων ἦλθεν ἄχρι τῶν ἐσχάτων, ὁ μῦθος αὐτὸν εἰς τὸ ἄντρον κατελθεῖν ἔφη καὶ συγγενέσθαι τῇ νύμφῃ τὸ διγυρον αἰσιπτόμενος τῆς ὕλης (165C). Ὁ δὲ προῆλυθεν ἄχρι τῶν ἐσχάτων τῆς ὕλης κατελθὼν (167 B). Πρόεισι τὲ γὰρ ἐκ τοῦ τρίτου δημιουργοῦ (as Bousset notes at this point "das klingt bereits ganz gnostisch") καὶ ἐπανάγεται πάλιν ἐπὶ τὴν Μητέρα τῶν θεῶν μετὰ τὴν ἐκτομήν (168A).

³⁰⁵ Segal, R. (1986), 38.

in the Valentinian myth has strong sexual overtones). Furthermore, it is not clear how he could appease the sexual desire of a material entity or actually mate with her.

The gifts of the Governors' (subordinate Archons headed by the Demiurge, each of whom resides within a planetary sphere) cannot, I think, be responsible here. There is no indication that they implant sexual desire in Man, and in fact he falls in love with the image of his material self. Nature is not responsible for what seems to be a pre-existent sexual desire in Man, though there is no indication how it came to be there. In any case, if Nature is guilty of having tempted man, it is equally clear that Man is only too happy to be tempted (ἐρώμενοι γὰρ ἦσαν). I think that Nature is the means by which Man brings to fulfilment his own narcissistic desires, a repetition in some sense of the role that Man plays for the First Principle. The mating of Man with Nature creates more philosophical difficulties than it solves. Ironically, it means that the highest point of creation, humanity, was not actually envisaged either by the Demiurge or by the First Principle. I think that the whole episode can best be explained in terms of the mythic framework of the *Poimandres*, where Man has a complete persona and is more than just an abstract philosophical entity,

The Mechanics Of Demiurgy

At *CH I. 17*, we are provided with a description of the manner in which the elements interact during the creation of the world:

“Ἐγένετο οὖν, ὡς ἔφη, τῶν ἑπτὰ τούτων ἡ γένεσις τοίωδε τρόπῳ· θηλυκὴ γὰρ <γῆ> ἦν καὶ ὕδωρ ὀχευτικόν· τὸ δὲ ἐκ πυρὸς πέπειρον. ἐκ δὲ αἰθέρος τὸ πνεῦμα ἔλαβε καὶ ἐξήνεγκεν ἡ φύσις τὰ σώματα πρὸς τὸ εἶδος τοῦ Ἀνθρώπου. ὁ δὲ Ἀνθρώπος ἐκ ζωῆς καὶ φωτὸς ἐγένετο εἰς ψυχὴν καὶ νοῦν, ἐκ μὲν ζωῆς ψυχὴν, ἐκ δὲ φωτὸς νοῦν, καὶ ἔμεινεν οὕτω τὰ πάντα τοῦ αἰσθητοῦ κόσμου μέχρι περιόδου τέλους <καὶ> ἀρχῶν γενῶν.”

“As I said, then, the birth of the seven was as follows. <Earth> was the female. Water did the fertilizing. Fire was the maturing force. Nature took spirit from the ether and brought forth bodies in the shape of the Man. From life and light the man became soul and mind; from life came soul, from light came mind, and all things in the cosmos of the senses remained thus until a cycle ended <and> the sensible appearances of things began to be.”

It is confusing that Nature needs to take spirit from the ether, when she already has an immaterial element in the form of enmattered Man. In most Gnostic texts, the body of man is the creation either of the Demiurge or the Archons/Governors (identified with the planetary gods), but here the human body is the product of Nature. This concept of *pneuma* seems like a combination of Arist. *De motu animalium* and *De caelo* (if

one regards *pneuma* and *aether* as equivalent or *aether* as the source of *pneuma*). The Demiurge of the *Poimandres* plays a relatively unimportant role in the creation myth. Once he has produced the Governors, he retires into a passive obscurity.

CH I 18 outlines the mechanism of creation by division adopted by the supreme god:

“τῆς περιόδου πεπληρωμένης ἔλυθη ὁ πάντων σύνδεσμος ἐκ βουλῆς θεοῦ. πάντα γὰρ ζῶα, ἀρρενοθήλαα, ὄντα, διελύετο ἅμα τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ καὶ ἐγένετο τὰ μὲν ἀρρενικὰ ἐν μέρει, τὰ δὲ θηλυκὰ ὁμοίως. ὁ δὲ θεὸς εὐθὺς εἶπεν ἁγίῳ λόγῳ. Αὐξάνεσθε ἐν αὐξήσει, καὶ πληθύνεσθε ἐν πλήθει πάντα τὰ κτίσματα καὶ δημιουργήματα καὶ ἀναγνωρισάτω <ὁ> ἔννουσ ἑαυτὸν ὄντα ἀθάνατον, καὶ τὸν αἴτιον τοῦ θανάτου ἔρωτα, καὶ πάντα τὰ ὄντα”.

“When the cycle was completed, the bond among all things was sundered by the counsel of God. All living things, which had been androgyne, were sundered into two parts –humans along with them- and part of them became male, part likewise female. But God immediately spoke a holy speech: “Increase and multiply in multitude, all you creatures and craftworks, and let him <who> is mindful recognize that he is immortal, that desire is the cause of death, and let him recognize all that exists:”

There is no reason why the First Principle should suddenly introduce the division of the sexes at this point. Humans are already in existence as a result of the fall of Man, and there seems to be no reason why the First Principle should split them. All living beings, according to this, were originally androgynous. In the case of Man, this is easily explained as the result of the fall of his archetypal ancestor, but why should this be the case with other living beings. If it was the case, as the result of the design of the Demiurge, there seems to be no point in changing it at this stage. In the Gnostic and Hermetic traditions, reproduction is often presented as a source of evil and it is unclear why the First Principle should be the one to divide the androgynes, and advocate sexual reproduction. Equally strange is the fact that just after doing this, he then delivers a tirade against it. I think that it is likely that it is only sexual intercourse among humans that is actually condemned. In any case the idea of a primordial androgynous ancestor is not uncommon. It occurs in the Gnostic creation myth mentioned in the *Refutation* of Hippolytus in the context of his discussion of the Nassenes: “For man is androgyne, they say...Attis was castrated...and has passed over to the eternal substance above, where there is neither male nor female but a new creation, a new man, who is androgyne”.(5.7.14-15). The same notion can also be found in biblical texts.³⁰⁶ Under the influence of *Gen.* 1:27, Philo thought that

³⁰⁶ Cf. *Gal.* 3.28, 6.15 ; *Eph.* 2:15, 4:24.

humans were created in a divine image that was either bisexual or sexually undetermined.

At *CH* I.19, the mechanism of reproduction by sexual intercourse is established:

“ΤΟΥΤΟ ΕΙΠΟΝΤΟΣ ἢ ΠΡΟΝΟΙΑ ΔΙΑ ΤΗΣ ΕΙΜΑΡΜΕΝΗΣ ΚΑΙ ΑΡΜΟΝΙΑΣ ΤΑΣ ΜΙΞΕΙΣ ΕΠΟΙΗΣΑΤΟ ΚΑΙ ΤΑΣ ΓΕΝΕΣΕΙΣ ΚΑΤΕΣΤΗΣΕ ΚΑΙ ΕΠΛΗΘΥΝΘΗ ΚΑΤΑ ΓΕΝΟΣ ΤΑ ΠΑΝΤΑ ΚΑΙ Ο ΑΝΑΓΝΩΡΙΣΑΣ ΕΑΥΤΟΝ ΕΛΗΛΥΘΕΝ ΕΙΣ ΤΟ ΠΕΡΙΟΥΣΙΟΝ ΑΓΑΘΟΝ, Ο ΔΕ ΑΓΑΠΗΣΑΣ ΤΟ ΕΚ ΠΛΑΝΗΣ ΕΡΩΤΟΣ ΣΩΜΑ, ΟΥΤΟΣ ΜΕΝΕΙ ΕΝ ΤΩ ΣΚΟΤΕΙ ΠΛΑΝΩΜΕΝΟΣ, ΑΙΣΘΗΤΩΣ ΠΑΣΧΩΝ ΤΑ ΤΟΥ ΘΑΝΑΤΟΥ”

“After God said this, providence, through fate and through the cosmic framework, caused acts of intercourse and set in train acts of birth; and all things were multiplied according to kind. The one who recognized himself attained the chosen good, but the one who loved the body that came from the error of desire goes on in darkness, errant, suffering sensibly the effects of death”.

Here, as in the *Asclepius*, it is apparent that Providence and Fate are only instruments of the supreme god, not independent entities existing outside his control. Providence only acts after God has spoken. The allusion to fate and the cosmic framework echoes again the *Asclepius*: the Demiurge or higher powers influence the world through the revolution of the stars.

It is difficult to understand the explanation of demiurgic causality presented in the *Poimandres* in terms of Greek philosophy. God appears to be both omnipotent and omniscient. He wilfully creates a world, which he then decides to oppose. The *Poimandres* never explains or resolves this paradox. To a certain extent, creation is presented as a *fait accompli*. However, as Segal points out, once the *Poimandres* is read in terms of myth, it becomes possible to find a solution. The god of the *Poimandres* may be omnipotent and omniscient, but he is still capable of acting contrary to his knowledge, as in myth even the chief god may act under the influence of emotion. The *Poimandres* does not attempt to conceal this paradox, but neither does the author seem to perceive the need to resolve it. As Jonas notes: “The Plotinian descensus of Being, in some respects an analogy to the Gnostic one, proceeds through the autonomous movement of impersonal concept by an internal necessity that is its own justification. The Gnostic descensus cannot do without the contingency of subjective affect and will.”³⁰⁷ In the *Poimandres*, we have a perfect example of the flaws which Plotinus perceived in Gnosticism, not merely their radical dualism, but also the emphasis on revelatory assertion rather than rational argumentation.

³⁰⁷ Jonas, H. (1967), 193.

The myth of the *Poimandres* is so problematic in philosophical terms as an explanation of demiurgic causality that there are those who prefer to read it in psychological terms. Jung regarded Gnosticism as the predecessor of alchemy. Just as alchemy sought to turn a base metal into gold, Gnosticism sought to liberate the soul from the baseness of matter. He mistakenly equated the Demiurge with Anthropos:

“The primordial figure 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”. (Jung, *Gnostic Symbols of the Self*, 197-8.9)

For Jung, the *Poimandres* explains not creation, but the development of man’s psyche –the inter-relation of the immaterial godhead and unordered matter represents the emergence of the ego out of the consciousness. As he comments: “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). Jung radically alters the meaning of the *Poimandres* because he reads it in psychological, rather than metaphysical terms. Whatever the merits of Jung’s theory, it does show that the *Poimandres* lends itself more easily to being read in terms other than metaphysical and should be treated more as a myth than as “serious” philosophy.

Other Texts

CH II attempts to discover whether God is an essence or not. At *CH* II.6, the author denies that God exists as a spatial area (τόπος), but rather as a form of energy (ἐνέργεια), which is responsible for motion in the cosmos, although he himself remains motionless. At §12, this point is reiterated, but it appears that the Receptacle of the *Timaeus* has somehow become equated with Aristotle’s Unmoved Mover:

“τὸν οὖν τόπον τὸν ἐν ᾧ κινεῖται τὸ πᾶν, τί εἶπομεν;...Νοῦς ὅλος ἐξ ὅλου ἑαυτοῦ ἐμπεριέχων, ἐλεύθερος σώματος παντός, ἀπλανής, ἀναφής, αὐτὸς ἐν ἑαυτῷ ἐστὼς χωρητικὸς τῶν πάντων καὶ σωτήριος τῶν ὄντων”.

“So what have we said of the place in which the universe is moved?”...Mind as a whole wholly enclosing itself, free of all body, unerring, unaffected, untouched, at rest in itself, capable of containing all things and preserving all that exists”.

In the Hermetic texts τόπος has three separate functions. It is 1) the space occupied by a body, 2) as the divine Logos with which God fills the ὄλον δι' ὄλων with incorporeal powers and 3) God, as that which contains all things and which is his own place (αὐτός ἐστι χώρα ἑαυτοῦ, κεχωρηκῶς ἑαυτόν).³⁰⁸ This Intellect τόπος is a god, but he is not the First God. This shift from passive Receptacle to an independent divine entity is as interesting as it is unnecessary. It does, however, help to explain the interaction between the supreme transcendent God, and the cosmos. It is evident that the First God does not occupy a place in this world, and that He is above all Intellect, as well as all essence (§5).

The same idea can be found at *CH V.10* where there is no space around God because He embraces everything: “οὐ τόπος ἐστὶ περὶ σέ”. Parallels to this can be found in *Phil. Leg. Alle. I 44*, *Arnob. Adv. noet. I 3*: prima enim tu causa es, locus rerum ac spatium).³⁰⁹ At *XI 18*, there is the comment that if all things are contained in God, they are not contained in the same manner as in a spatial area. Finally, as Festugière points out, in the *Exc. ex Theod. 34, 37, 38 ss*, τόπος is used as a name for God.

At *CH III* we have an account of creation which parallels that of the *Poimandres*; the light elements separate themselves from the others by rising, and the heavy ones sink down, and all this division is accomplished by fire. However, here creation is performed by a number of subordinate Demiurges:

“ἀνῆκε δὲ ἕκαστος θεὸς διὰ τῆς ἰδίας δυνάμεως τὸ προσταχθὲν αὐτῷ, καὶ ἐγένετο θηρία τετράποδα καὶ ἔρπετὰ καὶ ἔνυδρα καὶ πτηνὰ καὶ πᾶσα σπορὰ ἔνσπορος καὶ χόρτος καὶ ἀνθους παντὸς χλόη. τὸ σπέρμα τῆς παλιγγενεσίας ἐν ἑαυτοῖς ἐσπερμολόγουν†.”

“Through his own power, each god sent forth what was assigned to him. And the beasts came to be- four-footed, crawling, water-dwelling, winged- and every germinating seed and grass and every flowering plant;”(§3)

At *CH IV.1*, we have a further discussion of the manner of creation:

“Ἐπειδὴ τὸν πάντα κόσμον ἐποίησεν ὁ δημιουργός, οὐ χερσὶν ἀλλὰ λόγῳ, ὥστε οὕτως ὑπολάμβανε ὡς τοῦ παρόντος καὶ αἰεὶ ὄντος καὶ πάντα ποιήσαντος καὶ ἐνὸς μόνου, τῇ δὲ αὐτοῦ θελήσει δημιουργήσαντος τὰ ὄντα· τοῦτο γὰρ ἐστὶ τὸ σῶμα ἐκείνου, οὐχ ἀπτόν, οὐδὲ ὄρατόν, οὐδὲ μετρητόν, οὐδὲ διαστατόν, οὐδὲ ἄλλῳ τινὶ σώματι ὅμοιον· οὔτε γὰρ πῦρ ἐστὶν οὔτε ὕδωρ οὔτε ἀήρ οὔτε πνεῦμα, ἀλλὰ πάντα ἀπ' αὐτοῦ, ἄγαθὸς γὰρ ὢν, <οὐ> μόνῳ ἑαυτῷ τοῦτο ἀναθεῖναι ἠθέλησε καὶ τὴν γῆν κοσμήσαι.”

³⁰⁸ Nock & Festugière, (1983), 39 n.14.

³⁰⁹ Ibid.

“Since the craftsman made the whole cosmos by reasoned speech, not by hand, you should conceive of him at present, as always existing, as having made all things, as the one and only and as having crafted by his own will the things that are. For this is his body, neither tangible nor visible nor measurable nor dimensional nor like any other body; it is not fire nor water nor air nor spirit, yet all things come from it. Because he is good, it was <not> for himself alone that he wished to make this offering and to adorn the earth.”

Here cosmos and Demiurge are closely identified. The Demiurge’s body is not the visible cosmos (as it is not sense-perceptible), but it is the source of the physical world. The cosmos can be said to be the body of the Demiurge in so far as he is the Reason pervading the universe. As the Demiurge’s body is immaterial (illustrated by the comment that it is not one of the elements) all things only come from his body in so far as he transmits the powers of the suprasensible world to the sublunar realm and orders matter. The stress on the fact that God does not create like a craftsman is noteworthy, since it echoes the comments of Plutarch that the Demiurge creates not like a man, but through the use of mathematical principles. It seems here that the Demiurge merely has to command and matter obeys him. This is stated again at *CH* V.4, where Hermes acknowledges that matter is deficient but nevertheless it obeys the Creator.

Imperfection in the world occurs when bodies are no longer able to contain the monad (*CH* IV.11). This same idea occurs throughout the corpus. At *CH* VI.2, there is no place in that which has come to be for the Good. The world is not good since it is in motion, but it is not bad since it is immortal. At *CH* VI.3 the world is only good in relative terms; absolute goodness in the material realm is impossible. This same idea is also expressed at *CH* X.10: even if the world is beautiful, it is not good since it is constructed from matter, although the point is contradicted by *CH* XI. 3 “ἔργον δὲ τοῦ αἰῶνος ὁ κόσμος, γινόμενος οὐποτε, καὶ ἀεὶ γινόμενος ὑπὸ τοῦ αἰῶνος”.

CH VIII & IX

CH VIII presents the Stoic idea that there is no such thing as absolute death, merely the dissolution of elements. §3 outlines God’s reason for creation: He wanted to adorn the beings lower down on the ontological scale with every quality. The treatise then points out that God made the world in the form of a sphere which is immortal. The only point worthy of note is the manner in which God constructs the world modelled on the intelligible archetypes:

“πλέον δὲ, τῶν ἰδεῶν τὰ ποῖα ὁ πατὴρ ἐγκατασπείρας τῇ σφαίρᾳ ὥσπερ ἐν ἄντρῳ κατέκλεισε.”

“Further, the father implanted in the sphere the qualities of forms, shutting them up as in a cave”. (§3)

This comment is made against the background of the usual platitudes concerning the disorder of matter and its retention of this quality even after creation. The reference appears to indicate that the images of the Forms become enmattered against their will, but this line is probably a sophisticated literary allusion. It recalls not only Plato’s myth of the *Republic* (514-17), but also looks forward to Porphyry’s exegesis of *Odyssey* 13.102-12, *On the Cave of the Nymphs*, where the darkness of the cave represents the unstable state of matter.³¹⁰ In Mithraism the cave also represented the world.³¹¹

Corpus Hermeticum IX shares numerous parallels with *CH* VIII. It interrelates the three terms: Man (§1-2), World (§6-8) and God (§9) in the same manner. God is the father of the world, just as the world is the father (surely mother would be more appropriate) of the beings which it contains.³¹² The treatise also refutes the notion that God is unthinking and without thought (§3-6) since being all things and in all things, He is necessarily intellective. §3 outlines the influence of God on individuals:

“ὁ γὰρ νοῦς κύει πάντα τὰ νοήματα, ἀγαθὰ μὲν, ὅταν ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ τὰ σπέρματα λάβῃ, ἐναντία δέ, ὅταν ὑπὸ τίνος τῶν δαιμονίων, μηδενὸς μέρους τοῦ κόσμου κενοῦ ὄντος δαίμονος ἴτῳ ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ πεφωτισμένῳ δαίμονι ἢ ὅστις ὑπείσελθὼν ἔσπειρε τῆς ἰδίας ἐνεργείας τὸ σπέρμα, καὶ ἐκήησεν ὁ νοῦς τὸ σπαρέν, μοιχείας, φόνους, πατροτυπίας, ἱεροσυλίας, ἀσεβείας, ἀγχόνας, κατὰ κρημνῶν καταφοράς, καὶ ἄλλα πάντα ὅσα δαιμόνων ἔργα”.

“Mind conceives every mental product: both the good, when mind receives seeds from God, as well as the contrary kind, when the seeds come from some demonic being. {Unless it is illuminated by god,} no part of the cosmos is without a demon that steals into the mind to sow the seed of its own energy, and what has been sown mind conceives- adulteries, murders, assaults on one’s father, acts of sacrilege and irreverence, suicides by hanging or falling from a cliff, and all other such works of demons”.

Here Mind is clearly not the First Principle, as in the *Poimandres*. The positing of evil daemons helps to protect God from responsibility for the existence of evil. The author then adopts the Socratic stance that God is the cause only of a few things i.e. of the Good:

“τοῦ γὰρ θεοῦ τὰ σπέρματα ὀλίγα, μεγάλα δὲ καὶ καλὰ καὶ ἀγαθὰ.”
“Few seeds come from God, but they are potent and beautiful and good”.

³¹⁰ Porphyry is only building on previous exegeses, such as that of Cronius.

³¹¹ Copenhaver, B. (1992), 149.

³¹² Nock & Festugière, A. J. (1983), 92.

CH IX believes firmly in the goodness of the cosmos, and therefore in the goodness of the Demiurge:

“τὴν γὰρ κακίαν ἐνθάδε δεῖν οἰκεῖν εἶπον ἐν τῷ ἑαυτῆς χωρίῳ οὔσαν· χωρίον γὰρ αὐτῆς ἢ γῆ, οὐχ ὁ κόσμος, ὡς ἐνιοὶ ποτε ἐροῦσι βλασφημοῦντες”

“As I have said, vice must dwell here below since this is its native land. The earth is its native land, not the cosmos, as some will blasphemously claim.” (§4)

It is only the sublunar region which is evil. § 5 then provides an account of demiurgic causality, which attempts to account for the presence of evil, despite the goodness of the Demiurge:

“ὁ μὲν γὰρ θεὸς, πάντων δημιουργός, δημιουργῶν πάντα ποιεῖ μὲν αὐτῷ ὅμοια, ταῦτα δ' ἀγαθὰ γενόμενα ἐν τῇ χρήσει τῆς ἐνεργείας διάφορα. ἢ γὰρ κοσμικὴ φορὰ τρίβουσα τὰς γενέσεις ποιᾶς ποιεῖ, τὰς μὲν ῥυπαίνουσα τῇ κακίᾳ, τὰς δὲ καθαίρουσα τῷ ἀγαθῷ. καὶ γὰρ ὁ κόσμος, ὡς Ἀσκληπιέ, αἴσθησιν ἰδίαν καὶ νόησιν ἔχει, οὐκ ὁμοίαν τῇ ἀνθρωπείᾳ, οὐδὲ ὡς ποικίλην, ἄλλως δὲ καὶ κρείττω καὶ ἀπλουστέραν.”

“God, craftsman of all things, makes all things like himself in crafting them, but these things that begin as good come to differ in their use of energy. The motion of the cosmos, as it grinds away, produces generation of different kinds: some it soils with vice; others it cleanses with the good. For the cosmos has its own sensation and understanding, Asclepius, not like the human, not diverse, but far stronger and simpler.”

This account echoes that of the *Timaeus*, God, being good, fashions everything for the best, but it is Necessity which is responsible for evil. Here it is the cosmos which is responsible for evil; I think that the irrational movement of the cosmos is intended here, rather than malign astral influence which affects the human soul through sympathy by placing it in various envelopes as it descends.

§6 states that all matter is used in creation and presents a closed system in which the matter that the cosmos contains is continually reused:

“ἢ γὰρ αἴσθησις καὶ νόησις τοῦ κόσμου μία ἐστὶ τὸ πάντα ποιεῖν καὶ εἰς ἑαυτὴν ἀποποιεῖν, ὄργανον τῆς τοῦ θεοῦ βουλήσεως, καὶ ὄντως ὀργανοποιηθέν, ἵνα πάντα παρ' ἑαυτῷ, ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ λαβόν, τὰ σπέρματα φυλάττων ἐν ἑαυτῷ πάντα ποιῇ ἐνεργῶς, καὶ διαλύων πάντα ἀνανεοῖ, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο λυθέντα ὡσπερ ἀγαθὸς ζωῆς γεωργὸς τῇ μεταβολῇ ἀνανέωσιν αὐτοῖς φερόμενος παρέχη. <οὐκ> ἔστι ὃ μὴ ζωογονεῖ, φερόμενος δε πάντα ζωοποιεῖ καὶ ὁμοῦ τόπος ἐστὶ καὶ δημιουργὸς ζωῆς.”

(§6) “The sole sensation and understanding in the cosmos is to make all things and unmake them into itself again, an instrument of God’s will. In reality, God made the instrument to make all things actively in itself, taking under its protection the seeds it has received from God. In dissolving all things, the cosmos renews them, and when things have been dissolved in this way, the

cosmos (like life's good farmer) offers them renewal through the same process of change that moves the cosmos. There is <nothing> that is not a product of cosmic fecundity. In moving, it makes all things live, and it is at once the location and the craftsman of life".

After God has set everything in order, the cosmos is capable of functioning on its own to maintain the life contained within it as a sort of second Demiurge. Just as in the *Poimandres*, cosmic motion was the means by which the Demiurge created, so here too it is the mechanism by which the cosmos ensures the preservation of life; engaging in a sort of continual temporal creation, as it were, through its motion.

§7 reiterates this point:

“τὰ δὲ σώματα ἀπὸ ὕλης, ἐν διαφορᾷ· τὰ μὲν γὰρ ἐστὶν ἐκ γῆς, τὰ δὲ ἐξ ὕδατος, τὰ δὲ ἐξ ἀέρος, τὰ δὲ ἐκ πυρός. Πάντα δὲ ἐστὶ σύνθετα, καὶ τὰ μὲν μᾶλλον, τὰ δὲ ἀπολούστερα· μᾶλλον μὲν, τὰ βαρύτερα, ἤττον δέ, τὰ κουφότερα· τὸ δὲ τάχος αὐτοῦ τῆς φορᾶς τὴν ποικιλίαν τῶν ποιῶν γενέσεων ἐργάζεται· πνοὴ γὰρ οὐσα πυκνοτάτη προτείνει τὰ ποιὰ τοῖς σώμασι μετὰ ἐνὸς πληρώματος τοῦ τῆς ζωῆς.”

“All bodies come from matter, but in different ways: some come from earth, some from water, some from air and some from fire. All are composite bodies, some of them more strongly so, and some are simpler. The more strongly composite are the heavier bodies; those less so are the lighter. The rapid motion of the cosmos produces diversity in causing generations of different kinds. When the cosmos breathes most frequently, it offers qualities to bodies, and their plenitude is one thing only- life”.

Here the motion of the cosmos is seen as producing various kinds of bodies from different combinations of the elements. I think that God transmits the Forms to the cosmos, which is only responsible for producing the individuals. This is the generation of different kinds that it is responsible for. This would agree with §6. The cosmos does not create the type, but by its revolutions it modifies each type to produce new individuals, and by this process ensures that each kind is preserved, since it is continually replenished.

“πατὴρ μὲν οὖν ὁ θεὸς τοῦ κόσμου, ὁ δὲ κόσμος τῶν ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ· καὶ ὁ μὲν κόσμος υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ, τὰ δὲ ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ ὑπὸ τοῦ κόσμου· καὶ εἰκότως κόσμος κέκληται· κοσμεῖ γὰρ τὰ πάντα τῆ ποικιλία τῆς γενέσεως καὶ τῷ ἀδιαλείπτῳ τῆς ζωῆς καὶ ἀκοπιάστῳ τῆς ἐνεργείας καὶ τῷ τάχει τῆς ἀνάγκης καὶ τῇ συστάσει τῶν στοιχείων καὶ τῇ τάξει τῶν γινομένων. ὁ αὐτὸς οὖν κόσμος καὶ ἀναγκαίως καὶ οἰκείως καλοῖτο”.(CH IX.8)

“Thus, God is father of the cosmos, but the cosmos is father of the things in the cosmos; the cosmos is the son of God, and all things in the cosmos are made by the cosmos. It is rightly called “cosmos” or “arrangement”, for it arranges all things in the diversity of generation, in the ceaselessness of life, in the tirelessness of activity, in the rapidity of necessity, in the associability of

the elements, and in the order of things that come to be. That it should be called an “arrangement”, then, is necessary and fitting”

This segment delineates further the role played by God and the cosmos. The cosmos, it is claimed, is the son of God. The fact that stress is laid on it as an arrangement seems to indicate that God formed it by organising pre-existent matter, rather than actually creating it. Just as in the *Poimandres*, the Demiurge and the Word separate the First Principle from matter; here the cosmos acts as an instrument of God in the subsequent creation of living beings.

This text seems to do no more than reproduce Platonic platitudes, but it is precisely this fact which renders it noteworthy. Unlike most Gnostic or Hermetic texts, there is no separation here between the First Principle and the Demiurge. Were it not for the fact that this text was attributed to Hermes Trismegistus, one would have difficulty claiming that it belongs to the same tradition as the *Poimandres*. Even *CH VIII*, with which *CH IX* shares so many correspondences, draws a distinction between a first and second god. Though the second god is clearly the cosmos it is stressed that man’s relationship with the First God is of a far superior order.

CH X

CH X.3 investigates the nature of God’s participation in creation:

“αἴτιος δὲ ὁ πατὴρ τῶν τέκνων καὶ τῆς σπορᾶς καὶ τῆς τροφῆς, τὴν ὄρεξιν λαβὼν τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ διὰ τοῦ ἡλίου· τὸ γὰρ ἀγαθὸν ἐστὶ τὸ ποιητικόν· τοῦτο δὲ οὐ δυνατὸν ἐγγενέσθαι ἄλλῳ τινὶ ἢ μόνῳ ἐκείνῳ, τῷ μηδὲν μὲν λαμβάνοντι, πάντα δὲ θέλοντι εἶναι”.

“The Father, receiving the appetite for the Good, by way of the sun, causes the begetting and rearing of his children, for the Good is the principle of making. But the Good can come to be in none other than him alone who receives nothing, but wills all things to be”.

Even though this is expressed in terms of human procreation, it is in fact relevant to demiurgic causality, since it restates the doctrine found at *CH I.11*; the First Nous remains the supreme cause of creation, even if he creates through his son, the Nous Demiurge. In this context, I prefer Festugière’s translation of ἀγαθὸν ἐστὶ τὸ ποιητικόν “le Bien... le principe efficient”, which stresses the demiurgic role of the First Principle.

§3 also expresses the Aristotelian notion of a motor that is engaged in continual noetic activity, in order to ensure continuous, eternal motion in the world (*Met.Λ 6*):

“οὐ γὰρ ἐρῶ, ὧ Τάτ, ποιοῦνται· ὁ γὰρ ποιῶν ἐλλιπής ἐστι πολλῶ χρόνῳ, ἐν ᾧ ὅτε μὲν ποιεῖ, ὅτε δὲ οὐ ποιεῖ, καὶ ποιότητος καὶ ποσότητος· ποτέ μὲν γὰρ ποσὰ καὶ ποιὰ. ὅτε δὲ τὰ ἐναντία· ὁ δὲ θεὸς καὶ πατὴρ καὶ τὸ ἀγαθὸν τῷ εἶναι τὰ πάντα.”

“I will not say “they are made”, Tat, for much of the time one who makes is wanting both in quality and quantity in that sometimes he makes and sometimes not; now he makes this kind and this many, now the opposite. But God the Father is the Good in that he <wills> all things to be.”

This indicates the existence of continuous, temporal creation, in order to ensure the preservation of the material realm. In fact, the One manages the universe like a statesman, managing it through the use of Intellect:

“καὶ αὕτη ἡ τοῦ παντὸς διοίκησις, ἡρτημένη ἐκ τῆς τοῦ ἐνὸς φύσεως καὶ διήκουσα δι' ἐνὸς τοῦ νοῦ.” (CH X.23)

“And this is the government of the universe, dependent from the nature of the one and spreading through the one mind”

At CH XI.2 God creates with the assistance of another agent:

ὁ θεὸς αἰῶνα ποιεῖ· ὁ αἰὼν δὲ τὸν κόσμον, ὁ κόσμος δὲ χρόνον, ὁ χρόνος δὲ γένεσιν.”

“God makes eternity; eternity makes the cosmos; the cosmos makes time; time makes becoming”.

Eternity is described as a power of god (δύναμις δὲ τοῦ θεοῦ §3) and Eternity is not only its creator, but also the guarantor of survival, because Eternity is imperishable. Eternity here retains the same signification as philosophical Eternity, as the immaterial model from which cosmic time was formed. However, it has been transformed into a hypostasis of God, which functions as a co-creator. It is a kind of Hermetic hybrid between divine wisdom and the World-Soul, since it is Eternity which sets the world in order by introducing immortality and duration (τὴν ἀθανασίαν καὶ διαμονὴν §3) to matter. Eternity, however, is not an independent agent, but is completely dependent upon God (§4). Using Providence, Necessity, and Nature, Eternity is able to preserve the world. God and his energy (ἡ δὲ ἐνέργεια θεοῦ §5) are responsible for the actions of eternity, and so there is no question, as in the *Timaeus* or the *Poimandres*, of Necessity or of Nature acting as independent entities which thwart God's plan. The moon also seems to function as an agent in the ordering of matter: (σελήνην δὲ ἐκείνων πρόδρομον πάντων ὄργανον τῆς φύσεως τὴν κάτω ὕλην μεταβάλλουσαν τε γῆν μέσσην, “Coursing ahead of them all is the moon, nature's instrument, transforming the matter below, §7). The moon must just act in the same way as the cosmic spheres elsewhere in the *Corpus Hermeticum*, as the mechanism by which the higher powers are able to regulate lower beings.

CH XI.9 continues the line of argumentation that these entities are responsible to God, by arguing against the dualism of various Gnostic sects:

“εὐδιαφόρων γὰρ καὶ πολλῶν οὐσῶν τῶν κινήσεων καὶ τῶν σωμάτων οὐχ ὁμοίων, μιᾶς δὲ κατὰ πάντων ταχύτητος τεταγμένης, ἀδύνατον δύο ἢ πλείους ποιητὰς εἶναι· μία γὰρ ἐπὶ πολλῶν οὐ τηρεῖται τάξις· ζῆλος δὲ τοῖς πολλοῖς παρέπεται τοῦ κρείττονος.”

“Since motions are many and diverse and bodies are dissimilar, while one speed has been ordained for all of them, there cannot be two makers or more than two. If there are many, one order cannot be kept. The consequence of plurality is envy of the better.”

The text adopts a classic Aristotelian formulation against the existence of multiple demiurgoi; if there is one order, there can only be one creator, established at Arist. *Met.* A 10,³¹³ (though naturally this applies to coordinate, rather than subordinate demiurgoi). The text argues against the possibility of a Demiurge of immortal entities and a Demiurge of mortal ones; a position which in fact runs counter to that adopted by the *Timaeus*. Since matter is one and soul is one, the treatise cannot envisage the possibility of two creators. The One God is the sole creator of soul and all living beings provided with it (CH XI.11). In fact, giving life to all living things and providing them with movement takes the place of motion and life for God (§17).

CH XII.14 adopts the same position. The entire succession of entities sometimes seen as exercising an influence on causality independent of the Demiurge are placed firmly under his control. Necessity, Providence and Nature are the instruments of the organisation of matter. God energises matter by permeating it (§22-23). This viewpoint may actually be a positive reading of the *Poimandres* myth., where Man is, after all, a part of the godhead.

The same notion can be found at CH XIV.6:

“εἰ τοίνυν δύο ὁμολόγηται τὰ ὄντα, τό τε γινόμενον καὶ τὸ ποιῶν, ἓν ἐστὶ τῆ ἐνάσει, τὸ μὲν προηγούμενον, τὸ δὲ ἐπόμενον· προηγούμενον μὲν ὁ ποίῳ θεός, ἐπόμενον δὲ τὸ γινόμενον, ὁποῖον ἔαν ᾗ.”

“Thus, if one agrees that there are two entities; what comes to be and what makes it, they are one in their unification, the one antecedent and the other a consequent. The antecedent is the god who makes; the consequent is what comes to be, whatever it may be”.

CH XIV.7 accepts cosmic evil as a necessary fact of generation:

“αὐτῷ δὲ τῷ ποιῶντι οὐδὲν κακὸν οὐδ' αἰσχρὸν νομιζόμενον ταῦτα γὰρ ἐστὶ τὰ πάθη τὰ τῆ γενέσει παρεπόμενα, ὥσπερ ἰὸς τῷ χαλκῷ

³¹³ Cf. also Cic. *Nat. Deor.* II. I, 16, 90, Phil. *De provid.* 11, 40.

καὶ ὁ ῥύπος τῷ σώματι. ἀλλ' οὔτε ἰὸν ὁ χαλκουργὸς ἐποίησεν, οὔτε τὸν ῥύπον οἱ γεννήσαντες, οὔτε τὴν κακίαν ὁ θεός. ἡ δὲ τῆς γενέσεως ἐπιδιαμονὴ καθάπερ ἐξανθεῖν ποιεῖ καὶ διὰ τοῦτο ἐποίησε τὴν μεταβολὴν ὁ θεός, ὥσπερ ἀνακάθαρσιν τῆς γενέσεως.”

“There is nothing shameful or evil about the maker himself; such conditions are incidental consequences of generation, like corrosion on bronze or dirt on the body. The bronzesmith did not make the dirt; nor did god make evil. But the persistence of generation makes evil bloom like a sore, which is why god has made change, to repurify generation.”

The Demiurge combats evil by eternal temporal creation in order to maintain the *status quo*. It is as if matter is continually attempting to break its bonds and the Demiurge has to continually order it. This passage also counters the belief of some Gnostics that extending divine unity into creative diversity would taint the supreme god, leading to the standard Gnostic postulation of the Demiurge.

At CH XVI.18, the Demiurge resurfaces, where he is identified with the sun:

“διὸ πατὴρ μὲν πάντων ὁ θεός, δημιουργὸς δὲ ὁ ἥλιος, ὁ δὲ κόσμος ὄργανον τῆς δημιουργίας.”

“Therefore, the father of all is God; their Craftsman is the sun; and the cosmos is the instrument of craftsmanship.”

However, the text is explicit in stating that it is God who provides the sun with his craftsmanship, by providing him with the Good. (§17).

Asclepius

The *Asclepius* is the Latin translation of the Greek treatise *Logos teleios* (Perfect Discourse). Lydus and Lactantius both reproduce passages from it in Greek.³¹⁴ The *terminus ante quem* for the Greek text, then, is the early fourth century, but a Latin version of the *sermo perfectus* corresponding to our version of *Asclepius* can first be found in Augustine’s *City of God* (413-426). Due to the number of early references to this text, which come from North African Christians, the Latin version may have been produced in North Africa. In any case, the treatise covers a great many topics, leading some scholars to suggest that the *Asclepius* is a synthesis of other works.

At §2 -3 the text outlines the composition of the world from the four elements:

“From the heavens all things come into earth and water and air. Only the fire that moves upward is lifegiving; what moves down is subservient to it. But whatever descends from on high is a breeder; what diffuses upward is a feeder. Earth, who alone stands still in herself, is the receptacle of all and the

³¹⁴ Copenhaver, B. (1992), 214 – *Divine Institutes* 2.14.6 ; 4.6.4 ; 7.18.4 (cf. *Asclep.* 28,8,26) ; *De mens.* 4.7.149 (cf. *Asclep.* 19, 39,28).

renewer of all the kinds that she takes in. Therefore, this is the whole- as you remember, because it is all and consists of all. Soul and matter embraced by nature are so stirred by the varied multiform quality of all images, that, in the discontinuity of their qualities, the forms are known to be infinite, yet they are united to seem to be from one. [3] The elements by which the whole of matter has been formed, then, are four: fire, water, earth, air. One matter, one soul and one god.” (trans. Copenhaver).

This passage alludes to differences in the nature of various elements, though these are not enumerated in any kind of scientific manner. Most interesting of all is the reference to only one god; the *Asclepius* exhibits monotheistic tendencies; even though it does refer to numerous gods; as elsewhere in the Hermetic corpus, these seem to be understood as merely instantiations of the supreme god.

At *Asclepius* §8, the author outlines the manner of creation:

“When the master and shaper of all things, whom rightly we call God, made a second next after himself, who can be seen and sensed, it seemed beautiful to him, since it was entirely full of the goodness of everything, and he loved it as the progeny of his own divinity. Then so great and good was he that he wanted there to be another to admire the one he had made from himself and straightaway he made Man, imitator of his reason and attentiveness.

This passage outlines a different method of creation from that contained in the *Poimandres*. The first god is evidently the Demiurge, since he is the shaper of all things and the text goes on to state that God’s goodness is the reason for his creation. The Second God seems to adopt somewhat the role of Man in the *Poimandres*; God falls in love with him as a reflection of his own beauty. In any case, this passage was misread by Christian interpreters such as Lactantius, who cites it as evidence that Hermes Trismegistus was aware that the supreme God had a son.³¹⁵ The Second God here is obviously the cosmos, as is explicitly stated at §10. Scott viewed this passage as modelled on *Tim.* 29E-31B, 37C, 92C and it is easy to observe numerous correspondences between both texts, particularly the emphasis given to the concept of Plenitude.

The passage then goes on to outline the manner in which God made man:

“After he <had made> Man *ousiodes* and noticed that he could not take care of everything unless he was covered over with a material wrapping; god covered him with a bodily dwelling and commanded that all humans be like this, mingling and combining the two natures into one in their just proportions. Thus God shapes mankind from the nature of soul and of body, from the eternal and the mortal, in other words so that the living beings so shaped can prove adequate to both its beginnings, wondering at heavenly beings and worshipping them, tending earthly beings and governing them.”

³¹⁵ Lactantius cites from *Logos teleios – Divine Institutes* 4.6.4 – Copenhaver, B. (1992), 222.

Again here, it is the First Principle who functions as the Demiurge. The description of the mingling of two substances of a separate order recalls Plato's account of the blending of soul substance out of Sameness and Difference in the *Timaeus*. The *Asclepius* seems to take a more positive stance regarding the cosmos than is usual in Hermetism. Here mankind's physical incarnation is not the result of some kind of fall (as it is in the *Poimandres*), but rather part of the rational design of a demiurgic First Principle. The material wrapping (*mundano integimento*) is not regarded as a prison, but rather as a mechanism allowing Man to fulfil his designated role in the ontological scheme.

§8 also does away with the conflict drawn between Reason and Necessity in Plato's *Timaeus*, which left its mark on many other Platonic metaphysical schemes with more pronounced dualistic tendencies:

“Necessity follows God's pleasure; result attends upon his will. That anything agreed by God should become disagreeable to him is incredible since he would have known long before that he would agree and that it was to be”. Here there is no question of any entity being capable of opposing the supreme God. The passage, unfortunately, does not really explain the mechanism of demiurgic causality: the will of God is itself sufficient to produce the end result.

“The master of eternity is the First God, the world is second, Man is third. God is the maker of the world and all it contains governing all things along with mankind, who governs what is composite. Taking responsibility for the whole of this - the proper concern of his attentiveness- mankind brings it about that he and the world are ornaments to one another so that on account of mankind's divine composition, it seems right to call him a well-ordered world, though kosmos in Greek would be better.” (§10)

This is clearly modelled on Plato's description of man as a microcosm of the well-ordered world in the *Timaeus*. §14 then provides a more detailed description of demiurgic causality:

“There was God and *hylē* (which we take as the Greek for “matter) and attending matter was spirit, or rather spirit was in matter, but it was not in matter, as it was in God, nor as the things from which the world came were in God. Because these things had not come to be, they were not as yet, but by then they already were in that from which they had their coming to be. Not only of those that have not yet come to be but also of those that lack the fertility for breeding so that nothing can come to be from them, is it said that they do not produce being. Therefore, things can breed that have in them a nature capable of breeding; something can come to be from them even though they have come to be from themselves (for there is no doubt that the things from which all come to be can easily come to be from those that have come to be from themselves). The everlasting god, god eternal, neither can nor could

have come to be- that which is, which was, which always will be. This is the nature of god, then, which is wholly from itself.”

This passage does posit a pre-existent matter, which contains some kind of motion of its own, indicated by the spirit existing in it; though it seems to exist in a lesser degree in *hylē* than in God. The author then rules out the possibility of *creatio ex nihilo*:

“But *hylē* (or the nature of matter) and spirit, though from the beginning they seem not to have come to be, nonetheless possess in themselves the power and nature of their coming to be and procreating. For the beginning of fertility is in the quality of nature, which possesses in itself the power and the material for conceiving and giving birth.”

This passage is problematic. It not only makes matter a co-Demiurge with God, but it states that nature is capable of production itself. In the *Poimandres*, Nature is incapable of creation herself, but requires Man. The Demiurge must not be the creator of soul, if that is what the author means by spirit here. Since matter possesses spirit, there may be some kind of idea of matter attempting to order itself by responding to the upper world and attempting to imitate it.

The lesser gods also seem to play a limited role in demiurgic causality:

“The heads of all classes are gods, after whom come gods who have a head <of> *ousia*; these are the sensible gods, true to both their origins who produce everything throughout sensible nature, one thing through another, each god illuminating his own work. The *ousiarchēs* of heaven (whatever one means by that word) is Jupiter, for Jupiter supplies life through heaven to all things. Light is the *ousiarchēs* of the sun, for the blessing of light pours down on us through the orb of the sun. The thirty-six (the term is “horoscopes”), the stars that are always fixed in the same place, have as their head or *ousiarchēs* the one called Pantomorphos or Omniform, who makes various forms within various classes. The so-called seven spheres have the *ousiarchai* or heads called Fortune and *Heimarmenē*, whereby all things change according to nature’s law and a steadfast stability that stirs in everlasting variation. Air is the instrument or mechanism of all the gods, that through which all things are made; its *ousiarchēs* is the second...” (§19)

Here we have a distinction between hypercosmic intelligible gods and cosmic sensible gods, introduced in the passage preceding the one cited.³¹⁶ The term *ousiarchēs* may be a translation of an Egyptian term. In the manuscripts five *ousiarchai* are mentioned: Jupiter, Light, *Pantomorphos*, *Heimarmenē* and a Second (? A second Zeus, perhaps, would fill the lacuna here). The five sensible gods are:

³¹⁶ “There are many kinds of gods, of whom one part is intelligible and the other sensible. Gods are not said to be intelligible because they are considered beyond the reach of our faculties; in fact, we are more conscious of these intelligible gods than of those we call visible, as you will be able to see from our discussion if you pay attention.”

Heaven, Sun, and the thirty-six (the Decans), seven planetary spheres and Air.³¹⁷ Each sensible god is paired with a corresponding intelligible god, but unfortunately a lacuna in the manuscripts prevents us from being certain whether there were further pairings of sensible and intelligible gods. Scott modified the scheme to produce the following pairings of intelligible and sensible gods: (Pantomorphos, Decans), (*Heimarmenē*, Spheres), (Zeus *Neatos* (probably Hades ruling the air), sublunar atmosphere), (Zeus Chthonios, Earth and Water). Scott compared this to similar structures in the Stoic Posidonius and the Platonist Xenocrates, although Festugière did not accept either Scott's position that *ousia* was Stoic corporeal substance or Murray's that it was Platonic intelligible essence.³¹⁸ Festugière compared *ousia* here to its usage in Iamblichus, designating secondary deities, and I think that this is probably the case here. I am less clear concerning the manner in which air can be used as the mechanism of all the gods, unless as the lowest ranking sensible god all connections between all other entities in the ontological system and the higher ranking gods have to take place through it. For example, the light produced by the planets is radiated into the air, and transmitted by the air to the earth.

The *ousiarchai* or "Departmental Rulers" have specifically delimited functions. The uppermost *ousiarch* transmits the generic forms of the ideal world to the *ousiarch* below him, to be modified by individual differences before being implanted in matter to form individual bodies. The passage can equally be read in terms of Stoic doctrine: that the outermost *ousiarch* emits fire, which passes through the chain of lower ranking *ousiarchai*, before combining with air to form πνεῦμα. The *Asclepius* attempts to combine elements from different philosophical schools, but they are not always completely harmonised and the details do not seem to have been fully worked out, as is the case here.³¹⁹

The individual forms are bestowed by the *ousiarch* of the fixed stars. He does this through the revolution of his sphere which modifies the form type, since each individual is born under a different aspect of the Decani. *Heimarmenē*, the *ousiarch* of the planets, governs the alterations that the form will undergo during its existence. Air receives all these influences and then redistributes them. The *ousiarch* of earth and sea supplies nutriment to the material bodies.

³¹⁷ Copenhaver, B. P. (1992), 231-2.

³¹⁸ Copenhaver, B. P. (1992), 232.

³¹⁹ Scott, W. (1968), 109.

The reason Scott attributed this scheme to a Stoic source was that the nearest analogies can be found in Stoic systems.³²⁰ Zeus is named here as the God who governs the Kosmos, which is more characteristic of Stoicism³²¹ than Hermetism, where Zeus normally only occurs as the name of the planet Jupiter.³²² The scheme is vaguely reminiscent of the myth of the *Phaedrus*, and Scott suggests that Xenocrates (c. 330BC) may have been inspired to produce his version under the influence of Orphic theology.³²³ (Xenocrates' system in which the World-Soul receives the Forms and projects them upon matter is also derivable from a non-literal reading of the *Timaeus*.³²⁴

The scheme presented here exhibits some differences with the type of metaphysical speculation found in Stoicism. Firstly, the Stoics did not posit the existence of incorporeal beings, while the author of our treatise postulates two classes of gods, with the *ousiarchs* as νοητὸι θεοὶ. The Hermetic scheme also postulates a supracosmic god in addition to the cosmic god found in Stoicism.

The *Abammonis Responsum* 8.2. contains a summary of a theological system which has pretensions to be from Egyptian sacred writings, but which is more likely from a more recent Neoplatonic interpretation of the "Books of Thoth".³²⁵ He calls the first God of the system (the ἐν of Plotinus) νοητάρχης, as the ἀρχή of τὰ νοητά and the second God (Plotinian νοῦς) αὐτάρχης as the cause of himself, as well as οὐσιοπάτωρ in his role as ἀρχή τῆς οὐσίας, the Demiurge of the sensible world. The system of the *Abammonis Responsum* contains sufficient significant differences from that of the *Asclepius* for it to be unlikely that either system was

³²⁰ Scott (1968), 110.

³²¹ For example *Diog. Laert.* 7.88: ὁ νόμος ὁ κοινός, ὡσπερ ἐστὶν ὁ ὀρθὸς λόγος διὰ πάντων ἐρχόμενος, ὁ αὐτὸς ὢν τῷ Δίῳ.

³²² *Kore Kosmou* 28

³²³ *Plut. Plat. Quaest.* 9.2: Ξενοκράτης Δία τὸν ἐν μὲν τοῖς κατὰ τὰ αὐτὰ ὡσαύτως ἔχουσιν ὕπατον καλεῖ, νέατον δέ, τὸν ὑπὸ σελήνην. See also Clement of Alexandria *Strom.* 5. 117: Ξενοκράτης δέ... τὸν μὲν ὕπατον Δία, τὸν δὲ νέατον καλῶν, ἔμφασιν πατρὸς ἀπολείπει καὶ μὲν ὕπατον Δία, τὸν δὲ υἱοῦ. A different scheme is attributed to Xenocrates by Aetius, *Diels Doxogr. P.* 304: "ἀρέσκει δὲ καὶ αὐτῷ <θείας εἶναι δυνάμεις Zeller> καὶ ἐνδιήκειν τοῖς ὑλικοῖς στοιχείοις. Τούτων δὲ τὴν μὲν <δι' ἀέρος ἐνεργοῦσαν δύναμιν "Ἡραν Meineke> ἀειδῆ ("Αἰδην Diels) προσαγορεύει, τὴν δὲ διὰ τοῦ ὑγροῦ Ποσειδῶνα, τὴν δὲ διὰ τῆς γῆς φυτοσπόρον Δήμητρα. ταῦτα δὲ χορηγήσας τοῖς Στωικοῖς κ.τ.λ. The Orphic verses that may have influenced Xenocrates can be found in *Stob. I. I.* 23, vol. I, p. 29 W.: Ζεὺς πρῶτος γένετο, Ζεὺς ὕπατος ἀργικέραυτος, / Ζεὺς κεφαλῆ, Ζεὺς μέσσα, Διὸς δ' ἐκ πάντα, τέτυκται. Dillon suggests that Aetius was attempting "to make sense of an already garbled text". Dillon, J., *The Heirs of Plato*, 130.

³²⁴ Dillon, J. (2003), 130.

³²⁵ Scott. W. (1968), 113.

derived from the other. However, the similarity of terminology leads one to believe that they were modelled on an earlier system using the term *ousiarch*.³²⁶

Scott's hypothesis concerning the origin of this system is that Poseidonius' list of departmental gods (first century B.C.) was reproduced, with modifications, by the Egyptian Stoic Chaeremon (c. 50 A.D.), who may have introduced the Decani and the term οὐσιάρχης. In Stoic terminology, and that of Poseidonius, οὐσία is synonymous with ὕλη. It seems, therefore, that the *ousiarchs* of the *Asclepius* are the overseers of material substance: three different kinds of fire, air, earth and water.

The passage then reiterates the fact that all the various entities in the ontological system are interconnected into a harmonious whole:

“Given such conditions all things from bottom to top <reach out to one another in mutual connections. But...> mortals are attached to immortals and sensibles to sensibles. And the whole of it complies with the supreme governor, the master, so that really there are not many but rather one. In fact, all depend from one and flow from it, though they seem separated and are believed to be many. Taken together, however, they are one or rather two, whence all are made and by which they are made out of the matter, in other words of which they are made, and from the will of him whose assent makes them different.” (§19)

Here the contradiction between the monotheistic stance adopted at the commencement of the treatise and the postulated existence of many gods is reconciled. The *Asclepius* is not so much monotheistic as syncretistic. All the lesser deities are really just the result of the volition of the supreme god.

Having examined the hierarchy of deities, it now remains to consider spirit, as the mechanism by which these deities act upon matter (§16-17):

“Spirit supplies and invigorates all things in the world; like an instrument or a mechanism, it is subject to the will of the supreme god. For now let this be our understanding of these issues. Understood by mind alone the god called “supreme” is ruler and governor of that sensible god who encloses within him all place, all the substance of things, all the matter of things that produce and procreate, all that there is whatsoever and however much there is. [17] But spirit stirs and governs all the forms in the world, each according to the nature allotted it by god. *Hulē* or matter, however, receives them all, <spirit> *stirs and concentrates* them all and god governs them, apportioning to all things in the world as much as each one needs. He fills them all with his spirit, breathing it into each thing according to the quality of his nature.”

Spirit is the mechanism by which the First Principle acts on matter. §17 reiterates Plato's standpoint in the *Timaeus* that the sensible cosmos occupies the receptacle

³²⁶ Scott, W. (1968), 114.

and uses up all available matter. “Stirs and concentrates” is Copenhaver’s translation for *agitatio atque frequentatio*, which denotes a much more active agent than matter which passively as a *receptaculum* “receives” the Forms. §18 then outlines the role played by spirit:

“The whole substance of all the forms of this world and of each one of them in its normal state is, if I may say so, “material”. Matter nourishes bodies; spirit nourishes souls”.

Here spirit plays some role in the preservation of soul- perhaps by allowing it to communicate with entities higher up on the ontological scale, since it is the instrument of the supreme god.

At §19 we are provided with a detailed account of the creation of man, which also sheds further light on the role played by necessity during creation

“God, the father and master, made gods first and then humans, taking equal portions from the more corrupt part of matter and from the divine, thus it happened that the vices of matter coupled with bodies along with other vices caused by the foods and the substance that we are obliged to share with all living things. Hence it is inevitable that the longings of desire and the other vices of mind sink into human souls. Even though immortality and unaging vigor were wisdom and learning enough for the gods, who were made of nature’s cleanest part and had no help from reason and learning, nonetheless, *because God’s plan was a unity, he established in eternal law an order of necessity framed in law, which stood in place of learning and understanding lest the gods be detached from them, for among all living things God recognized mankind by the unique reason and learning through which humans could banish and spurn the vices of bodies and he made them reach for immortality as the hope and intention.* In short, God made mankind good and capable of immortality through his two natures, divine and mortal, and so God willed the arrangement whereby mankind was ordered to be better than the gods, who were formed only from the immortal nature and better than all other mortals as well”.

The account of human creation parallels the *Poimandres*, where even though Man is produced after the heavenly gods, he is the one whom god loves most. Just as there he is better than the Governors, the same situation is observable here. However what is most interesting here is the description of Necessity as the creation of the First Principle in order to control the lesser deities; it plays no role in limiting the scope of the Demiurge’s creation. However, it seems that in the *Asclepius*, the position occupied by Plato’s Necessity is taken over by *Heimarmenē*³²⁷:

³²⁷ The notion of ἀναγκη occurs elsewhere in Plato, not just in the *Timaeus*, often in connection with Fate. Cf. *Rep.* 566A, (the necessary transformation of a protector into a tyrant, through the allegory of the transformation of a cannibal into a wolf), or *Laws* 904C., where the context is the necessary change of those things that share in soul. The notion is also to be found at *Polit.* 272E (the turning backwards

“What we call *Heimarmenē*, Asclepius, is the necessity in all events, which are always bound to one another by links that form a chain. She is the maker of everything, then, or else the supreme god, or else the second god made by the supreme god, or by the ordering of all things in heaven and earth made steadfast by divine laws. Therefore, this *Heimarmenē* and necessity are bound to one another by an unbreakable glue, and of the two, *Heimarmenē* comes first, begetting the sources of all things, but the things that depend on her beginning them are forced into activity by Necessity. What follows them both is order, the structure and temporal arrangement of the things that must be brought about. For without the fitting together of an order, there is nothing and the world’s order is complete. Order is the vehicle of the world itself, and the whole consists of order.” (§39)

Here *Heimarmenē* is a creation of the Demiurge, not an opposed evil or recalcitrant principle. *Heimarmenē* must be equivalent to the Fate regarded as originating from the circles of the Governors elsewhere in the Hermetic corpus, though the author of the *Asclepius* is not so specific. Here it seems somewhat akin to a separate entity which assists the Demiurge in creation, using order and necessity. § 40 elaborates further on the interaction between these three principles, which resemble Xenocrates’ triad of Fates:

“These three then - *Heimarmenē*, Necessity and Order – are in the very fullest sense the products of God’s assent, who governs the world by his own law and divine plan, and God has barred them altogether from every act of willing or willing-not. Not disturbed by anger nor swayed by kindness, they subject themselves to the necessity of the eternal plan. And the plan is eternity itself; irresistible, immovable, indestructible. First comes *Heimarmenē*, then, who provides progeny enough for all to come with the seed she has sown, as it were, and Necessity follows, forcing them all into activity by compulsion. Order comes third to preserve the structure of the things that *Heimarmenē* and Necessity arrange. This is eternity, which can neither begin nor cease being, which turns round and round in everlasting motion under the fixed and unchanging law of its cycle, its parts rising and falling time and again. So that as time changes the same parts that had fallen rise anew. Circularity gives the turning a pattern that crowds everything together so that you cannot know where the turning starts (assuming that it starts) since everything always seems to follow and also to precede itself. But accident and chance are also mixed into everything material in the world.” (§40)

This is similar to Xenocrates’ triad of Fates. *Heimarmenē* and Necessity are agents of the Demiurge who assist him in the creation of the cosmos and are completely under his control. *Heimarmenē* seems to be the entity that acts on matter, sowing the seed of creation (perhaps even soul) into it. Necessity is the divine plan

of the earth by fate (“*είμαρμένη*”) and innate desire, after the helmsman of the universe (“*τοῦ παντός ὁ μὲν κυβερνήτης*”) “drops the tiller”.

which seems to compel matter into subject. This vitiates the image hinted at early on, where matter seemed to respond itself to the creative impulse. The reference to circularity hints at continual temporal creation – just as in the *Politikos* myth disorder creeps into the world at regular intervals and God has to intervene. In fact §26 outlines this possibility:

“Such will be the old age of the world: irreverence, disorder, disregard for everything good. When all this comes to pass, Asclepius, then the master and father, *the god whose power is primary, governor of the first god*, will look on this conduct and these wilful crimes, and in an act of will- which is god’s benevolence- he will take his stand against the vices and the perversion in everything, righting wrongs, washing away malice in a flood or consuming it in fire or ending it by spreading pestilential disease everywhere. Then he will restore the world to its beauty of old so that the world itself will again seem deserving of worship and wonder and with constant benedictions and proclamations of praise the people of that time will honour the god who makes and restores so great a work. And this will be the geniture of the world: a reformation of all good things and a restitution most holy and most reverend of nature itself, reordered in the course of time <but through an act of will>, which is and was everlasting, and without beginning it remains the same, everlasting in its present state. God’s nature is deliberation; will is the supreme goodness.”

The portion in italics is problematic. The Latin reads *deus primipotens et unius gubernator*. *Gubernator* is the Latin translation of the Greek δημιουργός. The problem is that the text doesn’t explain what the Demiurge is first in relation to. Lactantius’ Greek reads ὁ κύριος καὶ πατήρ καὶ θεός καὶ τοῦ πρώτου καὶ ἑνὸς θεοῦ δημιουργός: “The lord and father and Demiurge of the first and one god” Amongst the numerous attempts to solve this passage, we can note that of Scott, substituting τοῦ κόσμου for the underlined portion of the Greek. Gersh saw in τοῦ πρώτου the positing of a consubstantial relationship between the first and second principles, but that in the wider context the second god is the cosmos and is only first in the sense of being the first product of the Demiurge.³²⁸ I am grateful for Dillon’s suggestion to take *demiourgos* with the genitive phrase which precedes it as “Craftsman *in the sense of* the first and one god”. Otherwise, the text must be corrupt.

The general sense of this passage at first reading appears to be one of continual temporal creation. The Demiurge has to re-order the world as disorder starts to creep in over the course of time. However, I think that this is one occasion when the text has to be read both with an eye to the Hermetic tradition and to that of Greek

³²⁸ Copenhaver, B. (1992), 243-4.

philosophy. In the Hermetic corpus there are frequent references to the coming neglect of the ancient Egyptian religion and the subsequent desertion of Egypt by the traditional gods. This was interpreted by Christian readers as a pagan prediction of the future fall of their religion, but is probably due to tension felt by Egyptians of the period when confronted with Hellenic culture which was increasingly becoming dominant in the region. A hint that this is what the author had in mind can be found in the reference to irreverence and disregard of the good which will soon take over the world.

Placing *Heimarmenē* and Necessity under the authority of the supreme god leaves the author of the *Asclepius* with a problem: how to account for evil in the world. At §40, he notes that accident and chance are mixed in with everything material. At §16, he attempts to account for the existence of evil:

“Thus, Asclepius and Hammon, I have not said what the many say: Was God not able to put an end to evil and banish it from nature? One need not respond to them at all, but for your sake I shall pursue this question as well, since I have opened it, and I will give you an answer. Now those people say that God should have freed the world of every kind of evil, yet evil is so much in the world that it seems almost to be an organ of the world. Acting as reasonably as possible the supreme god took care to provide against evil when he designed to endow human minds with consciousness, learning and understanding, for it is by these gifts alone by which we surpass other living things that enable us to avoid the tricks, snares and vices of evil. He that avoids them on sight before they entangle him is fortified by divine understanding and foresight, for the foundation of learning resides in the highest good.”

The text adopts the response of a manual for spiritual progress and not that of a metaphysical treatise. The author makes little effort made to explain the origin of evil, instead stressing the fact that the Demiurge did what he could to protect humanity against its existence by endowing it with enough intelligence to avoid its effects. Clearly it is problematic to state that nothing in the world can come into being that is not pleasing to God and then subsequently to state that evil is an inherent part of the world, but God cannot really be held responsible for its existence. Evil must originate from somewhere and quite clearly at this point it is useful to place the blame on the philosopher’s favourite scapegoat, matter:

“Therefore, although matter did not come to be, it nonetheless has in itself the nature of all things inasmuch as it furnishes them most fertile wombs for conceiving. The whole of matter’s quality, then, is to be creative, even though it was not created. Just as there is a fertile quality in the nature of matter, so also is the same matter equally fertile in malice.” (§15).

Here the standard anti-materialistic stance of Hermetic literature creeps in. Since matter is not the creation of the Demiurge, as is explicitly stated here and elsewhere in the *Asclepius*, this absolves him neatly from responsibility for the existence of evil. In spite of the anti-material strain observable here, the author's attitude still remains somewhat ambivalent: matter is still fertile and creative.

Conclusion

Apart from the *Poimandres* and the *Asclepius*, the *Corpus Hermeticum* can in general be seen as a sort of "school-level" philosophy. It does not provide a particularly sophisticated account of demiurgic causality. However, it does offer interesting insights into the perceptions of the Platonically-influenced underworld. The texts are often contradictory, since they cater to initiates at different stages of their spiritual progress. One can distinguish two separate trends, although I am reluctant to divide the texts into separate categories. Firstly, there are texts such as the *Poimandres* and *Asclepius* with a much more sophisticated version of demiurgic causality, which see the need for a creative entity distinct from, even if dependent upon, the supreme principle. The other texts tend to stress the unity of creation and regard all the other creative entities merely as agents, or better yet, as tools of the supreme god.

The more pro-cosmic treatises can probably be regarded as intended for earlier on in the initiate's career. The basic version that emerges from their more sophisticated counterparts is of a First Principle, which must be regarded as the efficient cause of creation. He does not always employ a Demiurge (his son) to create on his behalf, and in such cases he relies on a team of secondary, creative entities formed from all the usual suspects: Providence, Necessity, Fate and Eternity. There is no notion that these act independently of his volition and so they must accomplish their tasks with his approbation.

Indeed, creation itself is not really a mistake; the problem is that Man became enmattered, and texts such as the *Poimandres* do not fully explain why the omniscient and omnipotent First Principle should allow the fall of a hypostasis. By submitting Necessity and the Demiurge to the control of the First Principle, one is left only with the recalcitrance of matter as an explanation for the existence of evil in the material world. This is not utilised very much by the Hermetic authors, and in the *Poimandres*

it is clear that the dissolution of the godhead begins with the emanation of Man, for which the god would have to bear full responsibility. In the Hermetic corpus, we are no longer dealing with the abstract entities of Greek philosophy, but with emotional characters in the drama of creation; a transformation which affects even the supreme god. This has to be the favoured explanation for elucidating demiurgic causality in the Hermetic tradition, rather than a philosophical one.

Chapter 7: Valentinus and the Gnostics

Introduction

The Platonic Demiurge undergoes a transformation in the Gnostic tradition, with its anti-cosmic stance. Speculations regarding the relation between the First principle and the demiurgic one appear to reach their most extreme in Gnosticism, illustrated particularly clearly by the demotion of the Demiurge to Second God in Numenius. Admittedly, it is difficult to see anything in the *Timaeus* text which could have led to the ignorant Gnostic Demiurge. Since he cannot overcome Necessity completely, in order to produce a more rationally ordered cosmos, this may have led to a less positive appraisal of his role. Instead the Gnostic Demiurge owes more to the prevailing intellectual-religious trend among certain groups receiving the text, than it does to anything indicated in the dialogue itself.

One might argue that the term “Demiurge” has been applied to a different sort of entity from the generative one of the *Timaeus* and the only Platonic legacy owed is that of titular appropriation. Against this, one can set the following considerations: 1) The recalcitrance of matter, as mentioned in the *Timaeus*, has developed into a claim that the entire material world is fundamentally evil. 2) The Demiurge, in some versions of the Gnostic myth, actually does produce a world in imitation of the higher realities of which he is ignorant (due to the intervention of Sophia). I would contend that this has originated to some extent from the notion of the Demiurge modeling the world upon the Forms. 3) The “Young Gods” of the *Timaeus* are paralleled in the host of entities (such as Archons) which assist the Demiurge during the act of creation (although the original justification, that they produce the mortal element in humanity, finds no place in this myth, where the Demiurge himself is responsible for what is blameworthy in the material realm. 4) The descending ontological rank of the demiurgic principle can be observed even in monotheistic thinkers, such as Philo and Origen. The low-ranking Gnostic Demiurge is part of this tradition.

First, though, one must define Gnosticism in terms which give a coherent unity to the multiplicity of systems located under this doctrinal umbrella. The term comes from *gnosis*, “knowledge”. This is not particularly helpful in clarifying matters; most religious denominations lay claim to some kind of salvational knowledge known only to the initiated. The gnosis of Gnosticism is the knowledge of

a dual supraterrrestrial realm in the lower level of which is located the Demiurge, while in the upper level is the true God. This is common to all Gnostic systems, although there are numerous differences in the various manifestations. For example, in Christian Gnosticism, the distinction is between the Old Testament God, who is the Demiurge, and the Father of Christ.

Gnosticism might have been dismissed in antiquity as a “swarming ant-heap of heresies”, but in fact it can perhaps be viewed as an evolution of the concept of the Demiurge. The attempt to insulate him from the contamination of matter and responsibility for the creation of evil leads, via the distinction between two competing powers, one of which is the First Principle and the other the demiurgic one, championed by Numenius, to view these two entities as antagonistic in order to account for the inherent imperfection of the world.

This may be observed in the parallel development in mainstream philosophy, whereby terms such as “begotten of himself” were applied increasingly by pagan philosophers to a divine mediator, rather than the supreme principle.³²⁹ Porphyry refers to *Nous*, the Neoplatonic second principle as *autogenetos* and *autopator*.³³⁰ In these thinkers, we have the notion that it is somehow beneath the dignity of the First Principle to move or beget (perhaps related to Epicurean criticism of Plato, cf. Cicero *ND* 1). Petrément observes this idea in Numenius, although Logan claims that this cannot be proved to have existed in philosophy prior to its adoption by the Barbelognostics. Even in Philo, we encounter the position that the universe is inherently evil; for example at *de somniis* ii. 253, although he generally advances the view that the world as the creation of a beneficent and omnipotent God is good.

Much speculation has taken place concerning the origins of Gnosticism. Schenke attempted to discern an original philosophy without reference to Christianity. I feel that the above explanation provides a likely source. But the mythology of several Gnostic systems can only be satisfactorily explained in a Judaeo-Christian context. With the fall of Jerusalem (70 A.D.) and the expulsion of Christians from the synagogues (80 A.D.) anti-Jewish feeling amongst the Christian community was high. Christ’s words were appealed to: “They will exclude you from the synagogues and the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he renders

³²⁹ Logan (1996), 80.

³³⁰ Porphyry, *Historia Philosophiae* Frag. 223 Smith: “προῆλθε δὲ προαιώνος ἀπ’ αἰτίου τοῦ θεοῦ ὠρμημένος. αὐτογένετος ὢν καὶ αὐτοπάτωρ.”

service to God". (John 16:2). This helps to explain the distinction between the Old Testament Yahweh and the God of the Gospels in Christian Gnosticism, although since the 1950's some form of orientalising, Iranianising theory is accepted to explain the general origins of Gnosticism.

This hostility is expressed in the Fourth Gospel. Christ states that the Jews do not know God (John 5:37-38, 7:28, 8:19, 54-55). In the early Gnostic systems of Simon, Menander, Saturnilus and Cerinthus, God is described as *ignoratus* or *incognitus* (unknown, not unknowable). The phrase *agnōstos* used of God in the Gnostic tradition can mean both "unknowable" and "unknown". John again displays Gnostic tendencies when he points out that the name of the Father was revealed by Christ (John 17:6, 26). The father seems to be a separate entity from Yahweh, whose name was known prior to Christ.³³¹

The Old Testament God was the author of good and evil; the devil is his servant. In the Qumran texts, the Prince of Light and the Angel of Darkness are both created by God and obey him, though they hate each other.³³² According to the Jewish Christian Pseudo-Clementines, the "True Prophet" and the devil are seated at the right and left of God. According to this view Christ is a pre-existent divine being, who descended to incarnation, rather than an apotheosis.

While many elements of Gnosticism are explained by Christianity, it is certainly possible to identify its origins as a development of dissident Judaism. *The Tripartite Treatise* (112, 33 – 113, 1) claims that God did not create alone, but with the assistance or through the agency of angels. This is not heretical and is found in Rabbinical doctrine. The view found justification in the statement ποιήσωμεν ἄνθρωπον (*Gen.*), "Let us make man". Philo maintained this position, although he may have been regarded as a heretic (Christians preserved his works). Philo regarded this as referring to the planetary gods (pure souls/angels). The doctrine is related to the attitude that denigrated the value of the human body. According to Justin, heretical Jews claimed that the human body was created by angels (*Dialogue* 62).³³³ This view as well as the attendant belief that the human body was unworthy of creation by God can be traced back to Plato's position on the demiurgic role of the "Young Gods" at *Tim* 41. The Maghâria, a Jewish sect which

³³¹ Petrément S. (1999), 35.

³³² Petrément, S. (1999), 37.

³³³ Petrément, S. (1999), 41.

later split into the Qurquisâni (tenth century A.D.) and Shahrastani (eleventh to twelfth century A.D.) believed in a creator-angel called Shah, the “lieutenant” of God. The Maghâria avoided anthropomorphism in the depiction of God; in a sense this equates to Philo and John’s doctrine of the Logos.

Adolf von Harnack described Gnosticism as “the acute Hellenisation of Christianity”.³³⁴ Part of the problem with this definition is that members of only a few sects of this orbit actually called themselves “Knowing Ones” or Gnostics. Gnosis, as the knowledge of a God who is by nature unknowable, is an unnatural condition. Certain mystery religions, such as that of Isis, Mithras and Attis, can also be regarded as part of the Gnostic ambit.³³⁵ Post-third century Manichaeism was not regarded as Gnostic by anti-heretical writers. The discovery of the Turfan fragment in Persian and Turkish in Chinese Turkestan at the beginning of the twentieth century, and Pelliot’s discovery of two Chinese texts in Turkestan prove that Gnostic religions existed outside the Hellenic orbit. The same is true of the Mandaeans of the lower Euphrates (modern Iraq), noteworthy as the sole example of a Gnostic religion which has survived to the present. Their name is derived from Aramaic “manda” (knowledge) and so their name means “Gnostics”.

Spengler described Gnosticism as a “pseudomorphosis”. In geology, if a different crystalline substance forms in a hollow left by disintegrated crystals, the mould forces it to adopt the form of the original substance. Only chemical analysis can prove that the substance is actually a counterfeit. Spengler uses this argument to suggest that Gnosticism is a Hellenized pseudomorphosis of pre-existing Eastern thought.³³⁶

Another problem in studying Gnosticism is the biased nature of the sources. When Irenaeus refers to the Gnostics, he adds “falsely so-called”. He attacks their unity: their opinions are inconsistent (*Adv. Haer.* I.11), they dispute amongst themselves (*Adv. Haer.* I.12), they are inspired by evil spirits (*Adv. Haer.* I.9.5) and their Biblical exegesis is described as akin to breaking up a mosaic of a king to construct one of a fox or dog (*Adv. Haer.* I.8.1).³³⁷ Nor does Irenaeus stop there; he attacks the morality of the Gnostics: they not only associate with idolators and attend

³³⁴ Jonas, H. (1963), xvi.

³³⁵ Jonas, H. (1963), 38.

³³⁶ Jonas, H. (1963), 37.

³³⁷ Perkins, P.H. (1976), 196.

gladiatorial shows, but are even sexually promiscuous (*Adv. Haer.* I. 6.3f).³³⁸ Irenaeus parodies the tendency of Gnosticism to multiply the chain of Being through the postulation of entities, aeons, syzygies and angels with names such as “Abyss”, “Silence” and “Limit”. At *Adv. Haer.* I.11.14, he describes the emanation of Valentinian melons from the primeval beings Gourd and Utter-Emptiness.

Hostility to the Gnostics was not limited to the Church Fathers and heresiologists. Plotinus comments on acquaintances who “happened upon this way of thinking before they became our friends and, though I do not know how they manage it, continue in it”.³³⁹ Plotinus composed a treatise *Against the Gnostics* (*Ennead* II.9) and encouraged Amelius and Porphyry to do the same.³⁴⁰

His main objection seems to be the number of levels of Being in the Gnostic systems:

“And by giving names to a multitude of intelligible realities they think they will have appeared to have discovered the exact truth, though by this very multiplicity they bring the intelligible nature into the likeness of the sense world, the inferior world” (Plotinus, *Enn.* II 9 trans. Armstrong).

Plotinus himself posited only three levels of Being: The One, Nous and Soul. I think that some of the hostility towards Gnosticism is illustrated by Van den Broek’s comment:

“Gnosticism is not even a depraved form of philosophy. It is something quite different, though the Gnostic writers often make use of philosophical ideas.”³⁴¹

As Filoramo comments, the Gnostic Demiurge is always problematic and never a venerable figure.³⁴² This difficulty can mask some of the obvious differences in his role in various sects. He is central to Valentinian and Sethian systems, but possibly absent in the systems of Menander and Saturninus. He lacks a primary role in the triadic systems, of which our evidence derives from Hippolytus.³⁴³ For Ptolemy, the Demiurge was merely the ignorant creator of the seven heavens:

“They say the Demiurge believed that he had created all this of himself, but in fact he had made them because Achamoth had prompted him. He made the heaven without knowing the heaven, he formed man without knowing him, he brought the earth to light without knowing it. And, in every case, they say, he

³³⁸ Perkins, P.H. (1976), 195.

³³⁹ *Enneads* II. 9.10.

³⁴⁰ According to Porphyry, *Life of Plotinus*, 16, i.

³⁴¹ Van den Broek, R. (1998), 4.

³⁴² Filoramo, G. (1990), 218 n. 20.

³⁴³ Filoramo, G. (1990), 77.

was ignorant of the things he made and even of his own mother, and imagined that he alone was all things” (*Adv. Haer.* I. 5.3)

However, this neutral position becomes more ambivalent and even overtly hostile in other sects.

The Origins of Valentinian Gnosticism

Gnostic motifs can be traced in mainstream philosophy. For example, Zeno claims:

“God, nous, fate and Zeus are one, being by himself in the beginning, he transformed all substance through air into water and, just as the sperm is embraced in the seminal fluid, so also the *spermatikos logos* of the cosmos, this one remains behind in the moist substance making matter adapted to himself, looking towards the genesis of the next things. First he generated the four elements”. SVF I, 102f = D:C: vii, 135

We also have a further metaphor from the Stoics, portraying creation in sexual terms:

“Zeus, remembering Aphrodite and genesis, softened himself and having quenched much of his light, transformed (it) into fiery air of less intensive fire. Then, having had intercourse with Hera, he ejected the entire seminal fluid of the All. Thus he made the whole substance wet one seed of the All; he himself running through it, just like the forming and fashioning spirit in seminal fluid.” SVF II, 622

Imagery exploited by the Gnostics is clearly exhibited by this passage – not just the sexual imagery but also the role played by moisture in creation. Here, Hera does not actually provide anything towards the creation; she merely causes the fluid to be released.

The Stoic doctrine of natural place with the various elements separating of their own accord also echoes the transgression of Sophia:

“They fled and avoided each other, pursuing peculiar and arbitrary motions, since they were in a state in which everything without God is, according to Plato, that is, like bodies, lacking mind and soul; until the desired one came to nature through Providence, when addiction or Aphrodite or Eros came into being as Empedocles, Parmenides and Hesiod say.” (Plut. *On the Face in the Moon* 926F – 927A)

This is similar to the imagery of the Sophia myth, and in a way it is Sophia’s inability or rather unwillingness to accept her natural place that is the cause of all the trouble. It should be noted that any similarity between Stoicism and Gnosticism is unlikely to be the result of any direct connection between the two, since apart from Basilides, Gnostic thinkers’ contact with Greek philosophy was limited to either Pythagoreanism or Platonism.

The Stoics' viewpoint is shared to a certain degree by Philo, another important figure in tracing the development of Valentinian gnosis. Even though Plato had envisaged God as dealing with the world through intermediaries, illustrated by the Demiurge's relationship to the created realm through the Young Gods of the *Timaeus*, it was Philo who managed to harmonise such a conception with a staunch monotheistic viewpoint. For Philo such intermediaries could be equated with the angels. However, God could also deal with the world through a predominant hypostasis, such as the Logos, who could also be personified as a Servant of God (or the Son, as exemplified in the Christian tradition by Origen).

Another hypostasis, Ruach Jahweh, is not easily translated from Hebrew into Greek by πνεῦμα. Since Logos and Sophia do not share the same gender in Greek, it is difficult for Philo to present them as synonymous. Philo's Logos is to some extent the ancestor of Valentinus' Horos. At *Abr.* 143, it is not God but his subordinates who punish Sodom, and create human free will,³⁴⁴ just as it is the Logos-cutter which handles matter (*Spec. Leg.* 1.329). Evil cannot originate with God, but Philo is prepared to entertain the notion that his subordinates may be responsible for it (*Opif.* 75, *Conf.* 179, *Fuga* 68ff., *Qu. Ex.* i.23). Similarly, Horos maintains discipline within the Pleroma and separates the primary dyad from the lesser aeons, which it would be beneath the dignity of the First Principle to do.

As Stead points out, various traces of Philo's conceptions of Sophia could have given rise to Gnostic themes, particularly the notion of Sophia as the mother of all, as well as the idea of a fallen Sophia.³⁴⁵ The interesting question to pose is why these two elements should have entered the Valentinian tradition, rather than others? Sophia is generally thought to be the original representation of God's primary agency, with the Logos being posited subsequently. This is because of the obvious advantage that if Sophia is posited as God's consort, it explains where the Logos came from, if it is claimed as the Son of these two, whereas if the Logos emerges first, as a masculine entity, it cannot be claimed to be the consort of the Father, and the relationship between the three entities cannot be explained in human terms. It is this sort of concept that Irenaeus attacks at I.30.2ff, when he comments on the notion that the Father is the First Man, the Son the Second Man, and the Holy Spirit the First Woman with whom both have intercourse to generate the created universe. Such a

³⁴⁴ Stead, G.(1969), 97.

³⁴⁵ Ibid.

consideration explains the pivotal role Sophia plays in the creation myth of Valentinianism; despite her significant ontological demotion. At *Ebr.* 30f Philo refers to Sophia as God's consort:

“ ἡ γὰρ ἀναγκαῖον τῆς μητρὸς καὶ τιθήνης τῶν ὅλων πάνθ' ὅσα εἰς γένεσιν ἦλθεν εἶναι νεώτερα.”

The notion of an Oriental mother-goddess such as Isis has been grafted onto Sophia, as has Pythagorean speculation concerning the dyad as the first “feminine” number and therefore as the mother of plurality. Xenocrates describes this concept at fr. 15:

“ τὴν μονάδα καὶ δυάδα θεοὺς, τὴν μὲν ὡς ἄρρενα...τὴν δὲ ὡς θήλειαν, μητρὸς θεῶν δίκην, τῆς ὑπὸ τὸν οὐρανὸν λήξεως ἡγουμένην, ἣτις ἐστὶν αὐτῷ ψυχὴ τοῦ παντός...”

“The monad and dyad are gods, male..., and female, like a mother of the gods, the soul of all the universe”.

Armstrong proposes that the origins of Gnosticism may be found amongst those forcibly Judaized by John Hyrcanus and Aristobulus during the second century B.C. such as the Idumaeans, Ituraeans or Peraeans, although noting that this is merely speculation.³⁴⁶ There is no need to go to such exotic lengths to find the origins of an anti-Judaic Gnosticism, since it could have originated within Christianity and Pythagorean or Platonic accounts of demiurgic causality already conveniently provided the framework for the Gnostic myth.

The Life and Works of Valentinus

Valentinus (AD. c. 100 -175) was born at Phrebonis in the Egyptian Delta. He received a Greek education at Alexandria, where he may have met his contemporary, Basilides. This helps to explain the curious amalgam of Platonic philosophy and Gnostic mythology that he exhibits in his writings. He later taught at Rome but is said to have left the city after Anicetus (154-165) was elected bishop instead of him. This reveals the extent to which he could have claimed to be part of the mother church. One theological work *On the Three Natures* has been attributed to him, which deals with the three hypostases and persons (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) of the Trinity. The *Tripartite Tractate* (*NHC* 15) is unrelated, although it probably has a Valentinian

³⁴⁶ Armstrong, A.H. (1978) 92 n. 7.

(c.150-180) provenance. Additionally, the *Gospel of Truth* (NHC 13) has been wrongly attributed to Valentinus, which in spite of the name is in fact a homily which is doctrinally related to the sect, as well as the *Gospel of Philip* and the *Letter to Rheginos* (NHC 113, 1, 4, xi, 2).

It is difficult to attempt to distinguish an original Valentinian doctrine. In any case, much useful work in this area has been accomplished by Stead and Quispel. The reality is that each disciple seems to have made his own alterations which was acceptable within the liberal environment of Valentinianism. A great preoccupation of research in this area has been a comparative study of the various Valentinian “schools”, with the admittedly logical view that the lowest common denominator must be Valentinus’ original teaching. For the purposes of my examination, I shall treat Valentinianism as a single unit, incorporating all the various strands as well as whatever may have originally been the position of Valentinus himself, concentrating more on the system in its entirety than on the contributions of any single individual.

Given the fragmentary remains of writings that may be attributable to Valentinus, it can be easy to underestimate the extent of their influence on the Christian intellectual tradition, a fact attested by the hostility which they managed to invoke in the Church Fathers. In 229, for example, Origen travelled to Athens to debate with Candidus, an influential Valentinian.³⁴⁷ There is evidence of their survival into the fourth century, as we hear of feuds between the Arians and Valentinians of Syrian Edessa during the reign of the emperor Julian (361-363), while during that of Theodosius I (379-395), a Valentinian Church was destroyed by monks at Callinicum on the upper Euphrates.³⁴⁸ Interestingly, this is one of the few references we have for specifically Valentinian worship and indicates their relationship to the “mother church” of the period. Unfortunately, no archaeological site has been definitively identified as a Valentinian building. Layton raises the possibility that the sect survived into the fifth century, with its members in hiding; although Valentinus’ disciples come towards the end of the innovative period of western Gnosticism, they may have seen themselves not as a religion in competition

³⁴⁷ Rudolph, K (1983) 325.

³⁴⁸ Ibid.

with Christianity, but rather a sect offering a particular interpretation of its teaching.³⁴⁹

The Valentinians' most distinctive doctrine was their myth of Sophia. Their teachings can be grouped into two branches –Italic and Oriental, both of which varied the myth. The main source is Irenaeus *Adv Haer.* I.11.1, although Irenaeus is not concerned with producing a comprehensive account, but with merely highlighting some differences between the position of Valentinus and that of the main body of the Gnostics. Layton breaks the entire saga down into four “acts”, which are the sections relating to the Demiurge proper –the generation of the spiritual and material realms, the production of humans, which Irenaeus does not include in his account, and the Christian-soteriological section outlining the role of the Holy Spirit and Jesus.

Despite the lack of acceptance by many scholars' of Petrément's Valentinian “turning-point”, it does point to the problems surrounding Valentinus' position within Gnosticism. Irenaeus is deliberately confusing in his application of the term “Gnostic” and the western Church Fathers tended to follow him in his inexactitude. Secondly, in the eastern Church the term had more favourable connotations than in its western counterpart. The Valentinians, however, are the first sect to be mentioned by Irenaeus at *Adversus Haereses* I. 11. 1 in connection with the term “Gnostic”. “ὁ μὲν γὰρ πρῶτος ἀπὸ τῆς λεγομένης γνωστικῆς αἵρέσεως τὰς ἀρχὰς εἰς ἴδιον χαρακτῆρα διδασκαλεῖον μεθαρμόσας Οὐαλεντίνος.”

That the term “Gnostic” was conventionally used is indicated by Irenaeus' use of “λεγομένης”, although he provides no evidence for when or by whom this name was first utilised.

Irenaeus associates Valentinus with the Gnostics here for his own particular reasons. Irenaeus accuses the Valentinians of plagiarism with the line λεγομένης γνωστικῆς αἵρέσεως, but at the same time they have been excessively original: “ἴδιος χαρακτήρ”. From I.11.1 it would appear that Irenaeus regarded the Valentinians as a separate group.

“ἄριστον ἄρχοντα ἐδογμάτισεν ὁμοίως τοῖς ῥηθησομένοις ὑφ' ἡμῶν ψευδωνύμως Γνωστικοῖς”. The Gnostics lack originality; but the Valentinians seem to be regarded by Irenaeus as a separate sect. He states that they were similar to the Gnostics, which suggests that he did not regard both groups as identical. Irenaeus was

³⁴⁹ This is in spite of the fact that according to the *Gospel of Philip* they celebrated additional sacraments.

aware that Valentinus could differ from mainstream Gnostic thought on important matters. For example:

“De ea autem, quae est ex his, secunda emissione Hominis et Ecclesiae, ipsi patres eorum, falso cognominatione Gnostici, pugnat adversus invicem...aptabile esse magis emissioni dicentes, uti verisimile, ex Homine Verbum, sed non ex Verbo Hominem emissum.”(*Adv. Haer.* II. 13.10)

“Again as to the second production which proceeds from these [Aeons who have been mentioned], - that, namely, of Man and Church, - their very fathers, falsely styled Gnostics, strive among themselves...maintaining that it is more suitable to the theory of production – as being, in fact, truth-like – that the Word was produced by Man and not Man by the Word.”

“Gnostic” for Irenaeus seems to function as an umbrella term to denote a group of loosely related heresies. Valentinus himself seems to have avoided use of the term “Gnostic”. The epithets they applied to themselves were traditionally used by members of the early Church; for example “people endowed with spirit”, “spirituals” (= πνευματικοί, I Co 2:15) and “the perfect” (= τέλειοι).³⁵⁰ The term “Valentinians” emerges c. 160 A.D., coined by opponents in critical pamphlets, in order to imply that this group were followers of Valentinus, rather than of Christ. According to Epiphanius, the Valentinians referred to themselves as “Gnostics”.³⁵¹ However, Epiphanius cannot be viewed as a reliable authority in this case, given his need to maintain eighty sectarian titles in order to allude to the eighty concubines in the *Song of Songs*.

Although Gnosticism seems to be generally presented in classical scholarship, or for that matter in philosophy and theology, as a “fringe movement”, Valentinianism was too important to ignore for figures such as Clement of Alexandria or Origen. In this we are fortunate, since it provides us with a source of information; as opposed to the situation regarding Gnosticism within Judaism. The rabbis had a much more effective way of dealing with heretics; by simply ignoring them, the details of the heresy would not spread; quite correctly, as it turns out.

Sources

The myth of Sophia, in addition to being distinctly Valentinian, also demonstrates the development of Valentinian thought in the various “schools”. The main source is the work of St Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons *Exposure and Refutation of the falsely so-called Gnostics*, in five books, cited hereafter by its Latin title *Adversus*

³⁵⁰ Layton, B. (1987), 270.

³⁵¹ Epip. Pan. 31.1.1, 31.7.8, 31.36.4, 33.1.1., 31.5.5.

Haereses. The original Greek version for the first part of Book I was preserved by Epiphanius' *Haer.* 31, although the complete Latin version survives. The work also survives in Armenian and Syriac. It is generally thought to expound the doctrines of the founder of the Italian branch, Ptolemaeus. It was composed over a lengthy period; Rudolph suggests during the reign of the Emperor Commodus (180-192)³⁵²

It seems to have been written to combat the Gnostic heresy, which from the second half of the second century, during the reign of Marcus Aurelius, originating in Asia Minor, began to spread towards Lyons, where Irenaeus was consecrated bishop in 177-178. It was also reported that he died during a persecution c. 200. The ostensible motive for composing the work was to satisfy a friend's request for information concerning Valentinian doctrine. Irenaeus deals with a variety of sects that fall under the term Gnostic. He claims to have relied on the written and oral accounts of the Valentinians, which independent research has confirmed.

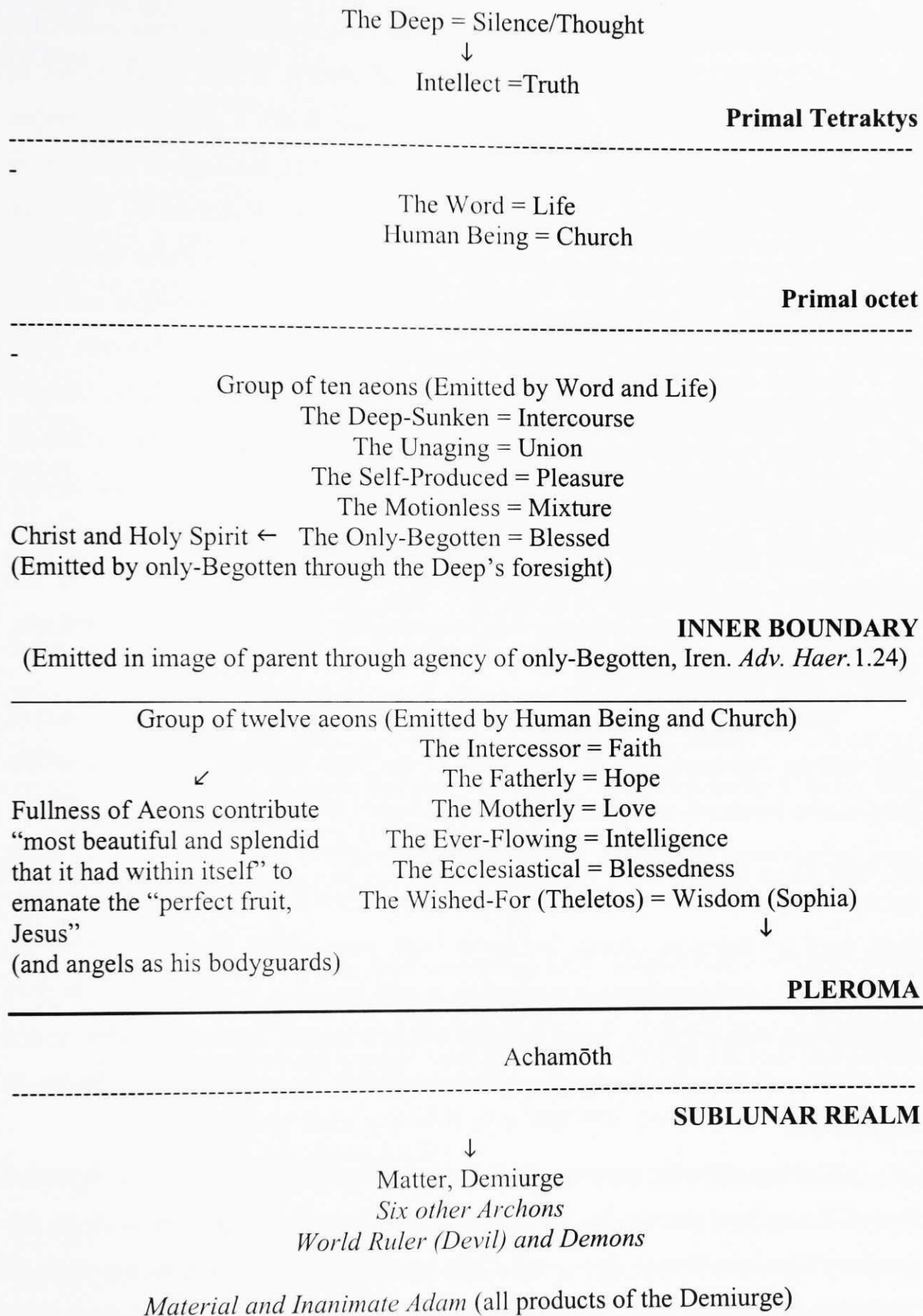
Second in order of importance is the *Refutatio* of Hippolytus, Book VI, 29-36. There are also a set of extracts from Clement of Alexandria's *Excerpta ex Theodoto*. The problem with these is that they are completely out of context and they are interspersed in a confusing manner with Clement's views, although they have the great advantage of providing information on Theodotus' oriental branch, while Irenaeus and Hippolytus have an Italian bias.

In addition to the above-mentioned sources there are some others, of which unfortunately not enough survives to draw firm conclusions from. These include the fragments of Heracleon, taken from a *Commentary on St. John*, and the fragments of Valentinus, which for the sake of thoroughness I have examined here. Irenaeus *Adv. Haer.* I.11. 1 contains some details concerning Valentinus, and he also mentions some other systems derived from Valentinianism. There is also a Valentinian letter at Epiphanius *Haer.* 31.5-6 and an *Adversus Valentinianos* by Tertullian, which I have not examined, as it is based on Irenaeus' version.

³⁵² Rudolph, K (1983), 11.

Fig. 7.1 –The Valentinian Myth of Sophia

(Ptolemy’s version recorded by Irenaeus *Adv. Haer.* 1.1.1 – 1.5.5)



Valentinian myth of Sophia

There are two variations of the Valentinian myth deriving from the two main branches: Irenaeus is the main source for A, while Hippolytus is the main source for B. However, it should be noted that elements of version B can be identified in Irenaeus – in ii.3 and ii.4.³⁵³ The Valentinian system posits a plethora of entities between the First Principle and the Demiurge (see Fig. 7.1), although in comparison with the Basilidean system, where the material realm is fabricated by the three hundred and sixty-fifth generation of angels, it could be viewed as rather restrained. These hypostases, which represent modes of God, are paired into syzygies and then grouped together into larger formations, which could be viewed as families. First comes the Primal Ogdoad³⁵⁴ (Abyss = Silence/Thought, Intellect, = Truth, the Word = Life).³⁵⁵ Word and Life then emanate a second group of ten aeons (the Deep-Sunken = Intercourse, the Unaging = Union, the Self-Produced = Pleasure, the Motionless = Mixture, the only-Begotten = Blessed). The Twelve Aeons are emanated from human being and the Church (the Intercessor = Faith, the Fatherly = Hope, the Motherly = Love, the Ever-Flowing = Intelligence, the Ecclesiastical = Blessedness, Theletos (the Desired) = Sophia).

Such a system can be seen as an attempt to convey the various conceptions of God without compromising the simplicity of the First Principle. However, unlike Origen who locates them all within his Christ-Logos and thereby dispenses with the need for numerous hypostases, the Valentinians are able to adopt their approach since a fragmented godhead is one of the cornerstones of their theology. Even though they posit such an elaborate system, it fails to work even within the terms which the Valentinians set themselves, or perhaps it would be fairer to say that while it is possible that such a system might function within a mythic framework, when tested with the touchstone of metaphysics, it feels as though the entire structure begins to break down.

Leaving aside the question of whether the First Principle should be above the law of the syzygy, there is the question of how these various groups relate to one another. Where do Human Being and Church emerge from to emanate the group of twelve aeons? Christ plays a role later on in the Sophia myth, but at least he is

³⁵³ Stead, G. C (1969) 78 outlines the extent of the influence of version B on Irenaeus' account.

³⁵⁴ I use the equals sign to indicate the consort of the male hypostasis which appears on the left.

³⁵⁵ This is only in version A (Irenaeus); in version B (Hippolytus), there is no primal octet.

described as emerging from Intellect. This makes Intellect the Father, which might be acceptable in this scheme where he is described as the parent and the source of the entirety. However, he can only be the third-highest ranking aeon, since Silence and Abyss come first. Indeed Abyss is referred to as prior source.

This is perhaps a throwback to the persistent attempts within philosophy to outdo Plato by going back further than him in attempting to uncover the origin of the universe, and describing the First Principle as Forefather or Pre-First Principle. Abyss is described as prior source. It is problematic in a “Christian” document for Christ to not be emanated directly from the First Principle. It is also unclear how the Holy Spirit is generated, though it seems to be floating around in the Pleroma, and given Origen’s system, it does not seem to have been unusual to have assigned it no metaphysical role at all. It is also unclear how, when or by whom Horos is produced, although since he separates the primary dyad from Intellect, there are good grounds for assuming that it is emanated fairly early on. In analysing this system, the hypostases which are actually of importance are the First Principle and Sophia.

The Valentinian First Principle is described in negative terms – it is located “within indivisible and unnameable heights, where there was –they say – a pre-existent, perfect eternity; this they call also prior source, ancestor and Abyss. And it existed uncontained, invisible, everlasting and unengendered. Within infinite eternal realms, it was in great stillness and rest: And with it coexisted thought, which they also call loveliness and silence.”(1.1.1)

This thought is the consort of the First Principle; together they emanate the next principle:

“And eventually the aforementioned deep took thought to emit a source of the entirety. And it deposited the emanation that it had thought to emit like sperm in the womb of the silence that coexisted with it. And the latter received this sperm, conceived and brought forth intellect, which was like and equal to the emitter and was the only being that comprehended the magnitude of its parent. And this intellect they call also only-begotten, parent, and source of the entirety.”(Iren. *Adv. Haer.* I.1.1)

This primary divine couple is an allegory for a dyad as the First Principle, rather than a single First Principle or two antagonistic principles. I think that is what is at stake in the statement: “For sometimes they maintain that the parent is with a consort, silence, but other times, that it is beyond (the categories) male and female.” (Iren. *Adv Haer.* 1.2.4). I think the Valentinian group which suggested this were attempting to adopt a more monistic stance. The version described by Hippolytus also envisages the

cosmos as originating from a single male principle and therefore allocates no female consort to Abyss: ἄθηλον καὶ ἄζυγον καὶ μόνον τὸν πατέρα, ‘a non-female and unjoined and only father.’(Hippolytus 29:4). For Irenaeus, however, the First Principle is ὑπέραρρεν καὶ ὑπέρθηλυ, ‘beyond male and female’, (Iren. ii.4. p18). In the version where the parent has no female counterpart, he emits a boundary which purifies Sophia and reunites her with Theletos, but expels her unlawful passion.

“Now, in their system the only being that was acquainted with the ancestor was -they say- the only-begotten, or intellect, which to them -held the pleasure of contemplating the parent and the joy of understanding its immeasurable magnitude. And it thought to communicate the size and extent of the parent’s magnitude to the other aeons and the fact that it was beginningless, uncontained and not capable of being seen. But by the will of the parent, silence restrained it because it wanted to elevate them all into thought and into longing for a search for the aforementioned ancestor of theirs”. (Iren. *Adv. Haer.* I.2.1)

This is similar to Origen’s view that only the Son knows the Father.³⁵⁶ The

Gospel of Truth explains how the First Principle actually emanates these entities:

“All the ways are his emanations. They know that they have emanated from him like children who were within a mature man, but knew that they had not yet received form nor had been given name. It is when they receive the impulse towards acquaintance with the Father that he gives birth to each. Otherwise, although they are within him, they do not recognise him. The Father himself is perfect and acquainted with every way that is in him. If he wills, what he wills appears, as he gives it form and name. And he gives it name and causes it to make them come into existence.” (GT. 27)

There is some difference in terminology between the *Gospel of Truth* and the version of Irenaeus, with the aeons being referred to as ways. There is a difference between both versions in the details that lead to the fall of Sophia:

“But Wisdom (Sophia) – the very last, most recent aeon of the group of twelve that had been emitted by the human being and the church- charged forward and experienced passion without the involvement of her consort, the Wished-For (Theletos).

The passion originated in the region of intellect and truth; but it collected in this (last aeon), which had been diverted ostensibly out of love, but really out of recklessness – because it had not communicated with the perfect parent as intellect had.

The passion consisted of a search for the parent; for – they say – she wanted to comprehend its magnitude. She was unable to, for she had tried to accomplish the impossible. And she became engaged in a very great struggle, owing to the

³⁵⁶ This parallel is brought out more forcefully at the *Gospel of Truth* 16 « that they might learn to know him through the power of the Word that emanated from the fullness that is in the father’s thought and intellect –the Word who is spoken of as “saviour”. (trans .Layton)

magnitude of the depth, the unsearchability of the parent and her affection for that parent. (Iren. *Adv. Haer.* I.2.2)³⁵⁷

Here it is as a result of her unacceptable desire to know the First Principle that she transgresses (the Limit) and falls. In Hippolytus' version, she attempts to imitate the creator by producing an offspring without her consort. Sophia is less culpable in version A, where even if she acts out of ignorance, she also acts out of love. Version B reveals her as hubristic; assuming that she is capable of emulating the creative power of the Father, and in acting above the law of the syzygy (she produces without her consort). I don't think that there is any element of jealousy in Sophia's attempt to emulate the creator; it can be observed in Plato's *Timaeus* 28e-29a (although there evidently in a less antagonistic or culpable context) and reminds one of the descent of Man in the *Poimandres*.

Sophia is then kept out of the ineffable magnitude and turns back to herself. In version A only the guilty intention of Sophia is expelled, not Sophia herself. This lower entity is forced outside the outer boundary of the Pleroma. (In a sense, this is the first time that the outer boundary of the Pleroma acquires any importance, since it is the first moment in the cosmology that an entity exists outside the fullness of the Pleroma). This lower Sophia is also known as Achamōth:

“This thinking was a spiritual essence, since it was a natural impulse to action on the part of an aeon. Yet it was without form and imageless because she had not comprehended anything. And –they say- for this reason it was a weak and female fruit”. (Iren. *Adv. Haer.* I.2.4)³⁵⁸

This parallels the description of the Demiurge as an ἔκτρομα or abortion – whatever offspring Sophia gives birth to is of necessity defective, since it is conceived without the participation of her consort or the will of the supreme principle.³⁵⁹

³⁵⁷ In the *Gospel of Truth* (17), the error is that of the whole Pleroma: “Inasmuch as the entirety had searched for the one from whom they had emanated, and the entirety was inside of him-the inconceivable uncontained, who is superior to all thought- ignorance of the Father caused agitation and fear. And the agitation grew dense like fog, so that no one could see. Thus error found strength and laboured at her matter in emptiness. Without having learned to know the truth, she took up residence in a modelled form, preparing by means of the power, in beauty, a substitute for truth.”

³⁵⁸ In the *First Apocalypse of James* (Nag Hammadi p. 35 II.5.19, Sophia is not portrayed in such negative terms, even though this generation of Achamōth is criticised: “But I will call upon the incorruptible Gnosis, namely Sophia who is in the Father, who is the mother of Achamōth. Achamōth has no father nor male consort, but she is a woman from a woman. She has made you without a male being alone, not knowing what <lives> through her mother, thinking she was alone.”

³⁵⁹ *Hypostasis of the Archons* (NHC II 4, 94 (142), 5-13: “Sophia (Wisdom) which is called “Pistis” wished to create a work alone without a consort. And her work became an image of heaven, (so that) a curtain exists between the heavenly and lower regions (aeons). And a shadow came into being beneath the curtain, and that shadow became matter.”

“The following are the events that they say happened outside the fullness. Once the higher Wisdom’s (Sophia’s) thinking, which they call also Achamōth³⁶⁰, along with her passion had been bounded apart from the fullness, it was –they say- cast forth in a region of shadow and emptiness: and necessarily so, for it had come to be outside the light and fullness, without form and imageless, like an aborted foetus, because it has not comprehended anything.”³⁶¹

The myth now requires the emanation of two further aeons to rectify the situation: Christ and the Holy Spirit or Pnuma. The Holy Spirit and Christ set the Pleroma in order by equalising the aeons (1.2.5-1.2.6). As a result of this equalisation all of the aeons become intellects, Words, human beings and Christs; in other words they become “equal in form and intention” (1.2.6), which indicates some sort of unification of the godhead. It is interesting to find a demiurgical role attributed to the Holy Spirit in the Christian tradition or rather quasi-Christian tradition, since in Origenian thought it has no such function and is not even a metaphysical principle. However, for Origen it does have a soteriological role, and if one was to be exact that is just what it is engaged upon here.

The aeon Christ descends out of the Pleroma in order to stabilise Sophia. There should really be no need for this action, as it seems to be merely a duplication of the activity of the Holy Spirit. It seems to be part of the development of the elaborate Gnostic systems, which appear to contain redundant entities (perhaps as the result of the combination of Christian and philosophical entities):

“Then the (higher) Christ took pity on it, extended himself through the limit (Horos) and formed it by his power into a figure, but only according to nature, not according to knowledge (*gnosis*). Thereafter he returned above withdrawing his power (from it) and abandoned its separation from the Pleroma and feeling yearning for what was of a different kind, for indeed it possessed a certain savour of immortality which Christ and the Holy Spirit had left to it. (Iren. *Adv. Haer.* I.4.1 trans Rudolph)

The emergence of these aeons is significant in numerous ways. Firstly, Christ and the Holy Spirit need to be written into the Gnostic myth, so to speak, in order to explain the emergence of the Christian Trinity. It would seem, then, that in spite of their age, they must be promoted to a senior rank in the Pleroma, just below the Father (who himself, as we have already seen, may be only the second-ranking principle). If this event takes place in version A, it means that the number of aeons totals thirty-two. If one includes Jesus, that provides thirty-three aeons; significantly the age at which the

³⁶⁰ A slightly corrupted form of the corresponding Semitic word for Sophia, *hokhma*.

³⁶¹ In the *Excerpta* of Clement, Achamōth is not actually expelled from the Pleroma, but wanders outside (“ἐπλανήθη ἡ Ἀχαμῶθ ἐκτὸς τοῦ πληρώματος, viii, 4. p. 73).

saviour died.³⁶² The Valentinians are displaying the same evidence of rationality in their account of creation as Plato does in the *Timaeus*. However, here we are discussing the godhead, which should display rationality; whereas the entire act of creation within Valentinianism is irrational. The role played by Christ was a Valentinian development and was seen as a prefiguration of the soteriological role which he plays later on when dealing with humanity.

The Pleroma's structure also displays Pythagorean influence in both versions. The primary Ogdoad can either be divided into two tetrads or four pairs, both of which reveal the significance of the numbers two and four, although all numbers up to ten in Pythagorean numerology have some significance. The pairing of male and female through the entire structure of the Pleroma including the First Principle reflects the importance of *συζυγία* (sexual union) within the Valentinian system, illustrated by the letter of Epiphanius. Version B traces being to a monad which produces a dyad, Even though this dyad (Nous and Aletheia) is composed of male and female, it is collectively female.³⁶³ Version A, as Stead notes, is less acceptable to the Jewish or Christian reader, who would raise no objections to claiming an ultimate monad, but could not really agree with the claim of an ultimate dyad.³⁶⁴

Sophia is conscious of the wrong that she has committed and attempts to turn around. In Hippolytus' version, all of the aeons are thrown into confusion by the transgression of Sophia. Achamōth undergoes manifold passions because she is cut off from the Pleroma. It is these emotions that become matter:

“The essence of matter –they say- had its first source in the aforementioned lack of acquaintance, grief, fear and terror.” (Iren. *Adv. Haer.* I.5.4)

This is important, since it indicates that the material realm is created not merely as the result of a split within the godhead, rather than due to the divine plan, but also as the result of a mistake perpetrated by this fragmented section of the godhead.

“She -they say- accounts for the genesis and essence of the matter out of which this world came into being. For the entire soul of the world and the craftsman had its origin in her turning back, other things had their beginning in her fear and her grief. Indeed, all moist essences came into being from her tears; luminous ones, from her laughter; and the bodily elements of the world from her grief and terror. For sometimes –they say- she cried and felt grief because of being left alone in the darkness and emptiness; sometimes she proceeded to thought about the light that had left her, and she relaxed and

³⁶² This total, however, disagrees with the account at i.3. or iii. 1, although this may come from version B.

³⁶³ “κυρία καὶ ἀρχὴ καὶ μήτηρ”.(Hipp. 29.6).

³⁶⁴ Stead, G. C. (1969), 80.

laughed; sometimes she was afraid; and yet other times she became uncertain and distraught.” (Iren. *Adv. haer.* I.4.2)³⁶⁵

However, every thought in the divine world, even a guilty one or one not authorised by the supreme principle, becomes a hypostasis, Because of this, expelling the thought is only the second-best option, because even the aeon Christ is unable to remove it completely:

“He separated them from her, but he could not ignore them, for it was impossible to make them disappear as the passions of the earlier (wisdom) had, since they were already habitual and powerful. Rather he set them apart, poured them together, fixed them and transformed them from incorporeal passions into incorporeal matter. Next he endowed them with suitable properties and with such a nature that they would enter into compounds and bodies, so that two essences came into being, a bad one deriving from the passions; and a mixed one tainted with passions deriving from the turning back. And that is why they say that the saviour virtually acted as a craftsman.” (Iren. *Adv. Haer.* I.4.5)

Here Christ can be regarded as a sort of demiurge within the divine world, given his attempt to stabilise it and impose order upon disorder. Yet, strictly speaking there should be no need for this type of ordering activity not just within the divine world, but within the very godhead. It is an example of the extent to which a rather commonplace philosophical motif has been seized upon by the Gnostics and used in an unsuitable context, which quite frankly produces bizarre consequences.

“And in response to these good deeds, with a single design and intention, as the anointed (Christ) and the spirit joined in the consent and their parent joined in the approval, the entire fullness of aeons- each of the aeons- joined in bringing and contributing the most beautiful and splendid that it had within itself. And interweaving these elements fittingly and uniting them harmoniously, in honour and to the glory of Abyss, they emitted an emanation that was a kind of utterly perfect beauty and star of the fullness, a perfect (or ripe) fruit Jesus: after his parent he was named also saviour, anointed (Christ), and Word; and also entirety, because he is from the entirety. Simultaneously, in honour of it (the entirety) angels of the same ancestry were emitted as bodyguards for him.” (Iren. *Adv. Haer.* I.2.6)

This passage is valuable for explaining the origin of the angels. Jesus is the joint emanation of the entire Pleroma, their “common fruit”. It seems that he supersedes Christ and Word, since he assumes these titles, despite the pre-existence of these entities. This agrees with the view that as divine messenger he is endowed with the

³⁶⁵ Cf. *Gospel of Truth* 26 : “All the ways moved and were disturbed, for they had neither basis nor stability and error became excited, not knowing what to do [she] was troubled, mourned and cried out that she understood nothing inasmuch as acquaintance which meant the destruction of her and all the emanations had drawn near to her.” Interestingly, the author does not refer to the fallen aeon by the contradictory name of Sophia –wisdom, but rather error, which more accurately reflects her situation.

power of all the Aeons, as well as the Father.³⁶⁶ At *Hipp.* 32.1-2, it seems that the power described is Carpos, which is also Jesus, since he is the καρπός of the Pleroma, as is pointed out at *Hipp.* 3.2.4. Jesus is seen by Sophia (“σύν ὅλη τῇ καρποφορία αὐτοῦ”) and marries her.³⁶⁷ It is difficult to understand why such a marriage is necessary, unless it to ensure that she has a consort and to parallel the restoration of the first Sophia to Theletos. In this context of duplication, Jesus may not be intended to supersede Christ, but to act as a second Christ, replicating the saving work of the first Christ in the physical realm.

Sophia then initiates world-creation:

“Now, of the three (essences) that –they say– were by this point extant, one derived from her passions and this was matter; another derived from her turning back, and this was the animate; another was what she brought forth, and this was the spiritual. So she turned to their forming. But she could not form the spiritual, inasmuch as it was of the same essence as she.” (Iren. *Adv Haer.* 1.5.1)

This is important for Gnostic eschatology, since it explains the three classes of soul. Evidently, this differs greatly from Origen, who regards souls as the same in their essence. For the Gnostics, then, individual salvation seems predetermined, having been fixed at the moment of creation.

“So she turned to the forming of the animate essence that derived from her turning back and she emitted what the saviour had taught (her to emit). And first, from the animate essence she formed the god and parent and king of all, that is, of both those which are of the same essence as he i.e. the animates, which they call those on the right; and those which derive from passion and matter, which they call those on the left. For they say that he formed all that were after him, being moved surreptitiously by the mother. Hence they call him mother-father, parentless, craftsman and parent. And they say that he is the parent of those on the right i.e. animates; craftsman of those on the left i.e. materials, and king of all.” (Iren. *Adv. Haer.* I.5.1)

This mention of the right and left seems to be an attempt to incorporate the notion of the Cosmocrator or the left-sided ruler. In this version, there is no real need for him, since the Demiurge is the creator of the material realm. The Cosmocrator is depicted as the brother of the Demiurge³⁶⁸; he is more evil with a “spiritalis malitia”, but he is also superior since he knows more concerning the higher powers than the Demiurge. In systems which acknowledge the Cosmocrator, the Demiurge is usually envisaged as ruling on the right-hand side; though here he appears to have jurisdiction

³⁶⁶ Iren. *Adv. Haer.* IV. 5. pp. 38f.

³⁶⁷ Iren II. 3 fin p. 17, *Hipp.* 34.4.

³⁶⁸ *Adv. Haer.* I.5.4.

on both sides. The Cosmocrator seems to be a later addition to the system, only included when Valentinianism began to propound that the Demiurge was not evil; not good, but just. This left a vacancy, which was supplied by an entity found in the writings of St. Paul. While St. Paul clearly never regards the world as the product of any entity other than the Judaeo-Christian God,³⁶⁹ he does frequently regard the (Judaic) law as the product of the angels (though this does not imply that it was designed without the consent of God). This subjected Man to the rule of the angels,³⁷⁰ and may lie in the background of the emergence of a figure (Demiurge or Cosmocrator) ruling the world in opposition to the supreme God.³⁷¹

“Now, the aforementioned thinking (Achamōth) wished to make all things to the honour of the aeons and so-they say- she made images of them; or rather, the saviour did, through her. She kept the image of the invisible parent, since the craftsman was not acquainted with it; he (the craftsman) kept the image of the only-begotten child (i.e.intellect); and the archangels and angels that were with the latter kept the images of the other aeons.” (Iren *Adv. Haer.*I.5.1)³⁷²

There seems to be an element of parallelism common in Gnostic myths in this passage. The Saviour acts through Achamōth, just as she acts through the Demiurge to mitigate the effects of creation. One must ask what are the images of the aeons that she is creating here. It would appear to be a second Pleroma (but inferior because it is merely an image of the first). The images must be an equivalent to the Platonic Forms, so it would seem that she is transmitting the Forms to the Demiurge to ensure that some of the goodness of the Pleroma is replicated in created reality. This is not unusual in Gnostic myth; what is not so commonplace is a description of how she transmitted those images, such as we have here. It is not the case that Achamōth communicates these forms to the Demiurge in an attempt to repent of what she has done (nothing, in fact, since the fault is that of the older Sophia). Rather she performs this activity under the orders, as it were, of the Saviour.

³⁶⁹ *Romans* I:20.

³⁷⁰ *Gal.* 4:3: “So with us, when we were children, we were slaves to the elemental spirits of the universe”. Cf. *Gal.* 4: 9 -11.

³⁷¹ Petrément, S. (1991), 62 -63.

³⁷² It may also be the case that Achamōth has intercourse with the angels: “But Achamōth, freed from the passions, enjoyed with the lights (=angels) who had come along with him (the Sotēr), had intercourse with them and became pregnant with fruit after their likeness.” (Iren, *Adv. Haer.* I 4, 5). As Achamōth has been freed from passions, perhaps no sexual fault is implied here.

The Demiurge

This brings us to the Demiurge, who is essentially a creator-angel. He tends to be identified with titles given to God in the Old Testament, most frequently Ialdabaoth (probably from a Semitic root *ialad* “child” and *baoth* “chaos”, hence “child of chaos”).³⁷³ He is also referred to as Esaldaios (=El Shaddai), Elohim, Iao, Sabaoth. As Ialdabaoth (an Ophite/Sethian appellation), he is frequently identified with Saturn and depicted as a lion. Since Yahweh’s day, the Sabbath, is celebrated on Saturn’s day, Saturday, this helps to explain how the identification took place.

Ialdabaoth is the “father of the powers”. In some sects, he fathers seven sons, the Archons, the eldest of whom, Sabaoth, the “god of the powers” is actually the Demiurge. It makes little sense, however, to have a Demiurge whose sole metaphysical purpose is to emanate another Demiurge. In some versions Pistis Sophia and her daughter Zoe intervene to allow Sabaoth to take his father’s place. This is because he does penance when he realises his father’s delusion; he becomes a Christian in advance of Christianity. This division may stem from the Gnostic perception that Yahweh, God of the Law, was the least acceptable aspect of the Old Testament God, while the God of the prophets after Moses or the Creator (the Demiurge proper) was more satisfactory.

“Thus they say that he became parent and god of things outside the fullness, being the maker of all things, both animate and material. For he separated the two essences that had been poured together, made bodies out of the incorporeal things, and created things both heavenly and earthly-and he became the craftsman of material and animate things, of right and left, of light and heavy, of upwards-tending and downward-tending. For he constructed the seven heavens above which –they say- is the craftsman. For this reason they call him the seventh, and the mother they call the eighth, preserving the count of the primal and first octet of the fullness.”(Iren. *Adv. Haer.* I.5.2)

Here we have an account of the actual construction of the physical universe, including the by now standard mention of the seven heavens, each containing their own ruling Archon (an adaptation of the Jewish archangels). However, the importance of Sophia in terms of creation is such that in certain accounts it is she who is envisaged as physically moulding matter.³⁷⁴

“They say that the seven heavens are intellectual and postulate that they are angels – and the craftsman too is supposed to be an angel, but resembling God. Likewise they say that paradise is above the third heaven and is virtually

³⁷³ Petrément, S. (1999), 43.

³⁷⁴ Cf *Gospel of Truth* 17 quoted above (note 28).

the fourth archangel; and that Adam (cf. 1.71) got something from it when he passed time within it. (Iren. *Adv Haer.* 1.5.2)

What could Adam have gotten from the fourth heaven if not some kind of gift, similar to that bestowed upon Man in the *Poimandres*? Clearly this motif has remained on in the Valentinian myth, but not much is said concerning it because it has become redundant, since Sophia is now the entity whose fall is responsible for creation, and not Man.

“Now the craftsman –they say- supposed that he was constructing these things of his own accord, but he (really) made them through Achamōth’s act of emission. For he made a heaven without knowing about heaven, modelled a human being without being acquainted with the human being, and showed forth earth without knowing earth. And in the case of all things, he was in a like fashion unacquainted - they say- with the ideal forms of the things he was making and with the mother, rather, he supposed that he was totally alone. The cause –they say- of this supposition of his was his mother, who wished to promote him by making him head and source of his own essence and lord of the whole affair.” (Iren. *Adv Haer.* 1.5.3)

Here it seems that the Demiurge is not so much to blame for his ignorance, but rather Achamōth, since she here conspires to keep him in this state. This contrast with the usual view that Sophia conspires when the Demiurge is creating Man to place a spark of spirit in this creation so that Adam becomes superior to creation and a son of the true God. It seems that the view in this text has been influenced by an alternative strand of the tradition, where the spark implanted in mankind is something negative (a spark of the female sex), and so Achamōth can be viewed as an almost malevolent entity.

The Valentinian Demiurge is the unconscious instrument of divine will. He is directed in the act of creation by the Logos of God. In systems influenced by Valentinianism, he is ignorant, rather than evil. Consider Basilides:

“For there ruled the great Archon, whose dominion extends to the firmament, who believes that he is the only God and that there is nothing above him.”
(Hippol. VII 25 cf.; 24. 4f)

Yet in the *Apocryphon of John*, Ialdabaoth’s position is motivated by jealousy of the higher God. He safeguards his status by cheating the other Archons in what he apportions:

“He apportioned to them some of his fire, which is his own attribute and of his power, but of the pure Light of the power which he had inherited from his Mother, he gave them none. For this reason he held sway over them, because of the glory that was in him from the power of the Light of the Mother. Therefore he let himself be called “the God” renouncing the substance from which he had issued. And he contemplated the creation beneath him and the angels under him, which had sprung from him, and he said to them “I am a

jealous god, besides me there is none” – thereby already indicating to the angels beneath him, that there is another God: for if there were none of whom should he be jealous?” (41:13ff; 44:9ff: Till)

This is a Gnostic motif with Christian imagery, as is apparent from Mandaean texts written in the same vein without overt reference to the Old Testament God:

“B’haq-Ziva regarded himself as a mighty one and forsook the name which his father had created [for him]. He said “I am the father of the Uthras, who have created Sh’kinas for them”. He pondered over the turbid water and said “I will create a world”. (G 97f).

Ialdabaoth’s claim to be the sole God is met with a retort from on high, sometimes from his mother, Sophia:

“Do not lie, Ialdabaoth: there is above thee the Father of all, the First Man, and Man, the Son of Man”. (Irenaeus I. 30. 4-6)

A greater reproach is uttered by the soul of the Gnostic returning to its higher origin:

“I am a vessel more precious than the vessel that made ye. Your mother does not know her origin, but I know myself and know whence I came. I invoke the incorruptible Sophia who dwells in the Father and is the mother of your mother...but a woman born of woman brought you forth, without knowing her own mother and believing that she was from herself, but I invoke her mother.” (Iren. I. 21.5)

The mention of Man invokes the primordial Man of the *Poimandres*. The term arises from the view that since God created Man in his own image, then Man can be regarded as God. But reading Genesis from a Gnostic viewpoint suggests that Man is the Demiurge. Saturnilus changed the text so that the Archons say “Let us make man in the image and likeness” rather than “in our image and likeness”. Man is created in the image of God (Gen. 1:26-27) rather than of his creator. This is because Sophia or the true God tricks the Demiurge into creating a being greater than himself by supplying the pneumatic element. It is this that is “alien” to the world. Man’s members (i.e. the Church) remain in the world as prisoners, but can escape through gnosis. Man is a prefigurement of the fate of Christ and the myth is probably inspired by it.

The End of Creation

The Valentinian concept of creation also envisages what will occur at the end of the world:

“The craftsman for his part will move into the place of wisdom (Sophia) the mother, namely in the midpoint. And the souls of the just, also, will gain repose in the place of the midpoint. For nothing animate goes inside the fullness.” (Iren. *Adv Haer.* 1.7.1)

Philosophically, this is particularly interesting. Many metaphysical systems have a cyclical concept; for example Stoic *ekpyrosis* or Platonic metempsychosis. Here the goal of Valentinianism is the negation of creation. Unlike Origen, a second fall is not envisaged or at least never made explicit. Creation is totally pointless, although at least Valentinus envisages some hope of salvation for the creator. Unlike other Gnostic sects, he also recognises the possibility of some (albeit limited) salvation for the just (non-Gnostics). Still, unlike in Plato's system, they never get a second chance.

“After such things have happened –so they teach- the fire that lurks within the world will flare up, catch fire, overcome all matter, be consumed along with it, and enter into definitive non-existence. And the craftsman –they declare- was not acquainted with any of these facts before the advent of the saviour.” (Iren. *Adv. Haer.* I.7.1)

Once all human souls have escaped, the material fabric of created reality will be destroyed; again, this is an indictment of creation when the entire goal of the Valentinian system is to seek to undo it. In the Valentinian system, no doubt as part of his *rapprochement* with the Jewish tradition, the Demiurge is allowed to repent and receive a reward at the end.

“Now inasmuch as the Craftsman was unacquainted with the realm superior to him, he was moved by the utterances that had no respect for them, attributing them to various causes- either the prophesying spirit, which has a kind of motion all its own; or the person in question, or an admixture of inferior things. And he continues in this lack of acquaintance until the advent of the saviour. But when the saviour came, they say, he learned everything from him and was delighted to defect to him, accompanied by all his army. It is he who is the centurion in the gospel, who says to the saviour, “For I have under my authority soldiers and slaves, and whatever I command, they do. He (the Craftsman) will bring about a providential arrangement of events in the world until the appropriate time, especially because of his care for his church and his knowledge of the reward that awaits him, namely occupying the place of the mother.” (Iren. *Adv. Haer.* I.7.4)³⁷⁵

The Demiurge here is not an antagonistic power, but it seems that a particular divine role has been allotted to him; he is something like the caretaker of the *Cratylus*. It is unusual to see the word “knowledge” used in conjunction with the Demiurge; not only is he aware of the higher powers, but also his own role within the

³⁷⁵ The mother will be readmitted into the Pleroma, when she is viewed as having become completely rehabilitated in the Barbelognostic system: “Her consort came down to her in order to put right her deficiency...And she was not brought back to her own aeon, but because of the very great ignorance which had become manifest in her she is in the monad (i.e. between the Pleroma and the realm of the Demiurge) until she puts right her deficiency.”

system, and knows enough of the future to be aware of his reward. While it may not prove Petrément's "Valentinian turning-point", the notion of the Jewish Yahweh acting as a protector for the Christian Church certainly indicates a change in outlook that has taken place since the emergence of Christian Gnosticism. The spirits of the Gnostics become detached from their souls and enter the Pleroma with Achamōth; and are bestowed as brides on the angels around the saviour. According to the *Gospel of Truth*, the material world will be dissolved, rather like the system in Origen.³⁷⁶

The Significance of the Sophia Myth

Intense debate has been sparked off by both variants of the Sophia myth as to which is the original Valentinian version. As Stead has illustrated, it is likely that it is neither, but that both are sophisticated versions of a much simpler original doctrine held by Valentinus himself.³⁷⁷ Stead advances several cogent arguments in favour of such a view. Firstly, both versions are organised in two phases (events within the Pleroma and activity subsequent to the fall). Secondly, the myth employs formal parallelism at several points. The First Sophia and the other aeons do not know their origin, which is known by Monogenes (*Adv. Haer.* I.3. 13), in order that they may long to see the Father. Likewise, the younger Sophia is not informed about her origin by Christ so that she may long for better things (*Adv. Haer.* IV. 1. 33-4).

The First Sophia acts without her consort (*Adv. Haer.* II. 2.13-16), while the younger Sophia is without a consort (*Adv. Haer.* I. 4.1). Indeed, it might be said that she is below the law of the syzygy. Thirdly, there is the parallelism between Sophia's attempt to know the Father, which is stopped by Horos, and Achamōth's attempt to re-enter the Pleroma to find the aeon who has left her, until she is stopped by outer Horos (who must clearly be a duplication). Fourthly, there is the parallelism between the expulsion of Sophia's guilty thought from the Pleroma, which creates younger Sophia or Achamōth and the expulsion of Achamōth's passions which then go towards the creation of the material realm. Finally, when younger Sophia is expelled she appeals to Christ to expel her passions and he sends the Paraclete or Soter. This indicates that the versions which we have are a development of a much simpler original involving only one Sophia, one Horos and a single expulsion of passions.

³⁷⁶ GTr 25 : « But when unity makes the ways complete it is in unity that all will gather themselves, and it is by acquaintance that all will purify themselves out of multiplicity into unity, consuming matter within themselves as fire, and darkness by light, and death by life. »

³⁷⁷ Stead, G.C. (1969), 81.

Sagnard propounded a theory of “les lois de la gnose”.³⁷⁸ This is the notion that in the Gnostic myths there is a tendency to draw a correspondence between both the upper and lower worlds. However, in this myth, there is only duplication in the events relating to Sophia. There is no equivalent to the Pleroma functioning at a lower level, and the Demiurge has no counterpart within the Pleroma. This leaves one to draw the conclusion that the myth of Sophia is a deliberate reconstruction. This may have been to cater for inconsistencies between the various traditions. It is possible, for example, that some versions regard the guilty intention of the first Sophia as expelled from the Pleroma, while others may have regarded her passions as being expelled. This is given greater force since one tradition claims that Sophia had four passions; another that she had three (and repentance). This all seems to indicate that the passions were those of the First Sophia, but have been assigned to the younger Sophia in the versions which we have.

According to Irenaeus, Valentinus believed in an ultimate dyad and thirty aeons, which is closer to the system subsequently advocated by Ptolemaeus. Valentinus does posit two Horoi, one between the other Aeons and Bythos and another between the Mother and the Pleroma.

“καὶ τὸν Χριστὸν δὲ οὐκ ἀπὸ τῶν ἐν τῷ πληρώματι Αἰώνων προβεβλήσθαι, ἀλλ’ ὑπὸ τῆς Μητρὸς ἔξω γενομένης, κατὰ τὴν γνώμην τῶν κρειττόνων ἀποκεκμησθαι μετὰ σκιᾶς τινος”. (Iren. 11. 1 (pp. 9-101)

“...and Christ to have been put forth not in the Pleroma of the Aeons, but by the Mother who was outside, who due to the opinion of the powers was put away with a certain shadow.”

The Latin text reads “secundum memoriam meliorum”, which indicates that the Greek text may have run “κατὰ τὴν μνήμην τῶν κρειττόνων”. In this version, Christ is the son of Sophia (and therefore the younger brother of the Demiurge), and is not the product of the Pleroma. Sophia has been expelled from the Pleroma, indicating that in this version, we are only dealing with a single Sophia. If one turns to the *Excerpta* of Clement, the situation becomes more complex. In one passage, Christ is emanated from the Ennoia (Thought) of Sophia.³⁷⁹ Stead suggests that this might suggest the Ennoia is to be distinguished as a separate entity from Sophia and that the resemblance between the two passages suggests that the Mother and Sophia

³⁷⁸ Sagnard *Gnose*, 255-65.

³⁷⁹ “ἔξ ἐννοίας προελθόντα τῆς Σοφίας ἔκ τῆς μητρῶας γενομένου ἔννοίας” (*Excerpta* 32.2, 33.3).

can be equated.³⁸⁰ If this is the case, then perhaps in the Ennoia we have the origin of the younger Sophia. At *Excerpta* 39, the Mother produces Christ.³⁸¹ Christ ascends to become the adopted son of the Pleroma. This version is problematic, since Christ's origin would be inferior to that of the other aeons, and would seem to make him incapable of fulfilling the role which he has to play.

All of this reveals that a creative approach towards Gnostic mythology was adopted by Valentinus and his successors, rather like the approach towards Plato's dialogues that was adopted by Platonists. In the myth of Sophia, we have the ultimate indictment that the world is bad from its beginning. It results, not as part of the divine plan, but as the product of fragmentation within the godhead, which ultimately leaves part of the godhead trapped, as in Hermetism. Similarly in Gnosticism, the whole goal of the philosophy is a return to the situation before creation occurred. (In Valentinianism, this is not strictly speaking true, since the Demiurge will receive a promotion of sorts.)

This world does not result from God's perfect wisdom, but from another Sophia, who must be an inferior sort of wisdom, since not only is she the last and youngest of the aeons, but we are explicitly told that she suffers from ignorance (ἄγνοια, Iren. I.2.3, I.4.1, I.5.4, Hipp. 31. 1-2, ἀπορία, Iren. I.4.1., I.5.4, Hipp. 32.5, 32.6). It results from impudence, and the materials of the physical world are derived from her negative emotions, not even of her, but of the even lower form of wisdom which is expelled. On top of this, the world is created by the Demiurge, who lacks the better aspects of Achamōth, so that what we are left with in the created world is a cosmos that reveals some aspects of a divine, ordering power (such as the images of the Forms), but which was unperceived by the entity who actually moulded the world.

The fragmentation within the godhead posited by the Pythagoreans was criticised.³⁸² However, Sophia can be interpreted not just as a failed emanation which has to be expelled from the godhead, but also as a divine mediator. She is described as a "heavenly Jerusalem"³⁸³, and "the good land flowing with milk and honey".³⁸⁴

³⁸⁰ Stead, G. C. (1969), 85.

³⁸¹ "ἡ Μήτηρ, προβαλοῦσα τὸν Χριστόν..."

³⁸² "Nam Pythagoras, qui censuit animum esse per naturam rerum omnem intentum et commeantem, ex quo nostri animi carperentur, non vidit distractione humanorum animorum discerpi et lacerari deum, et cum miseri animi essent, quod plerisque contingeret, tum dei partem esse miseram, quod fieri non potest." (Cicero, *ND* I. xi.27-8).

³⁸³ Hipp. *Ref.* vi. 30.9, 34.4

³⁸⁴ Iren. I.5.3.

Indeed, as a divine mediator and creative agent, she eclipses the Demiurge in the Valentinian creation myth.

Sophia contains numerous concepts. The term Mother is often allocated to her and it seems that she may have been conflated with the consort of the Father. She also is a failed female entity. As the *Gospel of Philip* 39 states: “Echamoth is one thing and Echmoth another. Echamoth is simply Sophia, but Echmoth the Sophia of Death.” The perfect consort may have been altered into this Sophia of Death based on the view that, since the most powerful principle after Good is Evil, it must originate from the second most powerful cosmic power.³⁸⁵ It would have been quite natural to make this second power female, since the second principle was traditionally regarded as a dyad (which is female).

Since Sophia connects the world of matter and the Gnostic equivalent of the world of the Forms, she can be regarded as the last of the aeons. In attempting to interpret this myth, Platonists assigned various roles to Sophia. She can be viewed as the receptacle of the *Timaeus*, hence the use of the term “mother” to refer to her. Because of her fall, she can be regarded as recalcitrant matter. Hippolytus at *Ref.* vi. 30.9 refers to her as “μήτηρ καὶ τιθήνη”, which evokes the “formless matter” of *Timaeus* 51a. Stead also adds that she can be identified with the world-soul; just like the human soul she falls due to her attachment to matter.³⁸⁶

It is tempting to discern Philonic influence on the Valentinian myth. Philo uses “God’s shadow” to denote either the Logos or the world vis-à-vis the Logos (*Leg. All.* iii 96, 100). In Philo, the world is God’s younger son, while the eldest is Logos (*Immut.* 31), God’s four offspring being Logos, Shadow, Demiurge and Prince. I think that the Valentinian myth is composed within the context of an interest in the origin of evil and within the framework of the temptation of Eve.

Sophia also owes something to the Holy Spirit, which Simon and Menander both regarded as the Mother of all beings.³⁸⁷ Christ in *The Gospel of the Hebrews* refers to “my mother the Holy Spirit”. Aphraates, a fourth century writer, claims that God is man’s father, but the Holy Spirit is his mother.³⁸⁸ The conception of the Holy Spirit as the Mother is a natural one, since *rûah* (spirit) is feminine in Hebrew. Since

³⁸⁵ Stead (1969), 99 cites the Naassene psalm in Hipp. *Ref.* v.10.2 in this context.

³⁸⁶ Stead, G.C. (1969), 100.

³⁸⁷ Petrément, S. (1999), 75 gives references: *Apocryphon of John* (BGp117 and parallels); *Gospel of Philip* 107, 18-27, 118, 24-25; 119, 16-28; *Apocryphal Epistle of James* 6, 20-21.

³⁸⁸ Aphrahat’s...Homilien, übers. V. G.Bert, TU 3, 3-4 (Leipzig, 1888), 297.

pneuma in Greek is neuter, *rûah* can be rendered in Greek by *Ennoia* or *Sophia*, which helps to preserve the female aspect. Theophilus of Antioch and Irenaeus' *Apostolic Demonstration* list Wisdom as the third person of the Trinity.³⁸⁹ The Holy Spirit is equivalent to creative Wisdom. Once the act of creation was devalued, a distinction was drawn between the supreme Mother as first emanation and a second divine Mother inferior to the first.³⁹⁰ It is only once *pneuma* is translated by the masculine Latin *spiritus* that the concept of the Spirit as a female divine principle disappears.

This is replaced to some extent in later Christian thought by the Virgin Mary by certain heretics who worshipped her as a goddess and regarded her as the incarnation of a cosmic power, Michael. The father, Christ and Mary were regarded as the Trinity by groups mentioned by Epiphanius of Salamis in the mid-fourth century. The Christian concept of Mary contains elements of the Mediterranean mother-goddess. An element of this occurs in the Barbelo, the second entity in the ontological scheme of the Barbelo-Gnostics. Although sometimes described as a male virgin, it is essentially a female generative principle.

I think that *Sophia* is likewise an attempt to preserve a female principle at the highest level. Within the tradition of intellectualising Greek religion is a monotheistic vein, terming Zeus ὁ Θεός and regarding him as the supreme cosmic intellect.³⁹¹ The rest of the Olympic pantheon become mere aspects of the supreme deity. An element of this occurs in the Barbelo, the second entity in the ontological scheme of the Barbelo-Gnostics. Although sometimes described as a male virgin, it is essentially a female generative principle. The *Apocr. Joh.* 5. 56 describes it as “mother-father”, “a womb for the Pleroma” and the “thrice-androgynous name” which indicates a dyadic nature.³⁹² *Sophia* is also an indefinite female dyad and this is how she comes to represent a cause of instability. These disparate elements combine to create the myth of *Sophia's* fall.

Letter to Flora

One of Valentinus' most important disciples, Ptolemy (floruit c. A.D. 136-180), was responsible for the spread of Valentinianism in the West and is the founder

³⁸⁹ Theoph., *Ad. Autol.* I, 7, 11, 15 and 18 Irenaeus *Demonstr. apos.* 5 and 10.

³⁹⁰ Petrément, S. (1999), 77.

³⁹¹ Dillon, J. M. (1999), 69.

³⁹² Dillon, J. M. (1999), 70 n.2.

of its Italic version. Some of his ideas can be found in his *Letter To Flora*. Despite its name, it reads more like a treatise. The text was preserved in a quotation by St. Epiphanius of Salamis (*Against Heresies* 33.3.1'- 33.7.10).³⁹³ Although it does not deal solely or even primarily with the Demiurge, it is valuable for our purposes, since it concentrates on one of the burning issues of the Christianity of its day: the importance of the Jewish Torah and its relationship to the Christian Bible. The addressee of the letter appears to be a mainstream Christian, to whom Ptolemy is expounding the details of Valentinianism. The language is non-technical and rather frustratingly alludes to a sequel, which will concentrate more heavily on metaphysics, but which does not seem to have survived (if it was composed at all).

“For some say that this law has been ordained by God the Father; while others, following the opposite course, stoutly contend that it has been established by the adversary, the pernicious devil: and so the latter school attributes the craftsmanship of the world to the devil, saying that he is “the father and maker of the universe”. (33.3.2 trans. Layton))

The closing phrase is of course an allusion to Plato’s terminology at *Timaeus* 28E. Ptolemy alludes to the belief advocated by certain Gnostic sects, most notably the Cathars and Bogomils, that the world is so imperfect that it must have been created by the devil, usually in this context known as the Cosmocrator. The majority of Gnostic sects, including the Valentinians, would reject this claim, seeing the Demiurge as a separate entity. Ptolemy’s defends the Demiurge, whom he equates with Yahweh:

“Now, it does not seem that the law was established by the perfect god and father: for, it must be of the same character as its giver; and yet it is imperfect and needful of being fulfilled by another and contains certain commandments incongruous with the nature and intentions of such a god.” (33.3.4 trans. Layton)

The law is regarded as the product of the demiurge or Old Testament god. However, Ptolemy views his law as inferior to cosmic law, revealed in the generation of this world by the true demiurge, who is the father of Christ.

“And, further the apostle states that the craftsmanship of the world is his, and that “all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made”, thus anticipating these liars’ flimsy Wisdom. And the craftsmanship is that of a god who is just and hates evil, not a pernicious one as believed by these thoughtless people who take no account of the craftsman’s forethought and so are blind, not only in the eye of the soul but even in the eyes of the body.” (33.3.6 trans. Layton)

³⁹³ Since the text is a word for word quotation, it is, in fact, reliable.

It is of particular interest that the father of Christ can be regarded as the true Demiurge. In the more fundamentalist Gnostic tradition, the Demiurge's malevolence (or sometimes ignorance) is responsible for the inherent imperfection of the universe. The Valentinians, as part of their attempt to bridge the gap between the Christian heritage of Judaism, Gnosticism and Greek philosophy, sought to reconcile the concept of an imperfect world formed by an ignorant Demiurge and the Platonic notion that the design of the world revealed the existence of the rational intelligence which had created it. The myth of Sophia allows him to regard the First Principle as ultimately the Creator, since the Demiurge creates after being inspired by the supreme God, although he is unaware of this.

“And if the perfect God is good according to his nature – as indeed he is, for our saviour showed that “one only is there who is good”, namely his father whom he manifested –and if furthermore the law belonging to the nature of the adversary is both evil and wicked and is stamped in the mould of injustice, then a being that is in a state intermediate between these and is neither good nor evil or unjust, might well be properly called just, being a judge of the justice that is his.” (33.7.5 trans. Layton)

As Ptolemy points out here, he does not regard the Demiurge as the devil, but they are both separate entities. Ptolemy is also more favourable to Yahweh than is typical of the Gnostics, not referring to him as ignorant, but as just (although not good). By implication, he is imperfect, since the higher God is described as perfect. Although an element of ignorance is conveyed in Ptolemy's description of the Demiurge as administering the cosmos according to the sort of justice that is his, he does display the rapprochement towards Judaism that led Petrément to refer to this as the Valentinian turning-point.

“And on the one hand this god must be inferior to the perfect god and less than his righteousness precisely because he is engendered and not unengendered – for “there is one unengendered father, from whom are all things”, or more exactly from whom all things depend, and on the other hand, he must have come into being as better and more authoritative than the adversary; and must be born of an essence and nature distinct from the essences of the other two.” (33.7.6 trans. Layton)

Although positioning the Demiurge between the devil and the true God is to be found in Gnostic systems that do not posit a Cosmocrator, Ptolemy is heavily influenced by the Platonic myth of creation in this description of three essences. This becomes more apparent in a subsequent passage:

“For the essence of the adversary is both corruption and darkness, for the adversary is material and divided into many parts; while the essence of the

unengendered father of the entirety is both incorruptibility and self-existent light, being simple and unique. And the essence of this intermediate produced a threefold capacity, for he is an image of the better God". (37.7.7 trans. Layton)

It seems that Ptolemy has been influenced here by the three elements of Sameness and Difference, and the mixture intermediate between the two at *Timaeus* 35 *Aff* in his explanation for the variance between the three entities here. At this point Ptolemy tantalisingly alludes to an esoteric Valentinian metaphysics concerning which he will inform Flora in the next instalment.

“And now given that the good by nature engenders and produces the things that are similar to itself and of the same essence, do not be bewildered as to how these natures, that of corruption and <that> of intermediateness – which have come to be different in essence arose from a single First Principle of the entirety, a principle that exists and is confessed and believed in by us, and which is unengendered and incorruptible and good. (33.7.8 trans. Layton)

It appears that Ptolemy is on the verge of explaining the origin of evil and the responsibility, if any, which he feels that the First Principle must bear for its existence. If the principle is one of totality, than it would necessarily include elements which could ultimately produce the Demiurge and the devil. But I fail to see how it is possible for Ptolemy to refer to the First Principle as corruptible. Perhaps it is only corruptible in the sense that even its hypostases can become corrupted (for example, Sophia) and this would explain how it gave rise to the Demiurge. Yet what we are taking about here are the hypostases of God, not actually the First Principle, which is Abyss.

The main value of the *Letter to Flora* is the information it provides on the relationship between the Demiurge and the First Principle. It is of particular interest since it is a document created by the Gnostics themselves, rather than information relayed via the hostility of the Church Fathers. In it, Ptolemy adopts a stance which differs from the dualistic type of approach that one might expect from a Gnostic, identifying three separate entities: God, Devil and Demiurge, rather than the more usual two of God and Demiurge. It is never quite clear how there is space in the Gnostic scheme for both Devil and Demiurge, but it is a product of Ptolemy's attempt to rectify the harsh dichotomy between Yahweh and the highest principle more usually found in Gnosticism.

The Fragments

W. Völker's traditional numerical order of the Valentinian fragments is not followed by Layton, who prefers to arrange the fragments based on the order of the Gnostic myth, while Völker Fr. 8 is listed as a separate section, VHR by Layton, as he regards it as a complete work, rather than a fragment. In the interests of clarity, my practice here will be to provide both numerations.

Layton V Fr. A =Völker Frag. 7, despite its hostile stance, reveals attempts on the part of the Valentinians to claim a certain degree of legitimacy. This is reinforced by claims made by Valentinus' followers that he had an apostolic accreditation for teaching, since it was claimed that he had been instructed by Theudas, a disciple of St. Paul.³⁹⁴

“For Valentinus says that he saw a newborn babe and questioned it to find out who it was. And the babe answered him saying that it was the Word. Thereupon, he adds to this a certain pompous tale, intended to derive from this his attempt at a “sect”.

This fragment was preserved in a quotation by Hippolytus of Rome *Against Heresies* 6.42.2. Whatever the reality of the situation, it does stress that the Valentinians did not see themselves as a schismatic group, however they may have been viewed by others, and expressly attempted to legitimise themselves in terms of the mother church.

What Petrément refers to as the Valentinian turning-point, the attempt by Valentinians to reduce the distance between Christianity and Gnosticism, is in fact the attempt by Christians to raise their own theology to the same academic level as that of pagan philosophy. They originally seem to have been a sect within the church, rather than a separate group, although in A.D. 692, we learn from Canon 95 passed at the Trullan Synod which dealt with the treatment repentant Valentinians should receive from the Catholic Church, that the sect still persisted.

From V Fr. B Layton (=Frag 9 Völker), it would seem that Valentinus was quite close to the Barbelognostics' threefold division:

“Valentinus, the leader of a sect, was the first to devise the notion of three subsistent entities (hypostases), in a work that he entitled *On the Three Natures*. For he devised the notion of three subsistent entities and three persons –Father, Son and Holy Spirit”.

This might even be a version of the triad Being – Life-Intellect. The source for the text is Marcellus of Ancyra, a fourth century theologian. The title is all that

³⁹⁴ Layton, B (1987), 217.

survives of this work. While it is possible that this work refers to the Trinity, it may also have dealt with the earlier tripartite division of the Barbelo aeon.³⁹⁵ These divisions correspond to neither the persons of the Trinity or to the Platonic triad.

At Layton V Fr. C = Völker Frag 1, Valentinus outlines the superiority of Adam over the Archons:

“And even as awe (or “fear”) overcame the angels in the presence of that modelled form, because it uttered sounds superior to what its modelling justified, owing to the agent who had invisibly deposited into it a seed of higher essence and who spoke freely: so too in the races of worldly people, human artefacts became objects of awe for their creators –for example, statues and paintings and everything that (human) hands make as representing a god. For Adam, modelled as representing a human being, made them stand in awe of the pre-existent human being; for precisely the latter stood in him. And they were stricken with terror and quickly marred the work”. (trans. Layton).

This reference to a “pre-existent human being” is not merely a reference to Genesis.³⁹⁶ What we have is a principle speaking through Adam, which may refer to the Word acting through him.

This situation is elaborated upon at Layton V Fr. D = Völker Frag 5:

“However much a portrait is inferior to an actual face, just so is the world worse than the living realm. Now, what is the cause of the (effectiveness) of the portrait? It is the majesty of the face that has furnished to the painter a prototype so that the portrait might be honoured by his name. For the form was not reproduced with perfect fidelity, yet the name completes the lack within the act of modelling. And also God’s invisible (agency?) cooperates with what has been modelled to lend it credence.” (trans. Layton)

Here the distance between pre-existent Man as envisaged by God and the actual production of Adam is stressed, a theme one can also observe in Philo. However, in this case the Archons can be blamed for the inferiority of Man, just as in the *Timaeus* the work of the Young Gods was responsible for Man’s mortality. Adam is still formed according to the divine image and the First Principle rectifies his inadequacy, since he improves upon what has been modelled.

Layton VFrF (containing comments by Clement) attacks the notion that the true God could be evil, criticising instead the role played by the Demiurge in creating a world that is inherently evil:

“Now like Basilides, he supposes that there is a people that by its (very) nature is saved; that this race, indeed, has come down to us for the destruction of death; and that the origination of death is the work of the creator of the world. Accordingly, he understands the scriptural passage (Ex. 33:20) “No one shall see the face of God and live” as though God were the cause of death”.

³⁹⁵ Cf. for example EgG 50 :23f.

³⁹⁶ Layton, B. (1987).

Layton VFrH =Völker Frag 2, preserved by Clement in his *Miscellanies*, (*Stromateis*) 2.114.3-6 (vol. 2 173.31 – 175.14 Stählin) is taken from the Valentinian *Epistle on Attachments*:

“And one there is who is good. His free act of speaking is the manifestation of the Son. And through him alone can a heart become pure, when every evil spirit has been put out of the heart. For the many spirits dwelling in the heart do not permit it to become pure; rather each of them performs its own acts violating it in various ways with improper desires. And in my opinion the heart experiences something like what happens in a caravanserai. For the latter is full of holes and dug up and often filled with dung, because while they are there, people live in an utterly vulgar way and take no forethought for the property since it belongs to someone else. Just so, a heart too is impure by being the habitation of many demons until it experiences forethought. But when the father, who alone is good, visits the heart, he makes it holy and fills it with light. And such a person with such a heart is called blessed, for that person will see God.”

This Forethought (Pronoia) is equivalent to Providence (BJN 4:26f, FTh), which in Gnostic myth is frequently identified with the Saviour.

The Valentinians consciously attempted to link themselves with the “mother” church, as well as mainstream Greek philosophy, as can be seen from this fragment, fortuitously preserved by Clement of Alexandria, *Miscellanies (Stromateis)* 6.52. 3-4 (vol. 2, 458, 11-16 Stählin):

“Many of the things written in publicly available books are found in the writings of God’s Church. For this shared matter is the utterances that come from the heart, the law that is written in the heart. This is the people of the beloved, which is beloved and which love him.”(VCHR g = On Friends – Völker Frag 6)

The publicly available books are the non-Christian works of Greek philosophers. Like Philo and others before them, the Valentinians sought to reconcile the truth they perceived in mainstream philosophy with their own religious beliefs by claiming that earlier intellectuals whose beliefs agreed in whole or in part with their own were inspired by God.

Summer Harvest

“I see in spirit that all are hung
I know in spirit that all are borne
Flesh hanging from soul
Soul clinging to air
Air hanging from the upper atmosphere (aithêr).

Crops rushing forth from the deep
A babe rushing forth from the womb.”

This text (Layton V Hr = Völker Frag 8) is a cosmological poem in which the writer, whom it has been suggested is Valentinus himself, describes the generation of the universe. It actually has nothing to do with a summer harvest and Layton plausibly suggests that it may have been a tune to which this poem was intended to be sung, although noting that this school frequently makes use of agricultural metaphors when considering emanations.³⁹⁷ The text itself has been preserved by Hippolytus, who quotes it in *Against Heresies* 6.37.7, and forms a useful comparison to the theme of Demiurge presented in the myth of Sophia. The text differs from traditional Gnostic material, being written in regular verse, and the speaker claims a personal authority for his knowledge (“I see in spirit”), rather than resorting to pseudepigraphy, which would be more common among the Gnostic sects. The author (I hesitate to write Valentinus) describes the ontological structure of the universe from below “flesh-soul-air-upper atmosphere”) while the “crops” are the elements emanated from the godhead into the realm of phenomena. The “Deep” is the Valentinian First Principle. Aether represents the Pleroma in its entirety, including Sophia.

According to Hippolytus’ interpretation, flesh refers to matter which hangs from the soul of the craftsman (Demiurge) –by this he means that the craftsman clings to the spirit of the outer fullness. The infant child may be a reference to Valentinus’ vision from which he is said to have derived his authority, although it is far more likely to represent the Logos (as it does in his supposed vision), and to indicate that he placed it next to the Father but above the other Aeons. According to Hippolytus, Valentinus distinguished three levels of reality, but these are not the triad of spirit, soul and matter. Stead suggests that the emendation Σιγήν for the MS πασι γῆν is wrong, although this leaves the genitive which follows unexplained.³⁹⁸ He inclines towards Hilgenfeld’s view that the emendation may be πηγῆν, which would imply a triad of the Father, the Aeons and the cosmos, which could be seen as equivalent to the Middle Platonic triad of God, the Forms and matter. This would suit what we know of the Valentinian sect, which is more heavily Platonised than Gnosticised. The soul in such a case, though, may not necessarily refer to the Demiurge, but rather to

³⁹⁷ Layton, B (1987), 346.

³⁹⁸ Stead, G. C (1969), 81.

the Platonic world-soul, which would equate to what is otherwise introduced as a “power” in Gnostic myth or “verbal substance” in Fr. V.

The Sethians

Prior to concluding, it may be beneficial to examine briefly Sethian Gnosis, a much more dualistic system with markedly less Platonic features than its Valentinian counterpart. However, it is an alternative example of Christian Gnosis, although it does not seem to have attracted the same hostility as Valentinianism from the “mother church”, probably because it was not as influential, exemplified by the limited records or references to it in the ancient sources, in comparison to the Valentinians.

In the *Paraphrase of Shem* (NHC VII.1) Derdekeas, the son of the highest entity (Pleromatic Light) is allowed by his father to grant a revelation to Shem. In this system there are three principles: Light and Darkness with intermediate Spirit. Darkness wants to retain the Nous revealed to Shem, while Light attempts to recapture it. This produces the conflict which leads to creation.

After the first clash, sky and earth are created and subsequent clashes produce living beings. This is reminiscent of Mandaean dualism. Perates (the Self-Generated) intermediate between Supreme Good and Matter descends to impress his father’s seals upon matter,³⁹⁹ echoing Man’s descent in order to create in the *Poimandres*. Perates recovers the formal principles and returns. Here creation is allegorised as a circular self-generating process.

Basilides adopts elements of this, expressed in a less dualistic form. He depicts the non-existent God creating the world by hurling his seed into the immaterial substratum. The First Sonship, Nous, returns to him immediately. The Second, Anima Mundi, is unable to follow, but ascends to a place near God. The Second Sonship is the Holy Spirit, but for Basilides she is not consubstantial with the Father.⁴⁰⁰ It is more akin to the veil of the Sethian system or the Horos of the Valentinians than Sophia.

The Third Sonship requires purification because “that has remained in the huge mass of seeds to make and receive benefits” (*Refutatio* VII.22.16). This Third Sonship allows creation to take place and it is also the one which becomes incarnate in Jesus:

³⁹⁹ Filoramo, G. (1990), 84.

⁴⁰⁰ Filoramo, G. (1990), 85.

“When the whole Sonship thus arrives [above], he says, and is beyond the boundary, the Spirit, then the creation will receive pity. God will bring on the whole world the great ignorance, so that everything may remain in accordance with [its] nature, and nothing desire anything contrary to its nature. (*Refutatio* VII.27.1)

In the Sethian system, man is created by the demon-angels. NHC II.1.15. 29-17.6 provides the details:

“The first one began to create the head: Eteraphaope Abron created his head; Meniggestroeth created the brain; Asterechme the right eye; Thaspamocha the left eye; Yerormos the right ear; Bissoum the left ear; Akioreim the nose...”

The text goes on to outline the creation of each segment of the human body by a demon in a similar manner right down to the toe-nails. It contains a detailed section on the creation of the genitals. Each demon controls that part which it created. Their mother, Onortocrasi, is pure matter, while the four chief demons are Efememphi (Pleasure), Iocho (Greed), Nenentophni (Pain), and Blaomen (Fear).⁴⁰¹

According to the *Apocryphon of John* the Mother tricks the Demiurge by informing him through the five luminaries that to give Adam life, he should breathe his spirit into Adam’s face.⁴⁰² The Mother’s power leaves Ialdabaoth and passes to Adam. Realising their mistake the Archons imprison Adam in the material world. The Demiurge or Ialdabaoth or the chief Archon – the terminology refers to the same entity- extracts Adam’s rib in his attempt to seize the Epinoia of Light, which flees. As a compromise the Demiurge makes a copy of the Epinoia: terrestrial Eve.

Ialdabaoth and Eve mate and produce Elohim (Cain, the bear-faced just god) and Jahweh (Abel, the cat-faced unjust god). Elohim and Jahweh are two Old Testament names for God. It is understandable that as God of the Law Jahweh should represent the unjust god, since that was the aspect of the Jewish God most objectionable to the Gnostics. But why is Abel unjust, when the Biblical Cain is the unjust brother? Perhaps this is a deliberate inversion. Cain presides over the higher elements (fire and wind), Abel over the lower ones (earth and water). It is difficult to see how Cain can be just when he unites with Abel to deceive humanity.

Epinoia-Zoe returns to Eve, who produces a child, Seth, with Adam. In other similar variants, carnal Eve produces Cain and Abel and spiritual Eve bears Seth. The Demiurge or Protarchon consults with the seven planetary archons and produces Necessity (*heimarmenē*), which seems to be a version of Plato’s *Anankē*. It cannot

⁴⁰¹ Filoramo, G. (1990), 92.

⁴⁰² *B.G.* 51.1ff.

eradicate the people of gnosis, so the Archons ravish the daughters of men, which produces sickness and death (NHC II. 1.30.4-7).

Eve is somehow possessed of gnosis, which she communicates to Adam. The Demiurge retaliates by splitting the androgynous aeon. This has the effect of making Adam and Eve oblivious of gnosis:

“We became darkened in our hearts. Now I slept in the thought of my heart.”

(NHC V.5.65. 21ff).

Three angels (these appear to be different to the Archons or demon-angels) announce gnosis to Adam and the future destiny of Seth’s descendants. This is clearly a duplication as exhibited so frequently in Gnosticism; in the original version, Adam must have learnt gnosis from Eve and then revealed it to Seth. Where does Eve derive gnosis from? The androgynous aeon must be Man, though it is unclear what ontological system would allow the Demiurge power to divide an aeon.

Noah’s generation ridicule the power of the Demiurge, and he decides to eradicate them. Noah is either warned of the flood by Light or reassures the Demiurge and is allowed to survive. Noah’s sons serve the Demiurge, but four thousand of the descendants of Shem and Japhet join with the people of gnosis. The Demiurge attempts to eradicate them a second time, but they are saved from fire, sulphur and asphalt by Abrasax, Sablo and Gamaliel, who descend on clouds and convey them to the higher aeons where “they will be like those angels, for they are not strangers to them, but they work in the imperishable seed” (NHC V. 5. 76 3ff).⁴⁰³

The Third Intervention occurs when the “Illuminator of Knowledge” defeats the Demiurge by performing miracles. The Illuminator appears to be the Saviour, who is an incarnation of Seth. However, the end will occur only during the time of the fourteenth kingdom when sinners will repent and be judged by the honest angels.

The Sethian system is less interesting for our purposes than that of Valentinus. Of note here is the extreme hostility to the Demiurge, who resembles an evil principle, like the devil cosmocrator of the Cathars and Bogomils. Here Eve is an illuminating principle, with no element of a fall expressed even in her mating with Ialdabaoth. Sethianism owes more to Iranian dualism than to Platonism. It is the Platonism of Valentinus which leads him away from the hardline dualism of this system.

⁴⁰³ Filoramo, G. (1990), 97.

Conclusion

Gnosticism, particularly its Valentinian variant or development, is particularly interesting in tracing the development of the Demiurge. Firstly, the Valentinian system itself was incredibly liberal, allowing scope for subsequent thinkers to develop or reinterpret the teachings of the master. Irenaeus comments: “Every day one of them [the Valentinians] invents something new and none of them is considered perfect unless he is productive in this way” (1.18.15). Here we have evidence of the similar type of phenomenon that was occurring in contemporary Platonism and which helps to account for the divergent traditions. In spite of the state of the evidence and the evident hostility of Irenaeus, through whom much of our information is conveyed, it is still possible to draw a number of firm conclusions concerning the Valentinian view.

Firstly, while we may be dealing with a heretical sect, what we are discussing here is creation in the Judaeo-Christian sense and not mere demiurgy. The Valentinians were after all “wolves in sheep’s clothing”, very much a part of the mother-church in their original incarnation. This, I would suggest, is one of the reasons why the Demiurge is a less important agent in the generation of the world than Sophia or Achamōth. It is Sophia who initiates the sequence of events that leads to creation; one cannot really expect the Demiurge to accomplish better than he does. Since he was conceived by Sophia without the will of her consort or the consent of the supreme principle, he is destined to be defective. He is forced to construct the world without any knowledge of the Forms since he was either expelled from the Pleroma at birth or was born outside it. The material which he constructs the world from is drawn from the negative emotions of Achamōth. It is not the case that the Demiurge is malevolent; rather he is an entity with limited resources.

The Demiurge’s role is undermined by his relationship to other figures. In variants which posit the Cosmocrator, both entities appear to be on a level of equality, although the Cosmocrator has the advantage of greater knowledge. This would seem to leave him incapable of combating evil within the material realm, which since he is described as good, one would presume that he would wish to do. He is also not the sole creator of the material realm, since Sophia is responsible for instilling spirit in man, which is the only positive aspect of creation. Christ is the true Demiurge in the

suprasensible realm, since in his stabilization of the Pleroma he performs the standard demiurgic action of imposing order upon disorder.

Valentinianism is an extreme development of the concept of the Demiurge as an insulator of the supreme God from the inherent badness of his creation. Still, in fulfilling that role, he is unsatisfactory as a divine mediator; a role which is fulfilled jointly by Christ in the soteriological sense, and by Sophia metaphysically. This helps to account for his role in the Valentinian creation myth, where he is certainly not a central character, and who emerges on the scene in what can only be described as an epilogue, after the main events within the Pleroma have already taken place. Perhaps one should expect nothing less from a system which undermines the very value of the creative act. The sole result of creation during Endzeit will be a more united Godhead, since presumably Sophia will have repented adequately for her transgression. In Gnosticism, there is no notion of world-cycles, so that this entire universe can be viewed as nothing other than a divine aberration.

Chapter 8: Plotinus and the Demise of the Demiurge

The Disappearance of the Demiurge

It would be inaccurate to claim that the concept of the Demiurge simply disappeared and to a limited extent it has persisted into our own time, although mainly as a result of having captured the non-philosophical imagination. “Demiurg” was a character in the 1988 novel *Overburdened with Evil* by the Soviet science fiction writers Arkedy and Boris Strugatsky. (The title refers to matter). In 1996, Lucasart released a game in which the player is called the Demiurge and has to manage heaven and hell. Most famously of all, Christ-Michael in Karl Heinz Stockhausen’s opera *Donnerstag aus Licht* was a trainee Demiurge, who had to be incarnated in seven levels of being before he was entitled to create his own universe. (Stockhausen was influenced by Gnosticism, which he encountered via *The Urantia Book*). However, its importance as a philosophical concept declined with the emergence of Neoplatonism, which propounded an alternative model for generating the physical cosmos, while still remaining loyal to the essential elements of Platonism in drawing a distinction between the suprasensible and phenomenal realms.

Essentially one can claim that the Plotinian model is midway between Darwinianism and Deism, or as Dillon puts it in terms of an ancient perspective, between that of an atomistic creation such as that advanced by Democritus and the model of the Demiurge that we find in Plato’s *Timaeus*.⁴⁰⁴ The concept of the Demiurge effectively reached its postscript with the emergence of this new creational model propounded by Plotinus. However, Plotinus still shares sufficient similarities with Numenius to have been accused of having plagiarised his predecessor, a situation which prompted his disciple, Amelius, to compose a treatise, *The Doctrinal Differences Between Plotinus and Numenius*, in his defence.

Although Plotinus advocates an alternative model for world-generation, he still attempted to answer the primary question of Greek metaphysics, which Plato had with the Demiurge; how can the multiplicity of the created realm be derived from the Monad? While the classic response of Middle Platonism had been to propose some sort of duality, Plotinus responded in terms of radical monism. Just as the Middle

⁴⁰⁴ Dillon, J. (2005), 263-266.

Platonists reduced the principles from three to two, he reduced them further. Everything owed its existence to the One. While the Demiurge presumably requires to produce in order to be regarded as a Demiurge (and there is evidence to this effect in the *Timaeus*, where he has to ensure that every aspect of the intelligible realm is instantiated in its physical counterpart or Plutarch's *Quaestiones Convivales*, where he must continually engage in geometry), the One does not require his creations.

Plotinus describes this creative process in terms of the radiation of light in diminishing degrees. This has often been referred to inaccurately as emanation. In fact, this implies that the process is one way, whereas in reality it consists of two stages: "procession" and "creative contemplation". Plotinus is under no obligation to insulate his First Principle from what it produces since it remains in its transcendent state, even when producing; although he acknowledges that the generated is always inferior to the generator (cf. V.4.2.19; V 5.5. 1-7, VI 9.3.45-9, VI 9.9.1-7).⁴⁰⁵

The One differs from the Demiurge also in that it does not order; it spontaneously produces a power which then orders itself in contemplation of the One:

“καὶ πρώτη οἶον γέννησις αὐτῆ· ὄν γὰρ τέλειον τῷ μηδὲ ἔχειν μηδὲ δεῖσθαι οἶον ὑπερέρρηκτο καὶ τὸ ὑπερπλήθες αὐτοῦ πεποίηκεν ἄλλο.”

“The proof that the One is complete and above completeness is that it has no need of anything and does not seek to acquire anything and because of the intensity of its completeness and super-abundance, another thing is produced from it.” (*Enn.* V2 [II] 1.6 , cf. V.2.1.1-18).

This is illustrated in the case of *Nous*; the One generates what can best be described as intelligible matter, but in a formless state, although it shapes itself as a result of its *epistrophê*. Although this idea of an indeterminate production ordering itself under the influence of a superior entity is alien to the *Timaeus*, where Necessity dominates the account of world-generation from below, it can be found in Plutarch's account of Isis or indeed the Numenian Second God's continual contemplation of the First.

While the Demiurge's production owes itself to his inherent goodness and ungrudging nature, this is not the case with the One: “All things when they come to perfection produce, the One is always perfect and therefore produces everlastingly: and its product is less than itself” (V I. 6. 37-9). The One produces in the following manner: 1) everlastingly, 2) from inexhaustible reality (VI 9. 9. 3-4), 3) without undergoing change (III 8. 8. 46-8, I, 4), 4) without deliberation or desire to generate (V.I. 6. 25 -7, V. 3. 12. 28-33, cf. V. 5. 12-43-9) and 5) without knowledge of

⁴⁰⁵ Dillon, J. (2005), 266.

products (V.7. 39. 19-33). The One has generated all possibilities: “it is not possible for anything else to come into being: all things have come into being and there is nothing left” (V 5. 12. 46-7).

The subordinate hypostases are not created from the substance of the First Principle, since it does not flow to them, rather from its power. *Nous* then produces its own matter which, turning back to contemplate it, is generated as soul. At the extremity of this procession, the soul of the universe (which for Plotinus represents *physis* or nature) generates sensible matter.⁴⁰⁶ Because of its distance ontologically from the One, it is unable to contemplate nature and from its attempt to turn back the sensible realm is produced.

The Plotinian model, in a sense, stands midway between the two extremes of demiurgy. It envisages no role for the element of planning prior to embarking on the world-production undertaken by the Demiurge of Plato or of Philo, even though the portrayal of world-generation undertaken by the Intellectual-Principle by its vision of the Good might seem to resemble the production of the Demiurge in accordance with the Forms.⁴⁰⁷ Conversely, although the sensible world is not planned, there is no sense in which it results from the mistake of a hypostasis, as with the Gnostic myth of Sophia. Rather, sensible matter is ethically neutral (although Plotinus acknowledges that the soul’s obsession with the material world can be the cause of evil).

Plotinus makes explicit the ontological status of his generative principle, unlike Plato. It is true that the *Timaeus* never mentions any god superior to the Demiurge, but equally it never identifies him with the Good of the *Republic*. Plotinus makes this identification explicit, referring to his supreme principle as either the Good or the One depending upon the context. Although Plotinus denied the existence of demiurgy above the level of *nous*, here I consider the One from the perspective of a generative principle, as it is the *father of the cause* (5,1 [10], 8). While the Gnostics provide a detailed account of the Demiurge’s ancestry, and Plato never troubles to explain where he came from (a moot point, if in fact he was only introduced for “the purposes of exposition”). Plotinus specifies the origin of the One. “He (the Good) is not to be classed as made, but as maker, we must posit that his making is absolute” (VI 8. 20. 4-6), or “the One causes itself” (VI 8. 13, 55; 14.41, 16. 14-15).⁴⁰⁸ Unlike

⁴⁰⁶ Gatti, M. L (1996). 33

⁴⁰⁷ *Enn.* VI.7. 15

⁴⁰⁸ Bussanich, J. (1996), 44.

the Demiurge, who even in Plato's *Timaeus* was of rather limited resources, the One possesses infinite power to generate the suprasensible realm (V 4. 1. 23-6, V 5.10. 18-23, VI 9.6. 10-12, II 4. 15. 17-20, VI 9.6.7-8 cf. V5 11. 1-2). However, Plotinus acknowledges that the analogies used in his account of world-generation are inaccurate: "For to say that it is the cause is not to predicate something incidental of it, but of us" (VI. 9.3. 49-50).

The predominant trend of the negative association of matter was continued by Plotinus, who regards matter as "evil itself" (I. 8. 8. 37-44, I 8. 13. 7-14) and as responsible for evil in soul (I.8.14). Although he refers to it as "non-being" (II 4. 16. 3, II. 5. 4-5), this is not a denial of its existence, but an assertion of how lowly on the ontological scale it ranks (and is therefore comparatively evil). While Numenius declared that matter was not derived from the supreme principle (fr. 52 Des Places), Plotinus could not accept that since it would posit more than one first principle and the relationship between the two would result from chance (I 4.2. 9-20). Matter is evil, for Plotinus, not because it is recalcitrant, but because of its lack of Form (I8,10 etc., II 4.16. 16-25, III 6.11, 15-45), although this evil can be seen in terms of deficiency, rather than as a positive principle (cf. I.8.3.16, II 4.16, 10-24, III 6. 14, 5-15). For Plotinus, matter never really takes on Form – rather its relation to the Form it adopts is comparable to that between an object and its reflection (III. 6.7. 23-43, 9.16-19, 13.18-55). Plotinus does state that each soul is dependent upon an individual archetype (IV 3.5, VI 4.4. 34-46), which is an easier transition for him to make than for Plato, since he regards the Forms as God's thoughts, but he does note that it would be ridiculous to postulate a separate Form of fire for each individual fire (VI 5.8. 39-46), though his position in this regard is ambivalent, since at V 7, he defends the concept of Forms of individuals of some sort.

Plotinus moves away from the dualism of the preceding period; since in his model of procession, Form is adopted by the lower ranking entity in response to the One, it reflects poorly on matter that it should be unable to order itself, rather than on the One because he cannot order it.

The Middle Platonic doctrine of the Forms as the thoughts of God has been rehabilitated by Plotinus. He identifies the noetic realm with the animal of *Timaeus* 30Cff (V9.93-8, VI 2.21.53-9, VI 6.7, 14-19, VI 7.8.27-32). For Plotinus, Forms are living intelligences (VI 4. 26, V 9.8.24, VI 7.9. 20ff) which do not require to be thought in order to exist (V 9.7.11-18, VI 6.6 cf. *Parm.*, 132B-C). While Origen was

at pains to maintain that the intelligible world had to be finite, since otherwise it would be unknown even to God (*De. Princ.* Frs. 24, 38), Plotinus viewed it as possessing infinite power (IV 3.8. 15ff cf. VI. 3.6. 10-12), though he clearly adopts this approach under Aristotelian influence. However, Plotinus does not posit an infinite number of Forms, since he denies the existence of infinite number (VI 6.2. 17.1-3, 18.1ff) and although Intelligence has no external limitations, once it adopts Form, it imposes limitation upon itself (VI 6.18, VI 7.17.14-26, 33.7ff).

Plotinus' model breaks with the traditional one of demiurgy, since he no longer views the generative principle as partaking in Being, as had been the case with the Demiurge of the *Timaeus*. This had to some extent been anticipated by Numenius in his identification of Being with the First Principle, rather than with the Demiurge, or in the position of the Demiurge in the Gnostic and Hermetic traditions. However, in these systems the modification has the opposite effect- the creative principle is demoted. Plotinus, by moving away from the demiurgic model and linking the supreme power with the demiurgic principle raises the status of world-generation. Simultaneously, he elevates the ontological status of his First Principle by placing it beyond Being (III 8.10.26-32). The realm of the One is not a mere blueprint for the intelligible world, in the manner in which it serves as the paradigm for the phenomenal realm; rather it is its source.

Such an exalted principle can still be responsible for generating everything else in Plotinus' system, since the product is always less than the producer and given the maxim "bonum diffusivum sui" ("The good diffuses itself"). For Plotinus, there is no need to posit an instrument which the One requires to order to produce (III 8.2.1ff, V 9.6. 20-24). However, Plotinus does posit numerous Hypostases, which are generated before sensible matter is reached. Additionally, the One never contemplates the lower entities, but "turns its attention towards itself" (IV 6, 18). Generation is a spontaneous process caused when the energy generated by this contemplation overflows (III 8.3-4).

Plotinus is opposed to the notion of demiurgy since regarding world-generation as having been preceded by deliberation would imply hesitation, which would lead one to locate doubt and ignorance in the godhead. For Plotinus, every aspect of the generative process occurs in the only possible way, because it is the best possible way (IV 4.12, V 7.1.21ff), Plotinus vocalises his opposition to demiurgy at *Enn.* IV 3.10, 13-19 and IV 4.11, where he points out that the activity of the divine

hypostases is more akin to the spontaneous processes of nature than the deliberations of human craftsmen.⁴⁰⁹

He does, however, make a concession to the *Timaeus* by acknowledging that the world is as good as if it had been planned with the best divine reasoning (III 2. 14. 1-6, VI 2. 21. 32-8, VI 7. 1, 28-32, VI 8. 17. 1-12), although he argues, like the majority of Platonists, that fixing a temporal origin to the world should not be taken literally (III 2. 1. 20-6, IV 3.9,12-20, VI 7. 3. 1-9). This Plotinian generation is continual and it does not terminate with intelligence, but must continue to matter (IV 8. 6, V. 2.2. 1ff), just as the sensible cosmos must contain all possible living creatures (*Tim.* 30C-D, 39E). This leads Plotinus to postulate the Principle of Plenitude: as many beings as possible and every kind of being, even though not all beings are equally good (II 9. 13. 1-5, 25-33, III 3.3 etc.), but if they were, the universe itself would be less perfect, just as with a work of art, which for the beauty of the whole may require elements that are less beautiful when considered in isolation (III 2. 11).

Interestingly, although Plotinus criticises the demiurgic model, the force of it is such that he considers the generation of the cosmos in terms of the production of a work of art. While Christians or Platonists do not have much choice about whether they are created or not, all entities in the Plotinian system demonstrate some sort of creative volition; ordering themselves in response to their contemplation of the One to the best of their ability. This leads Plotinus to conclude that every being seeks to return to its cause (III 8. 7. 17-18). Yet the metaphysical contemplation required to achieve this is not based upon looking upwards to the heavens, but contemplating oneself in order to revert to the cause (VI 9. 2. 33 -45, cf. *ibid.* 7.29ff). This leads to the two phases of Neoplatonic generation: procession (*prohodos*) and reversion (*epistrophē*).

Plotinus also adapts the Logos to his system. However, he is influenced more by the Stoic conception of the Logos as an entity regulating the Soul's governance of the phenomenal realm, than the Platonic or Origenian sense in which it is a separate Hypostasis that aids in creation. The Logos, for Plotinus, cannot be a separate hypostasis:

“To increase the Primals by making the supreme Mind engender the Reason-Principle and this again engender in the soul a distinct power to act as mediator between Soul and the supreme Mind, this is to deny intellection to

⁴⁰⁹ Wallis, R. T. (1972), 62.

Soul, which would no longer derive its Reason from the Intellectual-Principle, but from an intermediate. The Soul, then, would possess not the Reason-Principle, but an image of it: the Soul could not know the Intellectual-Principle, it could have no intellection.” (*Enn.* III. 2. 2.15ff.)

At III 2.2. 15ff, Plotinus discusses how the Logos functions:

“The Intellectual Principle is Reason-Form flowing from it. For the Emanation of the Intellectual Principle is Reason, an Emanation unailing as long as the Intellectual Principle continues to have a place among beings. The Reason-Principle within a seed contains all the parts and quantities concentrated in identity. The Intellectual sphere (the Divine) alone is Reason and there can never be another Sphere that is Reason and nothing else, so that, given some other system, it cannot be as noble as that first, it cannot be Reason: yet since such a system cannot be merely Matter, which is the utterly unordered, it must be a mixed thing. Its two extremes are Matter and the Divine Reason; its governing principle is Soul; presiding over the conjunction of the two and to be thought of not as labouring in the task, but as administering secretly by little more than an act of presence “ (III 2.2. 15ff.).

The notion of continual flowing here echoes Philo’s comparison of the Logos with the cupbearer of Zeus.

The Logos, despite the wide range of meanings which Plotinus bestows on the word, often refers to the relation of the Hypostasis to its source, products or both (III.2.2. 15ff.). The term is also used to refer to the causal principles in the divine mind; the same sense in which Origen uses it (*spermatikoi logoi*, III.2.2. 18- 71, V 9. 6. 10-24).

Another Interpretation

According to Anton, the decline in the importance of the Demiurge can to a certain extent be linked to the rise of theurgy in Platonic circles; the role of the artist-demiurge as the revealer of divine beauty is replaced by the theurgist.⁴¹⁰ According to such a reading, Gnosticism would be responsible for the decline of the Demiurge, since it was accompanied by an increase in the significance of theurgy. As Olympiodorus states in his *Commentary on the Phaedo*:

“οἱ μὲν τὴν φιλοσοφίαν προτιμῶσιν, ὡς Πορφύριος καὶ Πλωτῖνος, καὶ ἄλλοι πολλοὶ φιλόσοφοι, οἱ δὲ τὴν ἱερατικὴν, ὡς Ἰάμβλιχος καὶ Συριανὸς καὶ Πρόκλος καὶ οἱ ἱερατικοὶ πάντες”

“Some put philosophy first, such as Porphyry, Plotinus etc; others the priestly art, as Iamblichus, Syrianus, Proclus and all the priestly school.” (123.3 Norvim, trans. E.R: Dodds, Proclus, *Elements of Theology* p. xxii)

⁴¹⁰ Anton, J. P. (1992), 12.

Olympiodorus identified two stages in the development of Neoplatonic theurgy. In the first phase they began to conceptualise the demiurgic principle differently, exploring it dialectically.⁴¹¹ Furthermore, since the Gnostics disassociated God from the sensible world, knowledge of him could not be reached by contemplating the heavens, as it could for a Platonist. The attraction of Anton's theory lies in the implication that Gnosticism was doubly responsible for the decline of the Demiurge, although he proposes here that it was the result of the increase of theurgy that Gnosticism promoted, (as well as the decline in the social importance of the artist) that demiurgy as a concept fell from favour. However, by demoting the Demiurge in the first place, Gnosticism was further responsible for the decline of the demiurgic concept. The social importance of the artist presumably played less of a role, since it was not particularly elevated when Plato chose to use his image. In the Neoplatonic concept of the world, the soul could only know the *logoi* of the World-Soul, but not any higher entity.

Proclus

The Demiurge, of course, had to be reconciled with the God of the Judaeo-Christian tradition, whose God creates and still remains transcendental. Numenius' attempts to distinguish between a supreme principle and a demiurgic intelligence (Fr. 16 Des Places) is echoed by his Neoplatonic successors. Numenius (in his surviving work) leaves the Third God as something of a mystery; it appears to be a last vestige of the Platonic World-Soul, although since the Numenian Demiurge interacts with the phenomenal realm in a more immediate fashion than his ancestors, the World-Soul's role has disappeared.⁴¹² Proclus identifies it with the cosmos, although Numenius himself regarded it as "created" (ποίημα, δημιουργούμενον).⁴¹³

It would be wrong, however, to imply that Plotinus or his successors simply did away with the Demiurge. He survives, though occupying a role within a derivational, rather than demiurgic, model of world-generation. Additionally, the Neoplatonic systems tend to be more specific in delineating his ontological rank, not only identifying him with Νοῦς, but in Proclus' case, equating each subdivision of

⁴¹¹ Anton, J. P. (1992), 14.

⁴¹² On the basis of *In. Tim. III* p. 10.3.28ff., where it seems to represent the lower "dianoetic" aspect of the Demiurge. Cf. Dillon, J. (2000), 341.

⁴¹³ Dillon, J. loc. cit.

demiurgy with a precise form of intelligence. Indeed, much was made in the period of *Timaeus* 39E:

“ἤπερ οὖν νοῦς ἐνούσας ἰδέας τῷ ὃ ἔστι ζῶον, οἷαι τε ἔνεισι καὶ ὅσαι καθορᾶ, τοιαύτας καὶ τοσαύτας διανοήθη δεῖν καὶ τόδε σχεῖν”.
“According, then, as intellect perceives forms existing in the essential living being, such and so many as exist therein did he consider this world should possess.”

According to Proclus *In. Tim.* I p. 306 1ff, Amelius read this as referring to a demiurgic triad “he who is, he who possesses, and he who sees” (ὁ ὢν, ὁ ἔχων, ὁρῶν, based on ὁ ἔστι ζῶον, ἐχούσας and καθορᾶ). This idea of a demiurgic triad is incorporated by Proclus into his metaphysical system (although it was previously used by Iamblichus – *In. Tim.* 1. p. 308. 18ff). Proclus outlines his views on demiurgy in his *Commentary on the Timaeus*. He adopts the distinction drawn between the suprasensible and phenomenal realms at *Tim.* 27D3-28D4 “that which always is and has no becoming and that which is always becoming and never is”, positing an increasing level of multiplicity as ontological levels become more remote from the One. When Plato prefaces his remarks on causation by ὑπ’ αἰτιῶν τινός (*Tim.* 28A4-6), Proclus takes this to mean that the demiurgic cause is only one amongst several efficient causes (efficient is illustrated by the preposition ὑπὸ).⁴¹⁴

As the Demiurge is identified with Intellect, this places it third in the primary Neoplatonic triad of Being, Life and Intellect. This accords, incidentally, with the function of the Demiurge. As he is the conduit between the higher and sublunar realms, he requires proximity (ontologically) to the physical world. Demiurgic activity needs to be mediated if the Intellect is to remain transcendent. Proclus saw in Plato’s comments at *Tim.* 29A6, that the Demiurge is the best of causes, an assertion that it is superior to the other forms of demiurgic causes. Opsomer has analysed in-depth the structure of the intellectual hebdomad,⁴¹⁵ which can be subdivided into two triads and an entity that functions as a membrane separating the hebdomad from the other realms and providing internal divisions within its own hebdomad. (This echoes the ὑπεζωκῶς of the *Chaldaean Oracles*). The second triad duplicates the activity of the first, but at a less exalted level, thereby insulating it from matter. As the first member of a Proclean triad is usually concerned with inner activity and the Demiurge’s activity by its very nature needs to be external, he cannot occupy this

⁴¹⁴ Opsomer, J. (2000), 115.

⁴¹⁵ Ibid, 117ff.

position. The second member of a triad is typically associated with Life, though in the *Timaeus* account, the Demiurge is not principally associated with this, since he resorts to the mixing-bowl to produce soul at 41D4-5, but is able to impart intellect to the universe (30B4) by himself, so he logically occupies the third (intellective) position as intellective intellect.⁴¹⁶

Proclus draws upon the *Philebus*' statement that royal soul and royal intellect pre-exist in Zeus to posit two separate roles for the intellective triad as the fatherly cause of eternal beings, but as the demiurgic cause of mortal beings, with various distinctions drawn between the intermediary entities, which have combined titles. The "father and maker", therefore, (in which the fatherly element dominates) ranks above the "maker and father".

Another distinction drawn by Proclus amongst entities of his intellective hebdomad is amongst the four forms of demiurgic causes (*T.P.* 5.13; *in Tim.* I.310.18-24). It is the "one demiurge" who produces universal beings in a universal way (τῶν ὅλων ὀλικῶς δημιουργικοὶ ἀΐτιον), while the demiurgic triad produces partial beings in a partial way (τῶν μερῶν ὀλικῶς), a monad (Dionysos) produces universal beings in a partial way (τῶν ὅλων μερικῶς), and the lower triad (the Titans) produces partial beings in a partial way (τῶν μερῶν μερικῶς) [*in Tim.* I.310.15-18]. Opsomer concludes that the main distinction being drawn is not in terms of what is actually being created, but between a universal and partial mode of creation.⁴¹⁷ As has been observed the triads dealing with universal and partial demiurgy exhibit the same internal structure. Unfortunately, the section of the *Platonic Theology* which would have dealt with encosmic demiurgy (if this was ever, in fact, composed) has been lost.

The hypercosmic demiurgic triad (that responsible for the production of parts in a universal way) finds Platonic authority in the *Gorgias* myth with the division of Cronos' kingdom between Zeus, Poseidon and Hades (523A3-5). Zeus is more than just one of the three rulers, who divides the world, but in his role as the sovereign ruler, he is also the universal Demiurge. The second Zeus is a lower Demiurge, but still part of the chain originating with the first Zeus. The hypercosmic-demiurgic triad is responsible for existence, life and intellective reversion (the process whereby beings turn towards the ontological level which precedes them), activities which all

⁴¹⁶ Ibid, 117.

⁴¹⁷ Opsomer, J. (2000), 119.

exist causally in the universal Demiurge.⁴¹⁸ The problem Proclus faces in advocating such intermediary levels of demiurgy is not one of “contaminating” his Demiurge through proximity to matter, but one of “declension” (ὑφέσις), the decline of unity down through the ontological scale, which is why this hypercosmic triad is only responsible “for parts”.

The first triad at the hypercosmic-encosmic level consists of the third Zeus, second Poseidon and Hephaistos, who are “drawn into multiplicity by the Young Gods” (*T. P.* 6.15 p. 73. 17-19), and who separate the upper two levels of Proclus’ four levels of demiurgy from the lower ones. They form an intermediate realm between the hypercosmic and encosmic *diakosmoi*. Next follows the encosmic demiurgic gods, headed by Dionysos (a monad), who ensures the unity of the cosmos at the “inner-worldly” level. Dionysos represents the indivisible (held together by a totality) and divisible (a multitude of separable parts) nature of the universe. The encosmic Demiurgoi are Proclus’ equivalent of the “Young gods” of the *Timaeus*. Dionysos is followed by a triad of Titans, who engage in partial demiurgy. Dionysos himself, as noted above, produces universal beings in a partial way while the Titans produce partial beings in a partial way. The partial Demiurgoi also delegate some of their tasks to a plethora of lesser entities (such as heroes and *daimons*). The main distinction between universal and partial demiurgy is that the universal Demiurge can produce while remaining motionless (“he remained in his own accustomed nature” *Tim.* 42E5-6), while the encosmic Demiurgoi produce through their activity.

The identification of the first god of the hypercosmic-encosmic triad with Dionysos has Orphic associations. It draws upon a tale in Orphic mythology, whereby the young Dionysos, placed upon his father’s throne, is torn to shreds by the Titans. The Titans are struck down by Zeus’ thunderbolt in revenge, and the human race is reborn from their ashes, while Dionysos is reborn to Semele. This was interpreted as symbolising Dionysos’ divisible and indivisible nature (and by extension, as outlined above, the divisible and indivisible nature of the universe). His rebirth symbolises the regeneration of the universe, while the birth of mankind from the ashes of the Titans represents the demiurgy of man. Proclus regards the Titans as identifiable with the celestial, aquatic and chthonic aspects of Dionysos, paralleling these three divisions observable elsewhere. It is beyond the scope of our analysis here to comment in detail

⁴¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 120.

on these Proclean refinements, beyond observing that in his attempts at job demarcation, the lesser Demiurgoi have their activities confined to a particular division of the cosmos. Such a tripartite division of demiurgy raises questions concerning its interrelation with the fourfold division which Proclus suggests elsewhere. For all its complexity, the essential distinction being drawn is that made by Plato himself at *Tim.* 41A, between the Demiurge and the Young Gods.

As Opsomer notes, Proclus's scheme displays the tension inherent in two separate generative models; demiurgy and derivation.⁴¹⁹ Plotinus did not draw such sharp distinctions between the primary hypostases, though equating the Demiurge with intellect, but transferring his activities to soul. Porphyry finalises this process in his system, where matter is ordered by soul. The numerous intermediaries, then, inserted in Proclus' demiurgic scheme are not solely as insulation against the evil of matter, but preserve the image of continuous transition.

Proclus explains at *PT.* V 13 p.4. 14 -22 why he ranks the demiurgic function so comparatively humbly on the ontological scale:

“Where then are we to place it? All the partial entities which arise subsequently to the intellectual realm are more particulate than the single and universal demiurgic function; for the division of the universe into three and the leaders of the particulate creation manifest themselves at this level of reality; while on the other hand the beings superior to the intellectual level are defined by other properties characteristic of gods, as has been indicated above, and in general have been substantiated in the mode of unity and enjoy a level of superiority superior to that of the distinctness of intellectual forms. The only possibility remaining then is for the single Demiurge of all things to be ranked in the intellectual realm.”

One might also note by way of conclusion a pagan version of Origen's doctrine of the Trinity, which is shared by Proclus. Origen regards the Father as extending his power to every level of Being, including that which is lifeless, the Son to rational beings and the Holy Spirit to the saints. At Proposition 57 of the *Elements of Theology*, Proclus states that “every cause both operates prior to its consequents and gives rise to a greater number of posterior terms”. His supreme principle, the Good, extends its energy even to negations, *sterēseis*, including matter.⁴²⁰ Whereas *Noûs* affects everything which has adopted Form, Soul extends its influence merely to what has life. The Holy Spirit's influence in Origen's system does not correspond to

⁴¹⁹ Opsomer, J. (2000), 273.

⁴²⁰ Dillon, J. (1982), 21.

that of soul and the restriction of its power to the saints on Origen's part seems unnatural, since one would expect him to make use of a triad such as Being, Soul and Mind, with Being extending its influence to all things, Soul to all animate things and Mind to all intelligent things, not merely to members of a specific faith.

Traces of this doctrine appear in the *Chaldaean Oracles* “ Ἐνθεν ἀποθρῶσκει γένεσις πολυποικίλου ὕλης”. Matter is referred to as πατρογενής by Psellus at *Hypostases* Sect. 27 (p.207 Des Places). In this tradition, even matter could be regarded as the production of God, with the Demiurge encompassing what has Form and the World-Soul's influence extending to what had soul. Origen's attempts to use a much older tradition come unstuck as a result of his substitution of Soul with Spirit, which is not particularly straightforward, since the Christian tradition had distinguished the two from the time of St. Paul.

Pleroma and Noetic Cosmos

Another topic upon which it is worth passing some remarks is the manner in which the ordering model of demiurgy and the creative Judaeo-Christian model start to coalesce to some extent. This is not solely due to the activities of Platonising members of the Judaeo-Christian tradition, such as Philo and Origen, but also due to the emergence of Christian Gnosticism. Originally in Jewish or Christian thought, there was no notion of God creating according to a pre-existent model; the concept which we find in Philo and Origen has been imported from Platonism. This model, the *autozoōn* (Essential Living Being) becomes highly speculative as one descends through the Platonic tradition, with hierarchies of genera and species, leading Plotinus to describe it as a “globe with faces radiant with faces all living” (*Enn.* VI. 7, 15). This concept of the paradigm, according to which the world is constructed as the contents of the divine mind, can be traced back to Xenocrates' assertion that the supreme principle is an Intellect (which is necessarily engaged in thinking) and the Forms which Xenocrates equates with numbers (Fr. 34 Heinze) could be regarded, perhaps, as the contexts of this Intellect.⁴²¹

Though I have suggested above that Philo may be the first to have used the term “noetic cosmos”, I do not believe he was the first to develop this concept, as the identification of Forms with the *logoi spermatikoi* of Stoicism would easily have

⁴²¹ Dillon, J. (1982), 101. It must be noted that based on the extant evidence, Xenocrates himself does not actually draw this conclusion.

given rise to this theory. A comparable theory exists in Valentinianism with the view that the Aeons are the “thoughts of the Father”. The difference here is that the Aeons can be deficient in varying degrees, whereas this notion is never articulated in Middle Platonism. A related point is the rank accorded to the various Aeons, whereas the Forms are all on the same level (although subordinate to the Form of the Good). The imagery applied to the concept is similar in both cases –God is the “place” of the Aeons (cf. Philo, *Opif.* 20) and he is an undiminished spring (*Trip. Treatise*, Philo: *Opif.* 2, *Leg. All.* II 87, *Cher.*, 86, *Post.* 136), Plotinus *Enn.* III 8, 10, 5, VI 7, 12, 24).⁴²²

From the *Gospel of the Egyptians*, we learn that there are a mass of “thrones, powers and glories” which have not been characterised (54). This makes the Pleroma very similar to the noetic realm of Platonism:

“Corresponding to each of the Aeons, I saw a living earth and a living water and (air) made of light and fire that cannot burn (...) all being simple and immutable with trees that do not perish in many ways and tares (...)this way and all these and imperishable fruit and living men and every form and immortal souls and every shape and form of mind, and gods of truth and messengers who exist in great glory and indissoluble bodies and an unborn begetting and an immovable perception.”

The version of the Pleroma expressed here at *Zostrianos* 48 corresponds exactly to the Platonic noetic realm and illustrates the extent to which the paradigm from which the Demiurge creates or orders had become common currency by this period, shared by the major traditions. Origen is able to adopt this to a Christian context by locating the noetic realm within the Son-Logos, but the force of the concept is so strong that even he is not forced to justify why God should require a model at all. In the *Poimandres* 8, the *kalos kosmos* functions as a noetic archetype which God contemplates prior to producing the world. A major difference between the Pleroma and the noetic realm, however, is that the Pleroma is not meant to serve as a model upon which the world is based, since it results from to an error in the godhead.⁴²³ However, even here there is evidence of the traditions coalescing. Man serves as the archetype of mankind. In the *Second Treatise of the Great Seth* (NHC 53-4), Adam is the image of “the Father of Truth, the Man of the Greatness”. In the *Apocryphon of John* (NHC II, 1, 2, 5-14), “the perfect man”, the Barbelo, is the

⁴²² Dillon, J. (1982), 102.

⁴²³ Dillon, J. (1982), 106.

archetype for Adam. In the Sethian system additional archetypes of all the pneumatics exist in the Pleroma. The Pleroma, then, seems to be a Platonic import with a New Testament title.

Conclusion

The intense debate generated in certain quarters recently between Darwinianism and rational design can perhaps be paralleled in terms of the rival creational or demiurgic models of the first to third centuries A.D. That there clearly is a difference between creation (whether or not one wants to insist on *creatio ex nihilo*) in a Judaeo-Christian sense and demiurgy is beyond question. Just as the work of the biochemist Michael Behe has attempted to demonstrate Darwinianism and rational design are not necessarily incompatible, so the same may be said for creation and demiurgy. Indeed we could see the conflict of Darwinianism versus rational design as represented in the ancient world by the difference of opinion between Democritus and Plato.⁴²⁴

Origen and Philo, to take the case of the “creationalists” were prepared to incorporate elements of demiurgy. Most notable in this regard is the notion that God should create from a model, clearly not a Jewish or Christian concept. Conversely, Maximus of Tyre asserts that Zeus’ nod is enough for demiurgy to occur- a notion closer to Origen than to Plato. Additionally, the notion that God requires “tools” to create is not to be found in the Biblical account (although there he seems to require time). Since these “tools” are for the most part insulating hypostases, their origin can be traced back to the “Young Gods” of the *Timaeus*, but also to the winnowing-fan (πλόκων) at *Timaeus* 52E, which is used to separate out the different atoms, similar to Philo’s division of atoms on the part of the Logos-Cutter. This πλόκων is perhaps a reaction to the sieve (κόσκινον) which Democritus claims was used during the generation of the world.

Creation and demiurgy, then, seem to differ more in the nature of the mechanism they posit (a necessity when one proposes an omnipotent creator and the other a less exalted entity), rather than in terms of their original causality. Both are propositions along deistic lines, differing from the mindless “evolution” propounded by atomism or indeed the repeated generation of the cosmos found in Stoicism. In a sense, the Plotinian model can be viewed as midway between atomism and the deism

⁴²⁴ Dillon, J. (2005), 263.

advanced in different ways by creationism and “demiurgism” (if one can indeed posit such a term, since the existence of the Demiurge was not a doctrine that even most Platonists believed in) – for Neoplatonists the universe was produced according to rational principles, but this had occurred spontaneously, not thanks to the zealous concern of a Demiurge.

The metaphysical systems exhibited by those traditions which posit a Demiurge appear to become increasingly elaborate and in the case of some of the Gnostic sects, almost tortuous. This can be viewed as part of an increasing tendency of various traditions to either insulate the First Principle from the phenomenal realm or as part of a growing anxiety to increase his transcendence, as well as part of a drive for “one-upmanship”, claiming to accept, for example, the entities of a preceding intellectual figure and then going further back in tracing the cause of the universe. Plato may have had difficulty in finding the Father of the universe, but Numenius seems to have had no trouble in discovering its Grandfather! Additionally, Numenius’ tampering with the Platonic “trinity” of the Demiurge, the “Young gods” and the World-Soul, did not form a particularly satisfactory division, with the Third God a metaphysical hybrid formed from a lower demiurgic aspect, a World-Soul and a generated cosmos.

A related problem emerges in Plutarch’s attempts to express his view of the *Timaeus* in terms of Egyptian mythology- the correspondences do not quite work consistently, given his combination of the Receptacle and matter in the Form of Isis. His double-Demiurge is indicative of the tendency to strive for a greater degree of sophistication (or unnecessary complexity) than that of Plato’s *Timaeus*. With the Valentinian desire to make their Platonic inheritance compatible with Christianity, the incentive for developing Plato’s triad into something outrageously complex is easy to observe.

All cultures (presumably) speculate on the origin of the cosmos. There is nothing inherently “Greek” in that, nor does one require Plato in order to observe rationality and order in the created world. If God in the Old Testament can be regarded as a builder, then perhaps the thesis that the thinkers assembled here are part of the development of the demiurgic image (rather than merely speculation on creation) requires some defence. Against this I would contend that they are all attempting to various extents to respond to the nature of demiurgy, as advocated in the *Timaeus*. On a superficial level, all these systems make use of the entities (or

modified version of them) drawn from the demiurgic myth. More importantly, the nature of demiurgy is similar in broad outline- ordering of disorderly matter by an entity of limited powers in accordance with rationality, or “a beautiful model”. The nature of this limitation varies, from the negative influence of Necessity in the *Timaeus*, to the ignorant Gnostic Demiurge. Even in systems which envisage an omnipotent creator (such as the Judaeo-Christian one), demiurgy is assigned to a lower-ranking entity or hypostasis, such as the Logos or Son-Logos. Although the entities of Gnosticism can be viewed as caricatured or distorted versions of their Platonic originals, their ancestry from the *Timaeus* (or the subsequent philosophical tradition) cannot be disputed. The Demiurge might be an imperfect creator, but to a lesser degree so is his counterpart in the *Timaeus*, who is limited by Necessity. The Logos of the *Poimandres* may not be found in the *Timaeus*, but it does occupy a mediating role between the elements, though it evidently lacks the sophistication of its counterpart in Philo. The Gnostic Pleroma adopts the language used to describe the Platonic realm of the Forms.

This point can be made to a lesser degree regarding other interpretations of the *Timaeus*. It is clear that the Numenian account of the generation of the soul, enmattered as it is by the Second God, but with production supervised at some level by the Demiurge, is influenced by the co-production of the Demiurge and the Young gods. The mixing-bowl used by the Demiurge of the *Timaeus* is in some sense the ancestor of the elaborate system of hypostases, which are often envisaged as tools, from the representation of the Logos as a saw in Philo, to the mechanical imagery used by Maximus. The trend could also find justification in the description of the Young Gods, which led to positing various associates who aid the Demiurge during the process of creation. Such a trend was no doubt reinforced as it coincides perfectly with the unnamed associates who aid God in the Biblical account.

The pervasiveness of the demiurgic concept lies evidently in Plato’s philosophical importance and the esteem in which the *Timaeus* was held amongst the Platonic dialogues as a source for Plato’s metaphysics. In developing such powerful philosophical imagery to recount “a likely story” which “accounted for appearances”, Plato produced myth which could easily be adapted by other thinkers for their own ends (who could still have a legitimate claim for producing the more accurate story that *Timaeus* mentions possible at a stage in the future). Plato’s own ambivalence on certain points (especially the precise ontological status of the Demiurge), raised

interest amongst those keen on systematising his thought, but also meant that the imagery was flexible enough to be welcomed by other traditions and manipulated in suit their particular interpretations. Even Christianity, with its radically different heritage and fundamentally different vision of “creation”, was able to accommodate and indeed contribute to the debate on demiurgy (though this is largely indebted to the work of the Jewish philosopher Philo’s attempt to rewrite *Genesis* in philosophical language).

Although four separate intellectual traditions, Platonism, Gnosticism, Hermetism and Christianity, should not be conceived of as hermetically sealed units, but as interrelating to each other (though the direction of the influence is not always to be regarded as reciprocal). Analysing all four traditions allows the complex nature of the demiurgic concept to be revealed, from its more strict metaphysical usage through to various mythological permutations. Between all four traditions, a clear development can be observed, primarily centring on the Demiurge’s declining ontological status and the functioning of lesser entities in various ancillary or insulating roles, such as *daimons* or the Archons of Gnosticism.

Another question concerning demiurgy is whether it should be viewed as a continual, or a once-off event. While Plato was vague concerning this, Plutarch clearly views the Demiurge as continually ordering. Not enough of Numenius survives to make a definitive assessment, and the division of the Second and Third Gods may be a single occurrence. Still, one could argue that the Second God is continually instantiating the Intelligibles, as received from the First God. There is no doubt that Philo envisages the Logos as continually dividing. For Gnosticism and Hermetism, this can evidently not be the case; as the world is generated in these systems by a cataclysmic event, namely the fragmentation of the godhead itself, it has to be a single occurrence. This does not mean that both traditions have merely appropriated the language of demiurgy to describe a different process. Rather, they have accommodated certain elements of the Demiurge into their overall structure. After all, if one wanted to push the matter, the *orexis* (lust) of the Numenian Second God, could be claimed as the ancestor of the sublunar Demiurge of Gnosticism.

The double-edged problem facing those propounding the demiurgic model of world-generation is allowing the Demiurge to remain transcendent while still sufficiently immanent to create. This is evidently more acute for those who regard the Demiurge as the First Principle; the Gnostics have no such concern. The *νεῦμα* (nod

of Zeus necessary for world-generation to occur) proposed by Maximus of Tyre or the “other contacts and attachments” which Plutarch is so vague about helps to preserve this transcendence. However, it is not necessary to conceal aspects of the Demiurge’s causality merely to preserve his transcendence. Philo and Origen have more pressing demands to maintain divine transcendence and still develop a detailed model of how creation actually works, in spite of Origen’s claim that the will of God is sufficient. Indeed, they are additionally forced to posit the unity of the godhead, which can be compromised when positing numerous hypostases. As the Demiurge is by definition responsible for transmitting the Forms to the sensible world, he has to be placed quite close to it. This helps to explain his comparatively low ontological rank.

Perhaps the success of the demiurgic concept, and its impact even in our own time on popular culture (although in an extremely limited way) lies in Timaeus’ assertion that what he was expounding was only “a likely story” designed to account for appearances, and his admission that it would be superseded at some stage by a more accurate version, which would equally show that the world had been fashioned by a rational intelligence. Ultimately that is what occurred and “the likely story” became one influenced by Judaism, Christianity, or a more modern version of Platonism. That it lapsed from the forefront of even Platonic (strictly Neoplatonic) systems is largely because it had no response to the cogent argumentation of Plotinus that the world’s generation could not be the result of deliberation but must be spontaneous.

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