"The Form of The Formless":
A Hermeneutical Exegesis of the *Tripartite Tractate* from
Nag Hammadi Codex I

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Acknowledgement

Abstract

This is a theological and philosophical exegesis of the largest, and most systematic, extant Valentinian text: the *Tripartite Tractate*. While focusing on the detail of that text, there ever remains a wider concern for the fundamental orientation of the tradition within which it stands, particularly as represented by the other Valentinian texts of the Nag Hammadi Library. My intention in this study is to begin a hermeneutical engagement with the Valentinian tradition as embodied in the tractate . I have followed Ricoeur's method of entering the world of the text in order to discover its intentions and concerns, on its own terms and in its own language; to read from within it in order to articulate its meaning in a way that opens up its world to those reading it in an environment that is radically different from its original one. The study demonstrates why 'nonduality' is the only adequate characterisation of Valentinian Christianity.

Note on Translation

Unless specifically noted, the text of the *Tripartite Tractate* used throughout is my translation of Thomassen & Painchaud's *Le Traité Tripartite*, made with close reference to Thomassen's unpublished doctoral thesis 'The Tripartite Tractate from Nag Hammadi: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary', although there are substantial differences between the two.

The translations of the commentary from Thomassen & Painchaud's *Le Traité Tripartite* are also my own, as are the translations from Sagnard's *Extraits de Théodote*.

Other texts from Nag Hammadi follow the translations of the Nag Hammadi Studies series.

Note on Language

Unless specific individuals are being referred to, the use of masculine pronouns in this thesis includes the feminine as well as the masculine. This also applies to the use of the term 'man', and its equivalents.

Chapter One
Introduction

1.01 The Intention

This is a theological and philosophical exegetical study of the largest, and most systematic, extant Valentinian text; the *Tripartite Tractate*.[1] While focusing on the detail of that text, there ever remains a wider concern for the fundamental orientation of the tradition within which it stands, particularly as represented by the other Valentinian texts of the Nag Hammadi Library, (*Gospel of Truth, Treatise on the Resurrection, Valentinian Exposition, Gospel of Philip*), but also by the Patristic evidence (*Adversus Haereses, Excerpta ex Theodoto*, Origen's *Commentary on The Gospel of John* etc.).[2] However, I refer to these other sources solely in order to shed light on the meaning of our text, rather than with any comparative intent. And, while much scholarship has, rightly, concentrated on and emphasised the differences between the texts, I have found it worthwhile, illuminating even, to recognise and explore the coherence of the Valentinian tradition.

The question that informs the core chapters of this study is a disarmingly simple one, one which may at first seem naïve. It is: "What does the *Tripartite Tractate*, and more generally the Valentinian tradition as a whole, say?". One might object that, in the fifty years of scholarship since the Nag Hammadi find, surely that question, at least, has been answered. To a degree it has, but in a vital way we have only just begun to ask it. There has been precious little positive theological or philosophical engagement with this tradition as presented in its surviving texts. Virtually all scholarship has treated the texts as objects to study, classify and explain through the dominant historical paradigm of the *religionsgeschichtliche Schule*,[3] with its belief that the nature of a religion can be understood through an examination of the origins of its predominant, themes, motifs and attitudes. This approach is openly declared in the subtitle to Kurt Rudolph's influential book *Gnosis: The Nature and History of Gnosticism*. I am not dismissing the historical approach to religion, only denying that it can bring us to a theological or philosophical meeting with it in its own right. To bring about this sort of meeting, an entirely different approach is needed, namely, a hermeneutical one. My intention in this study is to begin a hermeneutical engagement with the Valentinian tradition as embodied in the *Tripartite Tractate*.

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1. It probably was written in the first half of the third century, see Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, pp.18-20, and Attridge and Pagels, 'The Tripartite Tractate: I, 5:51.1-138.27', in *Nag Hammadi Codex I (The Jung Codex): Notes*, p.178. The only surviving text that we have is an imperfect Coptic translation of the original Greek.
2. For a concise overview of the sources of our understanding of Valentinian Christianity, and of that understanding itself, see Desjardins, *Sin in Valentinianism*, pp.3-16.
3. "History of Religions School".

1.02 Why the *Tripartite Tractate*?

In their notes to the critical edition with English translation Attridge and Pagels state that the tractate, "revises the major themes of Valentinian theology more radically than any other extant source and approximates more closely than any other Valentinian thinker to the positions taken by more orthodox theologians of the third and fourth centuries".[4] It may then seem, at the very least, an odd choice of text if, as I have stated, my interest extends to the Valentinian tradition as a whole. However the situation is not quite as clear cut as the above statement makes it seem. There is, in fact, no existing text that presents all of the major themes of Valentinian theology as the heresiologists, the Church Fathers, describe them, and there is a great deal of speculation as to what that original theology comprised.

Another important point is that, as I have mentioned, we have not yet begun to engage with the Valentinian texts theologically or philosophically. While there has been plenty of classification and comparison of motifs in the various sources, little thought has been given to the ontological ground to which the sources refer and which they share. The question of *where* these texts are looking has not been considered. When the question of the function and intention of the texts has been examined, the answers have been social, political and economic, not theological.

For the present study the *Tripartite Tractate* has a great benefit over the other Valentinian texts; its size and its nature:

> The text is one of the longest (88 pages) and best preserved documents in the Nag Hammadi library. ... In its detailed, comprehensive and systematic theological speculation it is virtually unparalleled among Nag Hammadi texts. Only *A Valentinian Exposition* (CG XI,2) follows a similar program. Among other theological literature of the second and third centuries Origen's *De principiis* may offer the closest parallel in terms of genre.[5]

Thus its apparent intention, unlike that of the *Gospel of Truth* or the *Gospel of Philip*, is the presentation of an entire theological system. The intentions of the other texts, the much shorter *Valentinian Exposition* aside, are less apparent and more circumscribed. Thus the *Treatise on the Resurrection* does not treat the emanation of the Pleroma, and the *Gospel of Truth* does not closely consider the downward movement of the soul, and neither of them explicitly mentions the Sophia myth, because their intentions do not necessitate the inclusion of these subjects.

This brings us to the related subject of language. The various texts use the language that is appropriate to their respective subjects, which makes it very difficult to speak of one representing a demythologised school of thought and another the opposite. Whereas with a systematic text such as the *Tripartite Tractate* one is able to consider its use of language more broadly, as befits its broad nature. Finally, it is because of its nature that it is much more appropriate to attempt to orient the other texts to it rather than the other way around. Though as I have said, my concern here is not a comparative one. The method that I employ in this study is explored in Chapter 2, but first it is necessary to situate this study in relation to the scholarship in the field.

The philosophers and theologians of antiquity identified the nature of each and every manifest being, including man, with its origins. In this way the question of origins was directly linked with the question of destiny.

4.   Attridge and Pagels, 'The Tripartite Tractate: I, 5:51.1-138.27', in *Nag Hammadi Codex I (The Jung Codex): Introductions, Texts, Translations, Indices*, p.177.
5.   Attridge and Pagels, 'The Tripartite Tractate: I, 5:51.1-138.27', in *Nag Hammadi Codex I (The Jung Codex): Introductions, Texts, Translations, Indices* p.177.

The same is equally true of modern man, only the dominant paradigm and ontology through which such questions are asked has radically changed. One could reasonably say that the ontology within which modern western man thinks is the complete inverse of that in which the ancients thought. Once, that which is beyond being, namely, God was known to be the most real. And matter, being the most susceptible to change, was understood as being the least real, since it is furthest from the unchanging reality of the Ultimate. Today matter is considered the most real and God is considered to be nothing more than an abstraction.

Equally so, the eternal was once rated much more highly than the temporal, and it was there that man sought his origins and thus his nature. Today however the opposite is true and history has taken on the power of being the fundamental cause of all that is. Thus modern man looks for his origins in the history and prehistory of the physical world.

This attitude is so deeply embedded in the way we look at the world that to question it is virtually unthinkable, as it is part of what Heidegger calls our 'preunderstanding'.[6] This same paradigm rules modern scholarship. It is axiomatic that the nature (essence) of whatever phenomenon is under investigation, be it a species of animal, a work of art or an idea, is to be found in its history. The field of 'Gnostic' scholarship is no different, as can be seen from the fact that the majority of scholars in this field are to be found in departments of religious history. In his important book *Rethinking "Gnosticism" : An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category*, M.A. Williams points out that,

> At least since the work of the eighteenth-century Italian scholar Giambattista Vico, one of the presuppositions informing much research on religion has been that "the nature of any cultural product cannot be understood or known ahistorically — that is, without reconstructing its origins and causes".[7]

This attitude dominated 'Gnostic' scholarship throughout the 20th century. Behind Williams's succinct encapsulation of this presupposition, given above, are to be found several more fundamental presuppositions shared by modern scholars of religion. The most important is that religion is entirely a man-made artifact. There is a fundamental difference in orientation between this view and one which holds that religion is man's response to divine revelation. Williams's impressive book is not unusual in its field for not once mentioning revelation. Today God is simply not taken into account in the history of religion. I will return to this theme later, but first we must take an overview of the present state of the study of 'Gnosticism'.

1.03 The Importance of Williams's *Rethinking "Gnosticism"*

Prior to M.A. Williams's recent book *Rethinking "Gnosticism"*, this thesis would have been classed among the studies of one of the most influential schools of the 'Gnostic religion'. That this is no longer possible is one of the most significant occurrences in the history of this field of study, for Williams has demonstrated that the category 'Gnosticism' is irreparably flawed and that it must now be discarded.

The importance of his work lies in three directions. Firstly, it is one of the most complete and up to date surveys of the field. Secondly, it offers one of the clearest and most critical accounts of the dominant methodology in the field while remaining true to

6. See sections 2.03-2.08 below.
7. Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism"*, p.213. The quotation is from Preuss, J. S., *Explaining Religion: Criticism and Theory from Bodin to Freud*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1987), p.81.

that method. Finally, it effectively dispels the majority of the cliches and caricatures that have hindered a genuine historical understanding of the ancient sources that have been tarred with the brush of 'Gnosticism'.

It is for these reasons that considerable attention will be paid to Williams's study. Such attention is not out of place in the study of a work of Valentinian theology (which this thesis is), since the Valentinians have always been considered 'Gnostics' *par excellence*, and virtually all of the cliches of 'Gnosticism' have been applied to them at one time or another. Of course, the examples used will be, wherever possible, those most relevant to this study.

By being clear about what it was not, we shall be better able to see what Valentinian theology, and the texts that it produced, was. However the interests of this study, as we shall see, are unlike those of Williams and most other scholars in the field to the extent that they are not historical, which is not to say that extensive use will not be made of the historical scholarship.

1.04 The *Religionsgeschichtliche Schule*

Williams points out that the *religionsgeschichtliche Schule*, or history-of-religions school, as represented by such scholars as Wilhelm Bousset and Richard Reitzenstein, began its search, in the late nineteenth century, for the origins of 'Gnosticism' through the process of motif-derivation: "a religion was understood, it was argued, if one clarified that a certain motif within it derived from Babylonian myth and another motif derived from Iranian myth, and so on".[8] The inevitable conclusion of this method, which dominated the scholarship of the first half of the twentieth century and which remains influential, was that the 'Gnostics' were syncretistic dabblers. As recently as 1991 Bernard McGinn in his study of Western Christian Mysticism wrote that while we cannot reduce 'Gnosticism' to a search for its origins, "there can be no question that the Gnostics were eclectic, picking and choosing what they found useful".[9]

However, the generation of scholars that followed Reitzenstein rose up in what Williams calls "phenomenological revolt"[10] and the emphasis of the *religionsgeschichtliche Schule* was altered. What now came into focus was the essence of 'Gnosticism' as a whole in its own right. While the search for its origins continued, 'Gnosticism' was seen as being neither Christian nor Jewish nor Platonic but as something altogether new and sinister. It was claimed that this new religion was quite different for those from which it borrowed in that its 'attitude' was one of revolt.

> They had an attitude of "protest" or of "revolt," an "anticosmic attitude." This attitude allegedly showed up in the way "gnostics" treated Scripture (they are alleged to have reversed all its values), viewed the material cosmos (they supposedly rejected it), took an interest in society at large (they didn't, we are told), felt about their own bodies (they hated them). These revolutionaries are supposed to have lacked any serious ethical concern, and to have been driven instead by their attitude toward their cosmic environment to one of two characteristically "gnostic" forms of behavior: fanatical ascetic renunciation of sex and other bodily comforts and pleasures, or the exact opposite, unbridled debauchery and lawbreaking. "Gnostics," it is asserted, had no worries about their own ultimate salvation, since they understood themselves to be automatically saved because of their

8.   Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism"*, p.215.
9.   McGinn, *The Foundations of Mysticism: Origins to the Fifth Century*, p.90.
10.   Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism"*, p.215.

inner divine nature. With salvation predetermined, ethics were irrelevant to them.[11]

This is not the place to give a detailed account of Williams's arguments, for he spends a chapter each carefully dismantling these apparent manifestations of the 'Gnostic' attitude one-by-one: protest exegesis; parasitism; anticosmic world-rejection; hatred of the body; asceticism/libertinism; and deterministic elitism. However it is worth considering the first three characterizations in this list since they clear so much misunderstanding from the field and at the same time reveal so much about the methodology employed in it.

1.05 Protest Exegesis

Protest exegesis is the first, and one of the most important, of the characterisations of 'Gnosticism' since it is often used as the main evidence for other alleged instances of the 'Gnostic attitude' such as "anticosmism".[12] Hans Jonas has been particularly influential here in his insistence that the 'Gnostic' interpretation of scripture is fundamentally different from that of most other ancient allegorical interpreters.

> Instead of taking over the value-system of the traditional myth, it proves the deeper "knowledge" by reversing the roles of good and evil, sublime and base, blest and accursed, found in the original. It tries, not to demonstrate agreement, but to shock by blatantly subverting the meaning of the most firmly established, and preferably also the most revered, elements of the tradition. The rebellious tone of this type of allegory cannot be missed, and it therefore is one of the expressions of the revolutionary position which Gnosticism occupies in late classical culture?[13]

Williams credits Kurt Rudolph with the popularization of the theme of protest which has been taken up by many, including Giovanni Filoramo[14] and Iano Culianu.[15] The spanner that Williams throws into this neat theory is that there is no systematic or mechanical reversal to be found in the sources. What he shows is that, far from there being a central hermeneutical principle of the total and intentional reversal of the values of scripture, not only is there "a remarkable variety in hermeneutical approach *among* all these sources", but also "even within individual sources, we do not encounter the consistent and systematic reversal of values that modern discussion would so often lead the reader to expect".[16] The variety and complexity of 'Gnostic exegesis' has been demonstrated in studies by Nagel,[17] Filoramo and Gianotto,[18] and Pearson[19] despite their

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11. Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism"*, p.5.
12. Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism"*, p.54.
13. Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion*, p.92.
14. Filoramo, *A History of Gnosticism*.
15. Culianu, *The Tree of Gnosis*. See also, Dahl, 'The Arrogant Archon and the Lewd Sophia: Jewish Traditions in Gnostic Revolt'.
16. Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism"*, p.57, the emphasis is Williams's.
17. Nagel, P., "Die Auslegung der Paradieserzählung in der Gnosis", in Tröger, K-W., ed., *Altes Testament-Frühjudentum-Gnosis: Neue Studien zu "Gnosis und Bibel"* (Gütersloher: Verlagshaus Mohn, 1980), pp.49-70.
18. Filoramo, G. and C. Gianotto, "L'interpretazione gnostica dell'Antico Testamento: Posizioni ermeneutiche e techniche esegetiche", *Augustinianum* 22 (1982): 53-74.
19. Pearson, "Use, Authority and Exegesis of Mikra in Gnostic Literature", in Mulder, M. J. and H. Sysling, eds., *Mikra: Text, Translation, Reading and Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity*. Compendium Rerum Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum, 2.1. (Assen/Maastricht and Philadelphia: Van Gorcum and Fortress Press, 1988), pp.635-52.

acceptance of the notion of the 'Gnostic' negative attitude.[20] Thus, Williams's argument goes, the 'reversals' that do occur cannot be attributed to a single principle of protest. Something quite different is behind this process.

What Williams found was that each 'reversal' is linked to a passage in Jewish scripture that had long been of notorious difficulty to the exegete.

> Some of these "scriptural chestnuts", had begun to be perceived as problems generations or centuries before the beginning of the Common Era, and their difficulties had been resolved in various ways. A large number of these problematic elements in Scripture would fall under the category of scriptural anthropomorphisms or anthropopathisms, passages that describe God as though God had the form or emotions of a human being. But other "problem passages" about God do not really involve any human shape or attribute, but only some element (God appearing in a fiery aspect, for example) that seems unsuitable or unworthy of divine transcendence. Still other passages were not directly about God at all but involved, for example, embarrassing behavior on the part of a revered patriarch.[21]

These were passages that clearly exercised many early Christian theologians. Thus the 'Gnostic' concern over these passages and their alternative solutions for them are best seen in the broader context of the early Christian interpretation of the new revelation as being prefigured in the Old Testament and of hermeneutical strategies, such as allegory and typology, that were devised to overcome such generally perceived difficulties.

Williams understands these findings to be significant on two accounts. Firstly, theories about the nature of 'Gnostic hermeneutics' have been used as one of the primary supports for further sociological and historical inferences. Thus Jonas saw in these apparent reversals the manifestation of what he took to be the attitude at the heart of the 'Gnostic religion'. The next, even more inferential, step, which was taken boldly by Pearson was to "sociohistorically" locate these protesters and the conditions against which they were protesting[22] thus seeking out the origins of this religion of revolt. This has led to the reading back into the sources conditions and attitudes that they do not in fact reflect.

Secondly, Williams finds that there is no single 'Gnostic exegesis' such as Jonas posited by choosing the most radical reversals as revealing the true spirit of 'Gnosticism'. And without this common hermeneutical principle a powerful element in the construction 'Gnosticism' disappears.

1.06 Parasitism

In his fourth chapter Williams examines the various metaphors that have been employed in attempts to encapsulate the essence of the construct 'Gnosticism'.

One of the earliest metaphors, recognised by Williams as a medical one, was used by Adolf von Harnack who in his *History of Dogma*[23] described 'Gnosticism' as "the acute secularising or hellenising of Christianity". In viewing 'Gnosticism' as being specifically a Christian heresy he saw it as a particularly 'acute' form of the more chronic influence of Hellenistic culture on orthodox Christianity.[24]

20. See Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism"*, pp.57-59 for a survey of their findings.
21. Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism"*, p.63.
22. See Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism"*, pp.77-78.
23. Harnack, *History of Dogma*, Vol. 1 (London: Williams & Norgate, 1905), pp.227-228.
24. See Rowe, 'Adolf von Harnack and the Concept of Hellenization'. A good example of a recent study that defines 'Gnosticism' as a form of Hellenized Christianity is, Roukema, *Gnosis and Faith in Early Christianity*.

Although Jonas spoke of "Gnostic exegesis" as being a "heretical method",[25] his identification of the attitude of revolt as the defining feature of 'Gnosticism' led him to view it as a totally new and different religion in its own right, rather than as a heretical form of Judaism or Christianity, or as being nothing more than a form of syncretism. Because of the largely Judeo-Christian flavour of the sources, his insistence on the essential difference of 'Gnosticism' from those traditions led him to adopt the mineralogical metaphor of 'pseudomorphism'. A pseudomorph occurs where crystalline material fills spaces left by other crystals that have disintegrated and thus takes on a crystalline form that is not its own and which as a result cannot be told apart from true crystals of that form without further analysis. Hence 'Gnosis' was a pseudomorph in which, "the cultural space vacated by disintegrating elements in Greek culture was filled by new content from cultures further east".[26]

One of the most recent and popular metaphors used by scholars of 'Gnosticism' is that of 'parasitism' which has been credited to Ugo Bianchi by Kurt Rudolph who has popularised it. Here 'Gnosis' is depicted not as true religion in its own right, on a par with the great religions of the world, but as an attitude that attaches itself to and lives off the authentic religions:

> Since this view of the world attaches itself in the main to the older religious imagery, almost as a parasite prospers on the soil of "host religions", it can be also described as parasitic. To this extent Gnosticism strictly speaking has no tradition of its own but only a borrowed one. Its mythology is a tradition consciously created from alien material, which it has appropriated to match its own basic conception.[27]

Williams points out that, according to Birger Pearson, it is because of this parasitism that 'Gnosticism' is so difficult to define, since the 'Gnostics' always sought entry into their host religious communities by, for instance, 'Christianizing' the various elements of their myths, especially their "revealer figure".[28]

The parasite metaphor has been further extended by Guy Stroumsa with a return to medical imagery by calling 'Gnosticism' a 'parasitical virus'. Here the implication is that 'Gnosticism' produces mutations in the tradition to which it attaches itself. Stroumsa also considers that the essence of this pseudo-religion was the, "'coherent radicalization' of a pessimistic and dualist attitude".[29] Thus the world rejection that has been falsely read into the sources has then been used as a basis for this prejudicial metaphor.

Williams shows that these metaphors have several aims. Firstly they try to express what is seen as the "transtraditional character"[30] of 'Gnosticism'. This avoids confining and also giving it a valid claim to any single tradition, especially Christianity. Secondly, these metaphors indicate the dependence of 'Gnosticism' on the true religions from which it 'borrowed' and into which it tried to insinuate itself.

Williams finds serious problems with these metaphors, especially those of 'parasite' and 'virus'. Firstly, they tend to be, "inherently prejudicial, connoting pestilent entities that infest and feed off another organism to the latter's detriment, or at least with no benefit to the host organism".[31] Though Williams says very little else about the prejudicial nature of these metaphors, they indicate an attitude towards these sources that is widely held in the field and which deserves further examination, and so we shall be returning to this subject

25. Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion*, p.95.
26. Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism"*, p.80.
27. Rudolph, *Gnosis: The Nature and History of Gnosticism*, pp.54-55.
28. Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism"*, p.81.
29. Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism"*, p.82.
30. Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism"*, p.82.
31. Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism"*, p.82.

in Chapter 2.[32]

The second serious problem with the 'parasite' metaphor is that it creates "a special class of organism in the history of religions, when in fact the phenomena at hand are understandable in terms of normal and expected processes in religious innovation and the emergence of new religious movements".[33]

> However, this is the way innovation in religious traditions works everywhere. In this sense, every new religion has begun as a "parasite." Christianity, for example, grew parasitically from Jewish, Hellenistic, and other religious traditions. So did Judaism, or Islam, or Buddhism. With Rudolph's comment about a "pure" gnosticism in mind, we might ask, for example, what a "pure" or "nonparasitical" Christianity would look like? Would it be a Christianity with no elements of Jewish tradition in it at all, nor any traces of Greek or Roman religious or philosophical tradition? If the mere presence of elements of these earlier traditions in Christianity were what made it "parasitical," then we would probably never expect anything but a parasitical form of this religion.[34]

Thus, Williams points out, what is really being spoken about as a 'parasitical' religion is really one or a series of less successful innovations, which were unable to grow into religious traditions in their own right. There is, in fact, constant innovation within religious traditions, very few of which survive and thrive enough to become successful new religions. He also notes that very few innovators ever intend to produce completely new religious movements.

> Most innovators understand themselves to be remaining well within an existing religious tradition and only to be elaborating that tradition's inherent implications. There is little indication, for example, that Valentinus or Ptolemy or other early teachers in the Valentinian circles were intending to replace Christianity with a distinctly new religion.[35]

The third problem with the 'parasite' metaphor is that it confusingly personifies a world view. This metaphor is, "misleading because it conveys the impression of an autonomous set of religious themes, or myths, or practices, or attitudes that somehow hopped around from one religious community to the next".[36] However it is not worldviews that attach themselves to older traditions, rather it is people who, "hold or adopt worldviews and transmit, borrow, or adapt tradition".[37] To speak of 'Gnosticism' having no tradition, is to deny that the innovators had their own traditions. It is through such metaphors as 'parasite' that the relation of innovators to tradition is concealed: "The 'gnosticism-as-parasite' metaphor conveys the impression of an established tradition's somehow being exploited and victimized by an outside organism".[38] In actual fact, "the truth is that most of the innovators who produced the sources in question probably came, at least in terms of their own self-understanding, from *within* the traditions that they are alleged to have 'invaded'".[39]

Thus, behind these pejorative metaphors Williams has found the denial on the part of

32. See section 2.09 below.
33. Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism"*, p.83.
34. Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism"*, p.83.
35. Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism"*, p.84.
36. Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism"*, p.84.
37. Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism"*, p.84.
38. Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism"*, p.84.
39. Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism"*, p.85.

modern scholars that the writers and readers of these sources were truly members of any of the traditions that constituted Hellenistic society. Just as does the language of borrowing myths and symbols, these metaphors betray a fundamental bias. From the beginning of the modern study of these sources, little consideration has been given to the likelihood that the traditions in which such teachers as Valentinus and Ptolemy understood themselves to participate were *inherited*. The portrayal of the 'Gnostics' as being outsiders to their own cultures is untenable. This brings us to the last of the characterizations treated by Williams that we are going to consider closely.

1.07 Anticosmic World Rejection

One of the most familiar characterizations of 'Gnosticism', and its distinguishing feature in the eyes of many scholars, is its 'anticosmic' attitude. This attitude is often closely linked to so-called 'Gnostic dualism'. 'Gnostic' world rejection has become such a commonplace that it has become a "metaphorical shorthand", which "tends to be invoked in a rather perfunctory fashion and without much or any further explanation, as though everyone knew what it implied".[40] What is generally implied by this metaphor is a very negative and derogatory view of creation, particularly as embodied in the mythical ascription of the creation of the cosmos to an inferior being, often called the demiurge.[41]

Williams's primary concern is the sociological implications of these apparently world-rejecting myths:

> What differences, if any, does such language suggest about the lives of real human beings, their involvements, their commitments, their day-to-day behavior? Put another way, exactly how do we imagine that such persons went about "rejecting the world"? Are we talking about some form of antienvironmentalism? Do we imagine people who were incapable of enjoying springtime flora or a dip in the Mediterranean? Or is "anticosmism" to be translated primarily in sociopolitical terms, denoting persons who tended to be antisocial recluses or dropouts from any involvement with the larger community, and with a tendency to thumb their noses at society's expectations of them in terms of ethical behavior or general socialization? Or perhaps we envision persons who were political anarchists, rejecting the legitimacy of all political order, or who were at least completely indifferent to the political well-being and future of society?[42]

Several historians of religion have attempted to see in these myths the reflections of certain types of behaviour of their authors: usually open revolt against the prevailing political structures, and the demonstration of no interest whatsoever in the surrounding society or even the renunciation of all links with society. However, Williams convincingly argues that what evidence there is indicates that quite the opposite was most likely the case. Most 'Gnostics' were actually moving towards more social involvement and accommodation with their social environment.

He begins by urging caution in drawing conclusions about social relations based on mythological texts. By way of example Williams mentions Hans Kippenberg's article,

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40. Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism"*, p.96.
41. See, for example, Mansfeld, 'Bad world and Demiurge: A 'Gnostic' Motif From Parmenides and Empedocles to Lucretius and Philo'.
42. Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism"*, p.96.

'Versuch einer soziologischen Verortung des antiken Gnostizismus'[43] in which he reads the 'Gnostic' myths as veiled protests against the political structures of the Roman empire. Williams finds important problems with this type of "intuitive"[44] approach.

The first problem is that the 'Gnostic' sources, "do not share a common dualistic doctrine".[45] There is, instead, a large variety of views on the cosmos to be found in these sources. A small number of the texts present the ontological dualism found in the *Paraphrase of Shem* from the Nag Hammadi library, for example, in which light and darkness are the fundamental opposing forces to which everything can be traced. Elsewhere, such as in a section of Irenaeus's *Adversus Haereses* on Carpocrates nothing is said about the original nature of the negatively portrayed Demiurge. While in tractates such as the *Apocryphon of John*, "we encounter myths about evil or inferior demiurges who 'devolved' from an original monistic perfection",[46] this applies to all of the Sethian and Valentinian texts from Nag Hammadi. However, several Valentinian sources, including the *Tripartite Tractate* and Clement's *Excerpta ex Theodoto*, treat the demiurge sympathetically and insist on his devolution being according to divine providence. Finally Epiphanes, who is generally treated as a 'Gnostic', "espouses a monotheism and the *goodness* of creation".[47]

Williams sensibly suggests that rather than attempt to fit this diverse assortment of 'Gnostic' myths into a single mould, as many scholars have tried to do, we should recognise these differences. To do so would of course undermine world rejection as a dominant characteristic of 'Gnosticism'. He also points out that in those texts where the,

> demiurge seems evil as soon as he comes into being, it is not altogether clear that we should infer from this that the advocates of such doctrines would always have viewed their world with more antagonism than, for example, contemporaries who believed that the world had been created by one good God but had subsequently come under the strong influence or control of the Devil or evil angels — a position encountered frequently in Jewish and Christian sources. Rather than some qualitatively or quantitatively different experience of cosmic evil itself, it may well have been more a matter of different strategies for explaining the evil that one experiences in the cosmos.[48]

As for 'Gnostic dualism', which Gérard Vallée considers to be that which most infuriated Irenaeus, the great opponent of 'Gnostic heresy', Williams observes that Irenaeus demonstrates the awareness that, from the point of view of his opponents, monotheism was not a contentious subject, "almost all of these sects, he observes, admit that there is one God — but then they pervert this idea (*Adv. Haer.* 1.22.1)".[49]

Williams stresses the difficulty of drawing sociological inferences from the symbolism of religious writings. He reminds us of the high level of political initiative shown by medieval groups such as the Balkan Paulicians, the Central Asian Uighur Manichaeans, the Bosnian Patarenes and the southern European Cathars, all of whose mythologies were supposedly 'anticosmic'.

43. Kippenberg, 'Versuch einer soziologischen Verortung des antiken Gnostizismus', *Numen* 17 (1970), 211-232.
44. Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism"*, p.98.
45. Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism"*, p.98.
46. Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism"*, p.99.
47. Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism"*, p.99.
48. Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism"*, p.100.
49. Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism"*, p.100. Studies of 'Gnostic dualism' abound, see for instance: Armstrong, 'Dualism: Platonic, Gnostic and Christian'; Bianchi, *Selected Essays on Gnosticism, Dualism and Mysteriosophy*; and Couliano, 'The Angels of the Nations and the Origins of Gnostic Dualism'.

Indeed, very little is known about the level of political involvement of the 'Gnostics'. But what evidence there is points in quite the opposite direction to that which has been attributed to them. That is to say, "numerous factors indicate that some of the most famous representatives of this supposedly 'anticosmic' attitude experienced, and sought, less tension with their socio-political environment than was the case with some of their more 'orthodox' critics".[50] Williams divides the evidence into three categories 1) general level of social interaction and involvement; 2) degree of sociopolitical deviance; and 3) attempts to reduce cultural distance.

1) *General level of social interaction and involvement*: firstly the very location of some of the best known 'world-haters' gives an indication of their interest in sociopolitical interaction. Rather than removing themselves from society entirely, many chose to live in Rome itself, including Valentinus, Ptolemy, Heracleon, Marcellina, Marcion and those known to Plotinus. Some of these teachers were known to have moved amongst the rich members of society as was witnessed and complained about by Tertullian and Epiphanius.[51]

A famous complaint of Tertullian against his 'anticosmic' opponents is that they made no distinction between a catechumen and a full believer, and would even allow pagans to attend their meetings, making no effort to keep their secrets from them. This section, 41.2, from Tertullian's *Prescription against Heretics* is often used as proof for the repudiation of conventions and hierarchical authority, and this was, no doubt, Tertullian's intention. However, "what he describes is a form of religious association that was more open to its social environment, less secretive, less concerned with clear distinctions between those fully socialised into a specifically Christian culture and those still more identified to one degree or another with the larger sociocultural milieu".[52]

A similar and revealing example is of Irenaeus's charge against certain Valentinians, Basilideans and others who,

> eat with indifference foods that have been offered to idols, thinking that they are in no way defiled with these foods. They are also the first to gather at every gentile festival celebration held in honour of idols. Some of them do not even refrain from the murderous spectacles involving combat with animals and gladiatorial combat, which are despised by God and men.[53]

When this passage is usually cited by modern scholars, it is as an example of the rebellious nature of 'Gnostics' and their "flagrant violation of religious scruples".[54] Yet, as Williams observes, from the point of view of the larger Greco-Roman world of which the Jews and Christians were a part, this practice is better seen as just the opposite in spirit: "Fewer dietary scruples and greater openness to the social interaction associated with community religious celebrations or public entertainment is behaviour that looks more like social conformity than like social deviance".[55]

2) *Degree of sociopolitical deviance*: in terms of the degree of sociopolitical deviance of these apparent world haters, Williams finds positive evidence suggesting their tendency to minimize it in the debate over martyrdom. He cites the famous article by W.H.C. Frend, 'The Gnostic Sects and the Roman Empire',[56] which demonstrated that many of these

50. Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism"*, p.101.
51. Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism"*, p.102.
52. Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism"*, p.103.
53. Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* I 6.3. Quoted by Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism"*, p.103.
54. Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism"*, p.103.
55. Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism"*, p.103.
56. Frend, 'The Gnostic Sects and the Roman Empire', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 5 (1954), 25-37.

groups, including the Valentinians, rejected martyrdom. Frend discovered that these groups actually were interested in "the toning down of Christian sociopolitical deviance",[57] and that they were, "able to satisfy the susceptibilities of contemporary society in a way impossible for more rigid Christians".[58]

The implications of Frend's article, for the most part, have not been grasped. Williams takes Guy Stroumsa as an example of a scholar who still holds the "common misconception"[59] that the 'Gnostic' agenda was founded on the hatred of the world and the body.[60] Stroumsa extends this misconception by using it as the basis for sociological speculation: "what are the sociological implications of such ['Gnostic'] conceptions? It is clear that, by virtue of both his theology and his psychological attitude, the gnostic isolates himself completely from the society to which he is in opposition".[61]

Yet elsewhere Stroumsa refers to Frend's article as proof that the 'Gnostics' did not reject the paganism of their society as radically as did the more orthodox Christians, and this was one of the reasons for their ultimate defeat. Williams sees in this incongruous portrait given by Stroumsa a more general problem in the modern characterisation of 'Gnosticism' by scholars:

> Gnostics are characterized as more accommodating to Hellenistic tradition and culture than were "orthodox" Christians, but they are also said to represent a much sharper "rejection of the world" — which for Stroumsa evidently means a rejection of, or some kind of self-isolation from, society. And indeed, I think one finds evidence here and there that modern scholars often sense this very incongruity at some level, between the evidence for greater accommodation to Greco-Roman culture and society on the one hand, and on the other hand the evolved scholarly orthodoxy that central to ancient "gnosticism" was some kind of radical rejection of the sociopolitical order.[62]

3) *Attempts to reduce cultural distance*: in terms of attempts by these groups to reduce the cultural distance between themselves and the pagan world around them, most strongly attested are the clear efforts made by the Valentinians, Sethians and others to reconcile the biblical tradition with the Greco-Roman mythical and philosophical tradition.

Aside from the all consuming question of origins, it is important, Williams argues, to recognise that the important figures and authors of our sources were attempting seriously, in their own ways, to reduce the tension between the Judeo-Christian and Greco-Roman traditions.

Williams uses the sociological work of Rodney Stark as a model for the way innovations within religious traditions occur:

> Along the single axis measuring degree of tension with sociocultural environment, "churches" are closer to the low-tension end and "sects" closer to the high-tension pole. The very nature of religion is such that there tends to be continual movement back and forth along the scale. A sect that happens to become a successful religious movement by gaining into its

57. Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism"*, p.105.
58. Quoted by Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism"*, p.105, from Frend, 'The Gnostic Sects and the Roman Empire', p.29.
59. Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism"*, p.106.
60. Stroumsa, *Savoir et Salut*, (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1992), pp.150-180.
61. Quoted by Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism"*, p.106, from Stroumsa, *Savoir et Salut*, p.161.
62. Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism"*, p.106.

membership an ever larger percentage of the society will, over time, inevitably become more churchlike, reducing tension with surrounding society. The more this happens, the less able the religious group is to "satisfy members who desire a higher-tension version" of religion. The result is schism: a new sect is produced, and the development starts all over. In other words, successful "sects" eventually produce "churches," which give birth to new "sects," which may be successful enough to develop into "churches," and so forth.[63]

Using this model, Williams describes such groups as the Valentinians and the Basilideans as 'church movements'. That is to say that they were groups of Christians who moved faster than the "natural drift" of the main body of Christianity towards greater accommodation with larger society as a whole and so "broke off the front end". This also explains why such groups were not successful in a way that the parasite metaphor cannot. Stark has found that 'church movements' are very rarely successful: they were not radical enough.

Stark and his collaborators stress the importance of how much membership in a religious movement "costs," in terms of material, temporal, emotional, intellectual, and other commitments, and in terms of stigma or cultural tension. The constant and gradual evolution from sect to church results from a natural inclination to seek rewards at an ever lower cost. But ironically, there is another natural inclination at work — the need for religion to cost something. The gradual erosion in the level of cost tends to diminish the experience of intensity and eventually the sense of reward itself.[64]

As a result of this process, members begin to leave the church, either by joining alternative, higher-tension 'sect movements' or at least less accommodating movements, or by leaving the religion once and for all.

... "church movements" would simply be in advance of the "mainline" groups in pressing the process of cultural accommodation. Whereas the latter might manifest a more incremental lessening of tension, church movements would be "breaking off the front end." In any case, as accommodators, "church movements" demand too little of their members to sustain real growth. Put bluntly, they do not "cost" enough to become "successful" new religions.[65]

1.08 Williams's Method

Williams's book continues to dismantle, chapter by chapter, each of the cliches that modern scholars have developed in their attempts to describe the essence of 'Gnosticism'. The chapters that we have considered above contain his central arguments, the subsequent chapters serve more as elaborations on those themes already covered. So we can now turn to further considerations of the method that Williams continues to champion and employ despite the many short comings that he himself has demonstrated in the work of those who have ostensibly employed similar methods.

63. Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism"*, pp.109-110.
64. Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism"*, p.114.
65. Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism"*, pp.114-115.

Williams recognises two basic strategies in the categorization of religious phenomena. Such categorization, "is of course necessary to any intelligible analysis in the history of religions".[66] The first basic approach is to employ the self-definition of those being studied.

> ... the fundamental *principle* in this approach is to organise religious data in terms of historical traditions which the persons being studied seem to identify *themselves*.[67]

He points out the fact that scholarly constructions will not simply reproduce self-definitions since they necessarily involve abstractions made from the definitions of the many self-definitions of denominations within the broader traditions. Thus they are likely to arrive at the lowest common denominator of such self-definitions which most practitioners would be unlikely to consider adequate.

The second basic classification strategy is typological, some scholars would call it phenomenological, this approach involves the "delineation of cross cultural types of religious communities or movements".[68] It is the intentional construction of artificial groupings entirely independent of the self-definitions of the people whose tradition is being studied. Williams gives as an example the study of 'religious fundamentalism' which scholars have identified in various cultures, but which is a label many practitioners in the groups so designated would reject.

Williams considers both approaches necessary in the history-of-religions enterprise:

> If our goal is to achieve as sound an understanding as possible of a given religious culture, we can hardly ignore the perceptions that insiders to the culture themselves have of the parameters that define their identity. At the same time, insiders may be ignorant of or may intentionally ignore or underestimate, either genuine continuities or significant distinctions between themselves and others. Such continuities or distinctions may not only be readily observable to outsiders; they may also be analytically interesting. While in a certain sense it might seem that scholars as outsiders are inflicting a kind of intellectual violence on the religious data by imposing their own systems of categorization, category construction by outsiders need not be insensitive to insider perceptions or unsympathetic with insider commitments. In any case, the process is inevitable in some form, given the mind's natural tendency to organize the world external to it.[69]

He goes on to argue that according to both strategies the modern category 'Gnosticism' should not have been arrived at. The argument that 'Gnostic' was a self designation has very little evidence. It has not been found in any of the original texts that have been classified as 'Gnostic'. The heresiologists identify only a few of the groups that are considered today to be 'Gnostic' as going by that self-designation. In so far as it was employed as a self-designation, it seems to have been used as an adjective, along the lines of "knowledgeable", rather than as a "social-traditional identity",[70] the equivalent, Williams argues, of modern Christians calling themselves Christian "intellectuals".[71]

As a typological construct 'Gnosticism' is equally problematical. These problems are

66. Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism"*, p.29.
67. Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism"*, p.29. The emphasis is Williams's.
68. Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism"*, p.30.
69. Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism"*, p.30.
70. Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism"*, p.41.
71. Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism"*, p.42.

the legacy, nearly two millennia on, of Irenaeus bishop of Lyons. By starting their treatments of 'Gnosticism' from Irenaeus's groupings of heresies in his great work *The Exposure and Refutation of the Falsely so called Gnosis* abbreviated in Latin to *Adversus Haereses*, modern scholars are in danger, in practice if not in principle, of assuming that they are using the same phenomenological grouping of data as Irenaeus. However Irenaeus's category of 'Gnosis' is not defined by an abstract list of traits, rather it is one that includes all 'false teachings'.

> Today most researchers would in principle heartily agree that in establishing suitable criteria for categorization, the modern history of religions can hardly be guided by Irenaeus's theological prejudices. And yet in fact, the bishop's influence in setting the agenda for all subsequent discussion of the theological positions included in his list has been profound. In the evolution of the modern discussion of these phenomena, the implicit approach has been to treat the constellation of positions in Irenaeus's catalog as the fundamental basis for the category "gnosticism," with the principal issue being merely that of refining the parameters.[72]

Williams finds the typological construct 'Gnosticism' wanting in two other ways. The first is "a failure to achieve clarity in classification".[73] Here he cites the lack of consensus over the categorization of some of the most important figures and groups within 'Gnosticism', including Marcion, Valentinus and Basilides. The second is that the construct "has increasingly been failing to help us understand the texts",[74] even as an ideal construct. Rather than shedding light on the texts in question the construct has overshadowed them with inaccurate expectations, and has become "a Procrustean paradigm distorting newly available evidence into its own image, while screening out the very information that actually tends to suggest that the typological construct itself is outdated".[75]

1.09 Williams's Solution

Williams proposes to completely abandon the category 'Gnosticism' and offers an alternative classification strategy that operates on two levels. The first is to work within the "traditio- or sociohistorical relationships"[76] such as 'Valentinianism':

> It still makes sense, for example, to speak of something called "Valentinianism," as a subtradition within the broader early Christian tradition. There will be debates about the degree to which this or that document is really "Valentinian." But that there was a Valentinus or a Ptolemy no one denies, and doctrinal continuities can be traced between figures such as Ptolemy and other Valentinian teachers, or between these teachers and certain Nag Hammadi tractates. The decision to abandon an overarching construct called "gnosticism" would not require abandoning research on specific categories of texts that manifest some relationship by tradition.[77]

72. Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism"*, p.44.
73. Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism"*, p.46.
74. Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism"*, p.49.
75. Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism"*, p.49.
76. Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism"*, p.51.
77. Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism"*, p.51.

Williams's second level of categorization involves the creation of new, less ambiguous typological categories. They would be completely divorced from and so could never be confused with traditiohistorical or sociohistorical groupings. To this end he suggests the category 'biblical demiurgical traditions':

> By "demiurgical" traditions I mean all those that ascribe the creation and management of the cosmos to some lower entity or entities, distinct from the highest God. This would include most of ancient Platonism, of course. But if we add the adjective "biblical," to denote "demiurgical" traditions that also incorporate or adapt traditions from Jewish or Christian Scripture, the category is narrowed significantly.[78]

Such categorization has three distinct advantages over that of 'Gnosticism'. Firstly, it is in principle an easy feature to distinguish. Secondly, there is much less chance of it being mistaken for a religion in its own right, since the 'biblical demiurgical' category is a blatantly modern construct and has no relation to the self-designations of any of the groups so labelled. Finally, it would not be burdened by the misleading and unjustified cliches and caricatures with which 'Gnosticism' is now invariably associated.[79]

Regarding the ubiquitous question of the origins of the 'biblical demiurgical' traditions as a whole, Williams does not expect to find any single origin. Drawing on the sociological models of Rodney Stark, Williams considers such myths to have emerged from "multiple innovations".[80]

> But even if we redirect the quest for origins to better-defined categories such as biblical demiurgical myth, it is more probable that such myths had several origins and not just one. What I have called a demiurgical myth involves, after all, some presuppositions that were shared fairly widely in antiquity. That the world was administered and originally organized by a "middle management" level of the divine came to be taken for granted in most Platonic philosophy, for example, and at least by the beginning of the Common Era such a notion would have struck many people in the Greco-Roman world as perfectly sensible. In such an environment, it is not difficult to imagine why various Jews and/or Christians might have come to interpret biblical creation traditions accordingly.[81]

The present thesis falls within the first level of classification, as the *Tripartite Tractate* is clearly a Valentinian text, as is every other text in the first Nag Hammadi Codex. What reservations I have about the 'biblical demiurgical' category will be made clear in Chapter 5.[82]

78. Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism"*, p.51.
79. Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism"*, p.263: "The term 'gnosticism' has indeed ultimately brought more confusion than clarification. The pejorative connotations are also often definitely present in the label".
80. Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism"*, p.231.
81. Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism"*, p.232.
82. See section 5.01 below.

1.10 Valentinian Studies

In order to situate the present thesis, it is worth giving a brief overview of the field of Valentinian scholarship. Before the Nag Hammadi codices were made available, Valentinian scholarship concentrated on the evidence of the Church Fathers. Irenaeus's account in the first book of *Adversus Haereses* (I 1-7.6) has been especially influential in the shaping of the scholarly understanding of Valentinianism. The two scholars worth singling out from this period of scholarship, and whose work remains influential, are François Sagnard and Elaine Pagels.

Sagnard's *La gnose valentinienne at le témoignage de Saint Irénée*,[83] if somewhat dated, remains the most comprehensive overview of Valentinianism despite the significant effect that the Nag Hammadi find has had on the field.

Elaine Pagels's studies from the 1970's continue to prove their relevancy and accuracy. While she has been accused of going beyond the evidence of her materials,[84] especially regarding the thorny question of the possibility of salvation for the psychics, subsequent evidence from the Nag Hammadi Library has proved her right. Michel Desjardins's important study *Sin in Valentinianism* is a strong case in point. In her 1974 paper 'Conflicting Versions of Valentinian eschatology: Irenaeus' Treatise vs. the Excerpts from Theodotus' Pagels argued that, contrary to Irenaeus's claim, the Valentinians did allow for the complete salvation of the psychics. Desjardins's study of the Nag Hammadi sources has confirmed that this was indeed the case:

> What applies to the pneumatics tends to apply to the psychics as well, including a concern for proper actions and the avoidance of sin. This provides support for Pagels's hypothesis that the Valentinians envisaged the union of the pneumatics and the purified psychics in the Pleroma. What is difficult for her to prove using patristic sources becomes easier using those from the Nag Hammadi collection.[85]

This study of the *Tripartite Tractate* also offers further support to Pagels's hypothesis.

Desjardins points out that the heyday of Valentinian scholarship came in the 1970's, since when it has "subsided somewhat".[86] That decade of intense scholarly interest in 'Gnosticism' culminated in an international conference called *The Rediscovery Of Gnosticism*, which was held at Yale University in March 1978. The conference was divided into two seminars, the first was on *The School of Valentinus*, the second on *Sethian Gnosticism*.[87] The papers presented and the discussions following them give a clear indication of the questions and attitudes that have dominated Valentinian scholarship.

The relationship between Valentinianism and Platonism was given the most consideration at the conference, with three papers dedicated entirely to this question.[88] This relationship is clearly a question of great importance, and is one which continues to draw the interest of scholars from a variety of fields. In 1984 an entire conference was

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83. F.-M.-M. Sagnard, *La gnose valentinienne at le témoignage de Saint Irénée*, Études de philosophie médiévale 36 (Paris: Librairie philosophique J. Vrin, 1974).
84. See Desjardins, *Sin in Valentinianism*, pp.122-123.
85. Desjardins, *Sin in Valentinianism*, p.124.
86. Desjardins, *Sin in Valentinianism*, p.4.
87. The proceedings of the conference were published as Layton, B., ed., *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism, Proceedings of the International Conference on Gnosticism at Yale, New Haven, Connecticut, March 28-31 1978*, Vol.I *The School of Valentinus*. NumenSup 41., ed. by B. Layton (Leiden: Brill, 1980), Vol.II *Sethian Gnosticism*. NumenSup 41., ed. by B. Layton (Leiden: Brill, 1981).
88. Dillon, 'The Descent of the Soul in Middle Platonic and Gnostic Theory', O'Meara, 'Gnosticism and the Making of the World in Plotinus' and Stead, 'In Search of Valentinus'.

dedicated to the subject of *Neoplatonism and Gnosticism*.[89] G. C. Stead considers Valentinus to be a "biblical platonist" not unlike Philo,[90] those in the subsequent discussion were divided over the degree of Valentinus's platonism. Dillon, in his paper, had no trouble in locating Valentinus within the scope of middle platonism.[91] While John Wittaker offered a survey of, "the vocabulary of self-generation in philosophical and theological systems of later antiquity in order to provide a background for its use in Gnostic texts".[92] He does not, however, say anything about the theological meaning of the conception.

The question of the degree to which certain of the Nag Hammadi texts are Valentinian has also been important to scholars. At the Yale conference R. McL. Wilson's paper 'Valentinianism and the *Gospel of Truth*' represented this avenue of inquiry.[93]

Helmut Koester's contribution to the Yale conference, 'Gnostic Writings as Witness for the Development of the Sayings Tradition', represented the considerable interest shown by scholars in the relationship between the Christian texts from Nag Hammadi and the New Testament.[94] Koester is one of the New Testament scholars who has most appreciated the significance of the Nag Hammadi find in the light of Walter Bauer's ground-breaking study[95] about which more will be said in section 1.11 of this chapter.

Michael Tardieu, working within the old history of religions manner of searching for origins and influences, produced a study of Valentinianism in relation to the Chaldaean Oracles, which he views as being a form of pagan 'Gnosis', though he does not use the term 'Gnosticism'.

The final two papers from the Yale conference to be discussed here are the two that are the most immediately relevant to this thesis. William Schoedel is the only scholar, to my knowledge, who has devoted papers to the question of 'Gnostic monism' in his ''Topological' Theology and some Monistic Tendencies in Gnosticism' and more specifically Valentinian 'monism' in his 'Gnostic Monism and the Gospel of Truth'; the latter was given as a research paper at the Yale conference. While the term 'monism' is problematical and is less precise than the term 'nonduality',[96] Schoedel's two papers on this subject have been very important in taking the argument forward. 'Gnostic Monism and the Gospel of Truth' was one of the first papers to question the predominant reading of Valentinianism, as we know it from the Nag Hammadi texts, as a dualistic theology.

> A standard element in the interpretation of Valentinian and similar forms of Gnosticism is the recognition that they are fundamentally monistic. For in the last analysis everything arises directly or indirectly from one source. This renders it all the more understandable that a resolutely monistic version of Gnosticism of the kind found in the *Gospel of Truth* and *Adversus Haereses* 2 should emerge.[97]

89. The papers were published in Wallis, *Neoplatonism and Gnosticism*. See also Van Den Broek & Vermaseren, *Studies in Gnosticism and Hellenistic Religions presented to Gilles Quispel on the Occasion of his 65th Birthday*, and Runia, *Plotinus amid Gnostics and Christians*.
90. 'In Search of Valentinus', pp.82 & 85-88.
91. Dillon, 'The Descent of the Soul in Middle Platonic and Gnostic Theory', pp.163-164.
92. Wittaker, *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism* Vol. I, p.189.
93. Other studies of this type are Logan, 'The Epistle of Eugnostus and Valentinianism' and Thomassen, 'The Valentinianism of The *Valentinian Exposition* (NHC XI, 2)'.
94. See Evans, Webb and Wiebe, *Nag Hammadi Texts and the Bible*, Goehring, et al, *Gospel Origins & Christian Beginnings*, Koester, 'Gnostic Sayings and Controversy Traditions in John 8:12-59', Logan and Wedderburn, *The New Testament and Gnosis*, Peel, 'Gnostic Eschatology and the New Testament', Robinson 'Gnosticism and the New Testament', and Tuckett, *Nag Hammadi and the Gospel Tradition*.
95. *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity*, second edition trans. by a team from the Philadelphia Seminar on Christian Origins, ed. by R. Kraft and G Krodel (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971).
96. See section 5.02 below.
97. Schoedel, 'Gnostic Monism and the Gospel of Truth', p.390.

This statement was, it seems, more of a plea than a statement of fact, for many scholars have ignored this basic but very important point. Surprisingly, the present thesis is the first study of any Valentinian text to take the question of it's nonduality seriously and treat it in a sustained way. This is not to say that the question has been completely ignored. Pagels, for instance, in her response to Ugo Bianchi's weak paper at the Yale conference 'Religio-Historical Observations on Valentinianism', indicates her more nearly nondual understanding of Valentinianism:

> I also have difficulties with Bianchi's characterisations – with his account of the Valentinians, for example, as anticosmic and dualistic. This is a view which reflects the confusion of this theology with that of other groups which is found in the church fathers. In fact, Valentinian doctrines allow an interpretation much different from Bianchi's. The Valentinian demiurge, for example, is not a ludicrous figure; he is the image of the invisible father, the creation and instrument of wisdom who forms and administers the cosmic system created for the sake of salvation. As for the Valentinian universe, which Bianchi calls an "epiphenomenon of the fallen aeon," it is better described as permeated with the divine. Surely this system is not more anticosmic than that of the Kabbalah, which also traces the origin of the universe to divine devolution.[98]

This view also accords well with that of Williams.

More recently Andrew McGowan's study of Valentinus's poem *Harvest*, in light of Christoph Markschies's work[99] on the fragments of Valentinus,[100] has indicated the insufficiency of a dualistic reading of Valentinus himself:

> The picture of this physical world is ... one of continuity rather than of harsh dualism. Although the language of "flesh" and "spirit" is used, no greater distinction is placed between these two than any of the other elements.
> Exclusion of a radically dualistic picture of the cosmos does not necessarily place Valentinus at a far remove from his disciples. In his Letter to Flora even Ptolemy emphasises that his own understanding is monistic, and that the emergence of what is less than perfect from what is perfectly good is at the centre of his teaching, the "apostolic tradition" (Epiphanius, *Pan.* 33.7.8-9).[101]

98. *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism* Vol. I, p.114.
99. Markschies, *Valentinus Gnosticus? Untersuchungen zur valentinianischen Gnosis mit einem Kommentar zu den Fragmenten Valentinus*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 65 (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1992).
100. McGowan, 'Valentinus Poeta: Notes on ΘΕΡΟΣ', p.159: "Close examination of the fragments attributed to Valentinus and resistance to reading back the reports of heresiologists or the systems of later Valentinians have led Markschies to question the 'Gnosticism' of the supposed heresiarch. If Markschies ultimately adopts a sort of agnosticism as to the real position of Valentinus, it is a robust one which runs against the current of recent research and the tendency to read the fragments with what may now seem to be an unwarranted inter-textuality, whether in the traditional form of concern with orthodox doctrinal history or in terms of comparison with the library of Nag Hammadi".
101. McGowan, 'Valentinus Poeta: Notes on ΘΕΡΟΣ', pp.164-165. McGowan quotes the full poem on p.159:

Θέρος	Harvest
Πάντα κρεμάμενα πνεύματι βλέπω	All things hanging in spirit I see,
πάντα δ' ὀχούμενα πνεύματι νοῶ	All things carried in spirit I know;
σάρκα μὲν ἐκ ψυχῆς κρεμαμένην	flesh from soul hanging,
ψυχὴν δ' ἀέρος ἐξεχομένην	soul from air proceeding,
ἀέρα δ' ἐξ αἴθρης κρεμάμενον	air from ether hanging.
ἐκ δὲ βυθοῦ καρποὺς φερομένους	Fruit borne from the deep,
ἐκ μήτρας δὲ βρέφος φερόμενον.	Child borne from the womb.

Though he does insist that this position be distinguished from the "radical dichotomies presented by some Valentinian texts and accounts".[102] The 'monism' of Valentinus himself indicates that the nonduality of the Valentinian texts of Nag Hammadi, most obviously the *Gospel of Truth*, the *Valentinian Exposition* and the *Tripartite Tractate*, are closer to the position of Valentinus himself than are several of the heresiological accounts.[103] And, although McGowan argues that the fragments of Valentinus, "give us reason to think there is a mythological and at least somewhat dualistic aspect to the poem and to the closing lines in particular", there is nothing in the poem itself to indicate that it is at all dualistic. If anything the hymn presents the perception of the intimate relation of all things through the spirit, the origin of which is the "deep" (βυθός). An emanationist cosmogony is necessarily hierarchical, but that does not make it dualistic.

The strongest affirmation of Valentinian 'monism' comes from Einar Thomassen in his discussion of the Pythagorean background to the theology of the *Tripartite Tractate* and other Valentinian texts from Nag Hammadi regarding the unity of the Father. He explains that:

> L'arrière-plan pythagoricien est ... manifeste dans l'ExpVal, car en plus des noms caractéristiques «source» et «racine» (23:18-20), le Père reçoit les noms «monade» et «dyade»:
>
> > Puisque, donc, [il est] Monade et que person[ne né]tait avant lui, il est [dans la] Dyade et dans ce qui est double. Et son double est Silence. Et il possédait le Tout à [l'int]érieur de lui-même ... (22:22-28).
>
> Dans ce texte, comme dans le TracTri, les éléments de l'opposition Un/ Multiple-Dyade qu'on connaît par l'Académie et les pythagoriciens, sont conçus comme existant (potentiellement) à l'intérieur du Père unique, lequel n'a donc pas de partenaire féminin. Cette position est en accord avec celle qui est attribuée par Irénée (*AH*, I, 11:5) et Hippolyte (*El.*, VI, 29:3) à une faction valentinienne qui prétendait que le Père, étant mâle et femelle à la fois, ou au-delà des distinctions sexuelles, possédait en lui le principe de procreation (cf. aussi *AH*, I, 2:4). D'autres, par ailleurs, concevaient auprès du Père un principe féminin, avec lequel le Père formait une première syzygie. La première position est aussi attestée par l'EvVer, le système valentinien d'Hippolyte, les *ExtTh* 7, Irénée, *AH*, I, 11: 3, Marc le Mage selon *AH*, I, 14: 1, et le système «ptoléméen» de l'*AH*, I, 12:19. La deuxième position est représentée par le système valentinien principal de l'*AH*, I, 1-8, dans l'*AH*, I, 12:3, dans la partie explicitement théodotienne en *ExtTh*, 29 et dans le traité valentinien d'Épiphane, *Pan.*, XXXI, 5-6.
>
> Selon les sources actuellement disponibles, la position «moniste» semble avoir été la plus répandue. Le fait que le Père soit dans le valentinisme au-delà de l'opposition Fils/Sophia, comme le Premier Un était dans le néo-pythagorisme au-delà de l'opposition Deuxième Un/Dyade, suggére que l'hypostasiation de la pensée du Père, ou Silence, est historiquement secondaire dans le valentinisme, par extension du modèle de la syzygie jusqu'au sommet du système, et peut-être sous l'influence du

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102. McGowan, 'Valentinus Poeta: Notes on ΘΕΡΟΣ', p.165.
103. Such as Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* I 1-8 and 12.3.

barbélognosticisme.[104]

We must wait for the actual exegesis to see how fundamental a nondual perspective is to a meaningful hermeneutic of the *Tripartite Tractate*, and until the final chapter for the explication of the crucial difference between the terms 'monism' and 'nonduality'.[105]

In her paper 'Gnostic and Orthodox Views of Christ's Passion: Paradigms for the Christian's Response to Persecution?' Elaine Pagels, one of the most theologically oriented scholars in the field, confronts the very important question of Valentinian Christology. It was this very question that divided the Valentinians into two branches or schools: the eastern school is represented primarily by the theologian Theodotus, while the western school included Heracleon and Ptolemy.

The differences between the schools have been of great interest to scholars concerned with the history and classification of the Valentinian tradition. It was a particularly pressing question at the time of the Yale conference: Quispel, for example, considered that "an urgent task for Valentinian studies is the examination of the differences between the Oriental and Western schools".[106]

Pagels shows that from a theological point of view the Valentinian concern with Christology — and they were the first Christians to seriously raise the question[107] — lay in two directions. The first one was ecclesiological: both schools interpret Christ's body, in the Pauline manner, as "his body the church".[108] What divided the schools was the constitution of the Church. The eastern school held that it was only the pneumatic 'elect' who were the body of Christ, while the western school included the 'elect' and the psychic 'called', arguing that Christ's body had two natures. This ecclesiological debate was

104. Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, pp.262-263. Trans: "The Pythagorean background is ... manifest in the *Valentinian Exposition*, for in addition to the characteristic names 'source' and 'root' (23:18-20), the Father receives the names 'Monad' and 'Dyad':

   Since, then, [he is] Monad, and no [one] existed before him, he is [in the] Dyad and in the Pair. And his Pair is Silence. He had the All, existing [with]in him ... (22:22-28).

   In that text, as in the *Tripartite Tractate*, the elements of the opposition One:Multitude-Dyad which are known from the Academy and the Pythagoreans, are conceived as existing (potentially) within the unique Father, who is consequently without a female partner. This position is in accordance with that which is attributed by Irenaeus (*Adversus Haereses* I 11:5) and Hippolytus (*Elenchos* VI 29:3) to one Valentinian faction, which held that the Father was simultaneously male and female, or beyond sexual distinctions having within himself the principle of procreation (cf. also *Adversus Haereses* I 2:4). Others, otherwise, conceived a female principle alongside the Father, with which the Father formed a first syzygy. The first position is also attested in the *Gospel of Truth*, the Valentinian system of Hippolytus, *Excerpta ex Theodoto* 7, Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* I 11:3, Marcus the Magician according to *Adversus Haereses* I 14:1 and the "Ptolemaean" system of *Adversus Haereses* I 12:1. The second position is represented by Irenaeus's main Valentinian system of *Adversus Haereses* I 1-8, in *Adversus Haereses* I 12:3, in the explicitly Theodotian piece in *Excerpta ex Theodoto* 29, and in the Valentinian treatise of Epiphanius *Panarion* XXXI 5-6.
   According to the sources now available the 'monistic' position was most widespread. The fact that the Father in Valentinianism is before the opposition Son:Sophia, like the First One is in Neopythagoreanism before the opposition Second One:Dyad, suggests that the hypostatization of the Thought of the Father, or Silence, is historically secondary in Valentinianism, by the extension of the syzygy-model to the very summit of the system, and, perhaps under the influence of Barbelo Gnosticism".
105. Section 5.02 below.
106. From the discussion following his paper in *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism* Vol. I, p.129. The question as presented in Hippolytus's *Elenchos* was take up at the conference in a research paper by J.-D. Kaestli, 'Valentinisme Italien et Valentinisme Oriental: Leurs Divergences a propos de la nature du corps de Jesus'. He argues that the fundamental Christological differences can be located at the moment that each school considers the Holy Spirit or Celestial Logos to have entered Jesus (p.391).
107. Pagels, 'Gnostic and Orthodox Views of Christ's Passion', p.264.
108. Pagels, 'Gnostic and Orthodox Views of Christ's Passion', p.277.

ultimately a soteriological one, for the Valentinians applied the principle, which was later taken up by the patristic theologians, that "whatever is assumed is redeemed".[109] Put another way, the Saviour takes upon himself the nature of those He saves. Thus the consubstantiality of Christ and His church is their salvation. We then see that the question between the Valentinian schools was actually whether or not the psychics could be saved.

The second aspect of Valentinian Christology centered on the question of Christ's suffering. Contrary to the commonly held assumption, Pagels argues that Valentinian Christology, as represented by Nag Hammadi, is not docetic but is one of two natures.[110] Valentinians understood that Christ's body was not a mere appearance only but was both psychic and spiritual. And at the crucifixion it was the psychic Christ along with the physical body that suffered, while the spiritual Christ did not suffer since "it was not susceptible to suffering, being both incomprehensible and invisible".[111] Pagels points out that this position, which Bart Ehrman identifies as a "separationist"[112] Christology is a mediation[113] between the extreme docetism of some early Christians and the insistence on Christ's spiritual suffering on the part of the proto-orthodox and several 'Gnostic' texts from Nag Hammadi.[114]

Interestingly, and quite correctly, Pagels insists that it is inappropriate to speak of these inter-Christian Christological debates in terms of orthodoxy and heresy. It is a point that several scholars including Barbara Aland, Gilles Quispel and Hans Jonas in the discussion after her paper fail to appreciate, each of them affirming the heresy of Valentinian Christology.[115] Aland, referring to systematic theology, and Quispel, citing the Fifth

109. Pagels, 'Gnostic and Orthodox Views of Christ's Passion', p.279. Also see section 4.05 below.

110. Pagels, 'Gnostic and Orthodox Views of Christ's Passion', p.264. As late as 1996 Quispel, in 'The Original Doctrine of Valentinus the Gnostic', pp.343-344, was mistakenly insisting on the docetism of the *Gospel of Truth*, the *Treatise on the Resurrection* and all of the eastern Valentinian school (which he claims is closer than the western School to the theology of Valentinus himself). Yet the *Gospel of Truth* affirms that the Saviour "came by means of fleshly form (ⲛⲟⲩⲥⲁⲣⲝ̄ ⲛ̄ⲥⲙⲁⲧ)' (31.5-6). See Attridge and MacRae 'The Gospel of Truth: I, 3:16.31-43.24', in *Nag Hammadi Codex I (The Jung Codex): Notes*, pp.88-89 who argue that "it seems likely, then, that the *Gospel of Truth*, although it explores the spiritual and existential significance of the incarnation and passion of the redeemer, does not deny the reality of the event'. The *Treatise on the Resurrection* also speaks of the time when the Saviour "existed in flesh" (� 2̄ⲛ̄ ⲥⲁⲣⲝ̄ / ἐν σαρκί) (44.14-15) which Peel 'The Treatise on the Resurrection: I, 4:43.25-50.18', in *Nag Hammadi Codex I (The Jung Codex): Notes*, pp.146-147 notes was commonly used in anti-docetic contexts. Although he does, incorrectly revise his earlier view that this "flesh" is "symbolic of His full incarnation and mortality", he does hold that, "What is unambiguously clear in Treat. Res. (44.14-15; 47.4-16) is that 'flesh' is assessed as the temporary mode of earthly existence shared by both Saviour and Elect. See Peel, *The Epistle to Rheginos: A Valentinian Letter on the Resurrection: Introduction, translation, analysis and exposition*, 112-113, 165, 172-73". Quispel's association of this passage with the "fire body" of the Hermetic text known as *The Key* 16 and 18, in 'The Original Doctrine of Valentinus the Gnostic' p.345 is unnecessary and misleading. Quispel also quotes the *Excerpta ex Theodoto* 1.1 "the sarkion, which Sophia had brought forth from the Logos, the pneumatic seed, which the Saviour had put on when He descended" and makes the totally unfounded claim that this 'sarkion' is a "pneumatic body" (Ibid., p.346). He even cites John 1.14 ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο ("the Word became flesh"), probably the most famous anti-docetic passage in the New Testament, in support of this speculation.

The *Tripartite Tractate* as we shall see is also entirely comfortable with the full incarnation of Christ. It is about time that this clear agreement between the Valentinian texts of Nag Hammadi on Christology be taken seriously.

111. Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, I 7.2. Indeed the suffering and compassion of the Saviour are important themes in the *Tripartite Tractate*, and we shall have cause even to question the characterization of Valentinian Christology as one of two natures.

112. Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture: The Effect of Early Christological Controversies on the Text of the New Testament*, p.14.

113. Pagels, 'Gnostic and Orthodox Views of Christ's Passion', p.271 and *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism* Vol. I p.284 in the discussion afterwards.

114. Including the *Apocryphon of James*, the *Second Apocryphon of James* and the *Apocalypse of Peter*.

115. *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism* Vol. I, p.284 (Aland), pp.185 & 288 (Quispel) and p.286 (Jonas).

Ecumenical Council of 533, simply label it heresy in terms of subsequent Christian theology,[116] while Jonas, who seems to be referring to, and condemning as "profoundly heretical", docetism, argues that the human suffering of Christ, "was at the core of Christianity from the beginning; there was no need to wait for councils to define it".[117] The important question of heresy in the second century will be considered in section 1.11 of this chapter.

What is less convincing in her paper is Pagels's attempt to explain the debate over martyrdom between Irenaeus and the Valentinians in terms of the social and political concerns of the day. This approach, which here appears in only rudimentary form, gained enormously in popularity in the following decades, a good representative of which is M. A. Williams. This touches on one of the important differences between the method used in this thesis and that of the dominant *religionsgeschichte Schule*. While accepting that history does offer insights into ancient theology and religious practice, and can prevent misinterpretations of certain theological statements, as Williams has so clearly shown, a theological hermeneutic, such as this thesis follows, does not allow that history is the cause of theology. The relation between theology and action in the world is in fact the other way round: one's theology determines the way one acts, since one's actions are the expression of one's ultimate concern. We shall return to this point later. Ironically, later in the same paper, Pagels gives a much more satisfactory, theological, explanation for the differences between the Christologies of Irenaeus and the Valentinians, namely the ecclesiological and soteriological ramifications outlined above.

Out of all of the papers given at the Yale conference I have paid closest attention to that given by Pagels's since it deals with themes that are directly relevant to the study of the *Tripartite Tractate*. As we shall see the nature of the Christology/ecclesiology of the tractate is the deciding question on the debate between Attridge and Pagels, and Thomassen over the classification of the tractate as either eastern or western Valentinian.[118]

1.11 Orthodoxy and Heresy

The question of heresy in the second century is an important one, especially since Valentinian theology is still regularly, and inaccurately, labelled heretical. The scholar who has given the most clear survey of the scholarship on this question is Bart Ehrman in his exceptional study, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture: The Effect of Early Christological Controversies on the Text of the New Testament*. Ehrman states the present *opinio communis* thus:

> During its first two and a half centuries, Christianity comprised a number of competing theologies, or better, a number of competing Christian groups advocating a variety of theologies. There was as yet no established "orthodoxy," that is, no basic theological system acknowledged by the majority of church leaders and laity. Different local churches supported different understandings of the religion, while different understandings of the religion were present even within the same local church. Evidence for this view has been steadily mounting throughout the present century: we

116. Quispel, like Jonas, is very fond of affirming the heresy of the Valentinians, 'Valentinian Gnosis and the Apocryphon of John', p.118, *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism* Vol. I, p.285, 'The Original Doctrine of Valentinus the Gnostic', p.347, etc..
117. *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism* Vol. I, p.286.
118. See section 4.05 below.

know of the widespread diversity of early Christianity from both primary
and secondary accounts, and can sometimes pinpoint this diversity with
considerable accuracy.[119]

This view has only come about relatively recently in the wake of Walter Bauer's famous
work *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity*,[120] which successfully challenged the
opinion that had held sway from the time of Eusebius, bishop of Caesarea, in the fourth
century. According to this 'classical' view, 'orthodoxy' (or 'right opinion') conforms to
the true teaching of Jesus and his apostles, known as the *regula fidei* (rule of faith),[121]
which was spread by the latter throughout the world and which was held by the vast
majority of believers at any time. Conversely, 'heresy' (or 'choice') was always a
secondary corruption of the truth by those few who chose to misrepresent the truth while
claiming to be Christian.[122] Such perversions were the result of the contamination of the
truth with the alien ideas of Jewish teachings or of Pagan philosophers.

With the publication of Bauer's great study the classical view was irrevocably
overturned.

> Bauer argued that the early Christian church in fact did not comprise a
> single orthodoxy from which emerged a variety of competing heretical
> minorities. Instead, early Christianity embodied a number of divergent
> forms, no one of which represented the clear and powerful majority of
> believers against all others. In some regions, what was later to be termed
> "heresy" was in fact the original and only form of Christianity. In other
> regions, views later deemed heretical coexisted with views that would come
> to be embraced by the church as a whole, with most believers not drawing
> hard and fast lines of demarcation between the competing views. To this
> extent, "orthodoxy," in the sense of a unified group advocating an apostolic
> doctrine accepted by the majority of Christians everywhere, did not exist in
> the second and third centuries. Nor was "heresy" secondarily derived from
> an original teaching through an infusion of Jewish ideas or pagan
> philosophy. Beliefs that were, at later times, embraced as orthodoxy and
> condemned as heresy were in fact competing interpretations of Christianity,
> one of which eventually (but not initially) acquired domination because of
> singular historical and social forces. Only when one social group had
> exerted itself sufficiently over the rest of Christendom did a "majority"
> opinion emerge; only then did the "right belief" represent the view of the
> Christian church at large.[123]

Bauer's argument has not gone unchallenged in regard to particular early groups,[124]

119. Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*, p.4.
120. Walter Bauer, *Rechtglaubigkeit und Ketzerei in ältesten Christentum*, (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul
     Siebeck), 1934); zweite, durchgesehene Auflage mit einem Nachtrag, herausgegeben von George
     Strecker (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1964). English translation of the second edition *Orthodoxy and
     Heresy in Earliest Christianity*, by a team from the Philadelphia Seminar on Christian Origins, ed. by R.
     Kraft and G. Krodel (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971).
121. See Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*, p.32 note 7.
122. Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*, p.6.
123. Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*, p.7. Dunn, in his *Unity and Diversity in the New
     Testament*, extended Bauer's thesis by investigating whether it applied to the very beginnings of
     Christianity. He found that it clearly did: "*early catholicism was not the only trajectory or form of
     Christianity to emerge from the first century*. It is the one which became dominant in later decades, but
     at the turn of the century it was not yet dominant. And if judgement was to be made solely in terms of
     the New Testament alone there would be nothing to suggest that it should become the normative
     expression of Christianity". p.364, the emphasis is Dunn's.
124. See Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*, pp.33-34 note 16.

however the scholarly consensus has recognised that he was essentially correct: "if anything, early Christianity was even less tidy and more diversified than he realised".[125] The Nag Hammadi find has only helped strengthen this consensus, as it has provided evidence for what Pearson calls "gnostic heresiology":

> While it is probably true that much gnostic literature was intended to function more like "mystical poetry" than statements of logical precision or coherent theological systems, it is clear also the some gnostics were very serious in their attempts to define and safeguard the truth. Though their versions of the truth were not the same as that of the catholic Church Fathers, we can now see that their methods were not so different. One can therefore now, as a result of the Nag Hammadi library, speak of "gnostic heresiology"[126]

Of course the term 'Gnostic' is not a useful designation as Williams has demonstrated, while the term 'catholic' (universal) is equally inaccurate an adjective for any form of Christianity in the second century, as Bauer demonstrated. Nevertheless Pearson's point is well taken, and it supports Bauer's main argument that each of these early Christian groups understood itself to be 'orthodox', that is to say 'right', and its opponents to be 'heretical', that is to say 'wrong'.

Unfortunately Bauer's work while broadly recognised as being truly significant has been ignored for the most part.[127] One reason for this is that Bauer chose to keep the terms 'orthodoxy' and 'heresy' as designations for sociohistorical groups but stripped of their traditional senses of 'true/original faith' and 'secondary perversions' respectively.[128] I do not deny the sense of his argument, however it has allowed the discourse to remain very much as it was save for the addition of a quickly forgotten footnote that acknowledges the radical shift in meaning that these terms should have undergone in the mind of the reader. But the momentum of such a long tradition is simply too great to be overcome by the occasional footnote. The pejorative connotations of 'heresy' are too great for it to be used as a neutral term, especially since the term has been in use long since

125. Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*, p.8. "Walter Bauer, ...demonstrated convincingly in a brilliant monograph of 1934 that Christian groups later labelled heretical actually predominated in the first two or three centuries, both geographically and theologically. Recent discoveries, especially those at Nag Hammadi in Upper Egypt, have made it even clearer that Bauer was essentially right, and that a thorough and extensive revaluation of early Christian history is called for", H. Koester, 'Gnomai Diaphoroi: The Origin and Nature of Diversification in the History of Early Christianity', in *Trajectories through Earliest Christianity*, (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971), p.114, quoted in McCue 'Orthodoxy and Heresy', p.119. See also Gero, 'With Walter Bauer on the Tigris: Encratite Orthodoxy and Libertine Heresy in Syro-Mesopotamian Christianity', and Wisse, 'Gnosticism and Early Monasticism in Egypt' and 'The Use of Early Christian Literature as Evidence for Inner Diversity and Conflict'.
126. Pearson, 'Anti-heretical Warnings in Codex IX from Nag Hammadi', p.154. It is interesting to note which Christians are singled out as heretics by the *Testimony of Truth*: "While the thrust of our document's polemics is directed obviously against catholic Christianity, there is a very interesting section which looks very much like a catalogue of heresies and mentions well-known gnostic figures. Unfortunately this section (beginning with p. 55, line 1) is extremely fragmentary. 'Valentinus' (56.2) and the 'disciples of Valentinus' (56.5) are mentioned, as well as 'Isidore' (57.6) and probably 'Basilides' (57.8) and possibly the 'Simonians' (58.2f.). Other names surely mentioned in this section are now lost. Interestingly enough such terms as 'heretics' (αἱρετικός) and 'schisms' (σχίσμα) are used in this section!", Ibid., p.154.
127. McCue, 'Orthodoxy and Heresy', p.119.
128. Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*, p.12 and McCue, 'Orthodoxy and Heresy', p119 follow this practice.

the second century. To then make the word neutral only in terms of the first three centuries is too artificial. The term is so strong that even Dunn who, in his remarkable work *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament*, considers it "wiser to avoid the use of the terms 'orthodoxy' and 'heresy'", preferring J. M. Robinson's term 'trajectory' and his own terms 'unity' and 'diversity',[129] falls into the trap of referring to second century heresy:

> Thus it was that in the second century Paul's influence was more detectable on Valentinus and Marcion than on the theologians of the great Church, and it was only with Irenaeus that orthodoxy began to make a determined effort to wrest Paul's theology from the embrace of the heretics.[130]

Thus the necessity for the use of more neutral terms for diverse early Christian groups still remains. The work of both Ehrman and Dunn could prove useful in this regard. Since Dunn has pointed out that, regardless of the diversity of Christologies at the time, "*the identity of historical Jesus with kerygmatic Christ is the one basis and bond of unity which holds together the manifold diversity of first-century Christianity*",[131] we might identify the various Christian groups by their Christologies (adoptionistic, separationist, docetic, Patripassianist, etc.) much as Ehrman has done. Of course self-designations such as Valentinian, Ebionite, Marcionite, etc., are also useful.

One challenge to Bauer's thesis that deserves some attention is James McCue's 'Orthodoxy and Heresy: Walter Bauer and the Valentinians'. While not denying the validity of Bauer's overall argument, McCue argues that, "relative to Valentinus and his followers, Bauer is simply wrong and the older literature roughly correct on the question of the relationship between orthodoxy and heresy",[132] that is to say that the Valentinians were both a subsequent offshoot from orthodoxy and that they were numerically inferior. McCue's argument is based on the Valentinian's apparent self-understanding as part of the 'orthodox' community and that they employed most of the New Testament corpus, excepting *Acts* and the Pastoral Epistles:[133]

> What is important about this is that the Valentinian documents that Irenaeus is using were written at a time [when] the New Testament collection was just coming into common and normative use among the orthodox. Justin is still prior to this development. Indeed, Irenaeus is the first ecclesiastical writer comparable to the Valentinians in his extensive and deliberate use of the four gospels and of Paul. Though perhaps other explanations are possible, the most plausible is the traditional one that Valentinianism originates within the matrix of orthodoxy at just that point in time when the New Testament is "jelling" within orthodoxy; that this is why so much of the Valentinian material that we see in Irenaeus ... is an interpretation of New Testament materials.[134]

From this evidence McCue argues that, "the specifically *Christian* roots of Valentinianism are 2nd century orthodoxy rather than an earlier independent form of Christianity" and that

129. Dunn, *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament*, pp.5-6. One of the weaknesses, of this otherwise excellent book, in regard to early Hellenistic Christianity is Dunn's pre-Williams use of the term 'Gnosticism', which leads him to falsely attribute the usual cliches of 'Gnosticism' to the Valentinians such as docetism (p.304), dualism (p.277) and the belief that to them "the cross was an embarrassment" (p.277).

130. Dunn, *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament*, p.296.

131. Dunn, *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament*, pp.226-229. The emphasis is Dunn's.

132. McCue, 'Orthodoxy and Heresy', p.119.

133. McCue, 'Orthodoxy and Heresy', p.122.

134. McCue, 'Orthodoxy and Heresy', pp.122-123.

this supports, "the pre-Bauerian view of Valentinianism as a spin off from orthodoxy, which tried unsuccessfully to pass itself off as a truer interpretation of the ecclesiastical tradition".[135]

The weakness of McCue's argument is not in the evidence, but in the conclusions he draws from it. He has missed, or ignored, the larger view of early Christianity that Bauer took and which has been deepened by subsequent scholarship. McCue is still holding onto the idea of proto-orthodoxy as a monolith, which is clearly untenable, especially in the light of Dunn's *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament*. Dunn has shown that diversity was as apparent within congregations *from the very beginning* as it was between different congregations.[136] Referring to the second century context Ehrman remarks that:

> The more nebulous context of their own day also explains why Christians of radically different theological persuasions could be actively involved in the life and worship of the same church. I have already mentioned Irenaeus's general complaints about Gnostic Christians. We can also speak of specific instances: Valentinus, Ptolemy, and Justin were apparently all accepted as faithful members of the congregation in Rome, at approximately the same time.[137]

McCue's evidence is actually no different from what the Valentinians claimed of themselves. In fact the Valentinians firmly maintained their dependence on Paul's theology and claimed to be the inheritors of his apostolic tradition through Theudas (Origen, *Contra Celsum* V.62).[138] It is now clear from Dunn's investigation of the diversity within the Pauline churches that this claim is not at all unlikely and must be taken seriously.[139] Thus, far from Valentinianism having its roots in second-century 'orthodoxy', it's roots go back to the early Pauline churches of the first century. Having failed to grasp the fluidity of early Christianity, McCue has fallen back on the outdated view of orthodoxy and heresy. This only highlights the radicality of Bauer's insight and the profundity of its effects on the scholarship of early Christianity.

1.12 Studies of the *Tripartite Tractate*

There are at present few studies devoted to the *Tripartite Tractate*, although it is referred to regularly in other studies of Valentinianism, general and particular. In this brief overview I am concerned with the way in which the most significant scholars of the *Tripartite Tractate* have approached the text, rather than with specific details of their arguments. The latter, when they help to explicate the text, will be noted in the main body of this exegesis.

An obvious but critical point that nevertheless is worth making, is that the way in which someone studies a text largely determines the outcome; it sets the limits of what can be accomplished. If, for instance, someone reads a Valentinian text with regard to its Platonism,[140] it is clear that little attention will be paid to its Christianity, even if it is prevalent. The questions one brings to the text determine what answers the text will give.

135. McCue, 'Orthodoxy and Heresy', p.122.
136. See especially Dunn, *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament*, Chapter XII 'Hellenistic Christianity' pp.265-308.
137. Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*, p.10.
138. Pagels, 'Visions, Appearances, and Apostolic Authority', p.426. See also Pagels, *The Gnostic Paul*, pp.1-2, and Dunn, *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament*, pp.288-292.
139. Dunn, *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament*, pp.275-296.
140. As, for instance, does Zandee in *The Terminology of Plotinus and of some Gnostic Writings, Mainly the Fourth Treatise of the Jung Codex*.

The two most important studies of the *Tripartite Tractate* are those of Attridge and Pagels: 'The Tripartite Tractate: I, 5:51.1-138.27', in *Nag Hammadi Codex I (The Jung Codex): Introductions, Texts, Translations, Indices*; 'The Tripartite Tractate: I, 5:51.1-138.27', in *Nag Hammadi Codex I (The Jung Codex): Notes*, and Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite (NH I, 5). Text établi, introduit et commenté par Einar Thomassen. Traduit par Louis Painchaud et Einar Thomassen*.[141] Being critical editions of the original text and translations of it as well as commentaries, their methods are necessarily more diverse than an exegetical study such as the present one. The first concern of both is to establish the critical text of the original and to translate it. Consequently, a substantial portion of their notes is taken up with linguistic comments on the Coptic text: what amendments need to be made (the text is full of mistakes), questions of parsing, ambiguities of phrase, the identification of technical terms, and various possibilities for the translation of certain words and phrases.

The second focus for both sets of scholars is the identification of parallels with and influences from religious and philosophical sources. Attridge and Pagels tend to concentrate on the equivalences and differences that are to be found between the *Tripartite Tractate* and the Valentinian tradition as represented by the Church Fathers and the other Nag Hammadi texts. Thomassen, while looking at some Valentinian parallels, focuses more on the sources from the Platonic and Pythagorean traditions, which he sees as having a significant influence on the theology of the *Tripartite Tractate*. He is particularly interested in identifying as accurately as possible the specific sources from the Greek philosophical tradition that are used by the tractate. He also shows the strong affinities that the *Tripartite Tractate* has with Origenism.

The third focus of the commentaries is the one that most concerns this exegesis, namely the description of the theology of the tractate. Attridge and Pagels's reading of the *Tripartite Tractate* is based primarily on the comparison of each aspect of the text with other Valentinian sources, showing where they agree and how they differ. Thomassen tends to make more comparisons with Pythagorean and Platonic sources. However, it must be said that in his description of the theology of the *Tripartite Tractate* in its own right Thomassen has gone further than any other scholar, especially in the elucidation of the role of the divine Will and of the process of emanation.

Both sets of scholars are interested in locating the tractate within the Valentinian tradition. This is where one of the largest disagreements has arisen between Attridge and Pagels, and Thomassen. As early as 1955 Henri-Charles Peuch and Gilles Quispel speculated that Heracleon, who was one of Valentinus's greatest pupils and an important representative of the western school, was the author of the tractate. However, as Thomassen points out, "Cette hypothèse repose sur tout un ensemble de présupposés, qui prêtent tous flanc à une critique sérieuse".[142] And Attridge and Pagels consider that the suggestion, "that Heracleon himself was the author of the text is at least unprovable and at most unlikely". In their view,

> The fact that the *Tri. Trac.* carries its revision of Valentinianism farther than other extant Valentinian sources, including the fragments of Heracleon, suggests that its author was a later representative of western Valentinianism.[143]

141. These two studies have superseded the first translation which was made, into German, by Rodolph Kasser et al., *Tractatus Tripartitus, Pars I: De supernis. Codex Jung F. XXVI^r – F.LII^v* (pp.51-104) (Bern: Francke, 1973); *Tractatus Tripartitus, pars II: De creatione hominis; pars III: De generibus tribus, Codex Jung F.LII^v –F.LXX^v* (pp.104-140) (Bern: Francke, 1975).
142. Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.12 trans: "This hypothesis rests entirely on a collection of presuppositions, which gives rise on all sides to a serious critique". See Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, pp.12-13 for his full argument.
143. Attridge and Pagels: 'The Tripartite Tractate: I, 5:51.1-138.27', in *Nag Hammadi Codex I (The Jung Codex): Introductions, Texts, Translations, Indices*, p.178.

Attridge and Pagels do, however, recognise that there are parallels in the *Tripartite Tractate* with eastern Valentinianism, especially *Tripartite Tractate* 86.25, but they think that they are best explained as, "survivals of original Valentinian positions, which were modified by some of the major western Valentinians".[144] This general position is that of the majority of scholars.[145] However, Thomassen argues the text is from the eastern school and that it is closely related to the theology of Theodotus as attested in the *Excerpta ex Theodoto*.[146] He bases his argument on the fact that the *Tripartite Tractate*, like the eastern school, does not hold psychics to be members of the Church (*Tripartite Tractate* 119.25-122.1, 134.23f).[147] Since the distinction between the schools on the question of whether or not the psychics are members of the Church is the only fixed point that we have in deciding whether a text is of one school or another, Thomassen finds that there is only one possible conclusion: the *Tripartite Tractate* belongs to the eastern branch of Valentinianism. Thus, in Thomassen's view, the tractate is "le seul témoin conservé d'une exposition de la doctrine valentinienne oriental".[148] Considering the quality of his translation and commentary, this is not a view that can be dismissed lightly. We shall return to this debate in Chapter 4.[149]

The differences between the commentators in the categorisation of the tractate lead to important differences in the way they read the text. Where, for instance, Attridge and Pagels[150] view the text as consciously reinterpreting certain elements of earlier Valentinian thinking, Thomassen[151] takes the view that the author of the tractate is taking a stand on matters that were being debated among the Valentinians.

144. Attridge and Pagels: 'The Tripartite Tractate: I, 5:51.1-138.27', in *Nag Hammadi Codex I (The Jung Codex): Introductions, Texts, Translations, Indices*, p.178 note 29.
145. See Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.13.
146. Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, pp.14-17.
147. Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.16.
148. Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.17. Trans. "the only witness preserving a systematic exposition of the eastern Valentinian doctrine".
149. Section 4.05.
150. Attridge and Pagels: 'The Tripartite Tractate: I, 5:51.1-138.27', in *Nag Hammadi Codex I (The Jung Codex): Notes*, p.237.
151. Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.283.

Chapter Two
Method

As we have seen in this introduction, the historical approach to the study of religion has dominated the study of the Valentinians and other mainly Christian groups that until recently were designated as 'Gnostic'. However the historical method is not the only valid way of approaching the texts that we have. In fact, as important as the historical approach is to the understanding of these texts, it cannot, in the end, take the reader the entire way. Hermeneutical engagement involves the dialectic of historical, explanatory method and understanding. What makes this thesis different from any other that I know of in this field is that it is hermeneutical rather than historical or sociological. The historical method leads to an historical understanding of a religious text, one which situates it in its time and place and within the history of ideas that have influenced it. What it cannot do is lead to a religious understanding of a religious text, and that, from a religious point of view, is a significant limitation.

What, then, is a religious understanding of a text such as the *Tripartite Tractate*? It is one which recognises the orientation and intentionality of the text itself and thinks with it, that is to say, one which recognises the text's ultimate concern.

2.01 Hermeneutics

This study follows the hermeneutical approach of the modern philosopher Paul Ricoeur, who is one of the leading thinkers on the nature of the interpretation of texts. Ricoeur begins his investigation of the nature of interpretation by asking what is writing, and what is its relation to discourse. He draws on the work of the French linguist Emile Benveniste,[1] who, in speaking about the "instance of discourse", understands the "emergence of discourse itself as event".[2] Discourse is the coming together of event (the 'saying') and meaning (the 'said').[3] That the meaning (the 'said as such') can be detached from the event is apparent in that,

> It can be identified and reidentified as the same, so that we may say it again or in other words. We may even say it in another language or translate it from one language to another. Through all these transformations it preserves an identity of its own which can be called the propositional content, the 'said as such'.[4]

The detachment of event and meaning that is already present in living speech is brought to full manifestation in writing. This detachment does not affect the fundamental structure of discourse, for, the dialectic of event and meaning continues to govern, "the semantic autonomy of the text"[5] which now appears. Writing, then, does not have a foundation that is different from that of speech, as Jacques Derrida holds, rather, "writing is the full manifestation of discourse".[6]

Ricoeur points out that writing arises from the intention to fix discourse, which in turn leads to the methods of such fixation:

1. Benveniste, *Problèms de linguistique générale* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966).
2. Ricoeur, 'The Hermeneutical Function of Distanciation', p.77.
3. Ricoeur, 'Writing as a Problem for Literary Criticism and Philosophical Hermeneutics', p.320.
4. Ricoeur, 'Writing as a Problem for Literary Criticism and Philosophical Hermeneutics', p.321.
5. Ricoeur, 'Writing as a Problem for Literary Criticism and Philosophical Hermeneutics', p.321.
6. Ricoeur, 'Writing as a Problem for Literary Criticism and Philosophical Hermeneutics', p.321.

> Because the event appears and disappears, there is a problem of fixation, of inscription. What we want to fix is discourse, not language as *langue*. It is only by extension that we fix by inscription the alphabet, lexicon, and grammar, all of which serve that which alone is to be fixed, discourse. ... Only discourse is to be fixed, because discourse as event disappears.[7]

Writing, then, does not fix the event of discourse, the 'saying', but only the meaning of discourse, the 'said', which Ricoeur calls, "the intentional exteriorization constitutive of the couple event-meaning", or the "noema of the speaking act".[8] "This inscription", says Ricoeur, "is discourse's destination".[9]

The effects of the cultural achievement of inscription are tremendous, for "the text is, par excellence, the basis for communication in and through distance".[10] The possibility of communicating at a distance, temporal as well as geographical, altered and enhanced the communicative ability of humanity:

> To the possibility of transferring orders over long distances without serious distortions may be connected the birth of political rule exercised by a distant state. This political implication of writing is just one of its consequences. With the fixation of rules for reckoning may be correlated the birth of market relationships, therefore the birth of economics. To the constitution of archives, that of history. To the fixation of law as a standard for decisions, independent of the opinion of the concrete judge, the birth of justice and of juridical codes, etc. Such an immense range of effects suggests that human discourse is not merely preserved from destruction by being fixed in writing, but that it is deeply affected in its communicative function.[11]

While the detachment of meaning from event does not affect the fundamental structure of discourse, it does raise a new problematic: the need for interpretation. In living discourse, the fundamental feature of which is that someone says something to someone else about something,[12] the problems encountered in understanding what someone means can be overcome by asking for clarification there and then, because those speaking to each other share the same situation. The speaker, "is there, in the genuine sense of being-there, of *Dasein*".[13] In dialogue the sense, 'what' is said or "the immanent design of discourse",[14] blends with the reference, the 'about what' of the saying or "the intentional direction towards a world and the reflective direction towards a self",[15] thus the reference is ostensive:

> In speech, the interlocutors are present not only to one another, but also to the situation, the surroundings, and the circumstantial milieu of discourse. It is in relation to this circumstantial milieu that discourse is fully meaningful; the return to reality is ultimately a return to this reality, which can be indicated 'around' the speakers, 'around,' if we may say so, the

7.   Ricoeur, 'Writing as a Problem for Literary Criticism and Philosophical Hermeneutics', pp.322-323.
8.   Ricoeur, 'Writing as a Problem for Literary Criticism and Philosophical Hermeneutics', p.323.
9.   Ricoeur, 'Writing as a Problem for Literary Criticism and Philosophical Hermeneutics', p.323.
10. Ricoeur, 'Phenomenology and Hermeneutics', p.35.
11. Ricoeur, 'Writing as a Problem for Literary Criticism and Philosophical Hermeneutics', p.323.
12. Ricoeur, 'The Hermeneutical Function of Distanciation', p.83.
13. Ricoeur, 'Writing as a Problem for Literary Criticism and Philosophical Hermeneutics', p.324.
14. Ricoeur, 'Metaphor and the Main Problem of Hermeneutics', p.308.
15. Ricoeur, 'Metaphor and the Main Problem of Hermeneutics', p.308.

instance of discourse itself. Language is, moreover, well equipped to secure this anchorage. Demonstratives, adverbs of time and place, personal pronouns, verbal tenses, and in general all the 'deictic' and 'ostensive' indicators serve to anchor discourse in the circumstantial reality which surrounds the instance of discourse. Thus, in living speech, the ideal sense of what is said turns towards the real reference, towards that 'about which' we speak. At the limit, this real reference tends to merge with an ostensive designation where speech rejoins the gesture of pointing. Sense fades into reference and the latter into the act of showing.[16]

With written discourse, however, the coincidence of sense and reference is shattered: "the author's intention and the meaning of the text cease to coincide":[17]

Inscription becomes synonymous with the semantic autonomy of the text which results from the disconnection of the mental intention of the author from the verbal meaning of the text, of what the author meant and what the text means. The text's career escapes the finite horizon lived by its author. What the text means now matters more than what the author meant when he wrote it.[18]

From this autonomy of the text arises the need for interpretation, but there are many traps into which the interpreter can fall regarding both the relation of the author to the text and that of the reader to the text.

There are two primary fallacies that arise from the misunderstanding of the author and the text: the intentional fallacy, and the fallacy of the absolute text.

The intentional fallacy holds that the author's intention is the criterion for any valid interpretation of the text.[19] Ricoeur recognises this as one of the illusions of the subject, which was the "Romantic pretension of recovering, by congenial coincidence, the genius of the author".[20]

Nothing has more harmed the theory of understanding than the identification, central in Dilthey, between understanding and understanding *others*, as though it were always first a matter of apprehending a foreign psychological life behind a text. What is to be understood in a narrative is not first of all the one who is speaking behind the text, but what is being talked about, the *thing of the text*, namely, the kind of world the work unfolds, as it were, before the text.[21]

The liberation of the text from the psychological world of the author is also its liberation from the sociological world of the author:

What is true of the psychological conditions holds also for the sociological conditions of the production of the text. An essential characteristic of a literary work, and of a work of art in general, is that it transcends its own psychosociological conditions of production and thereby opens itself to an

16. Ricoeur, 'What Is a Text?', p.46.
17. Ricoeur, 'Writing as a Problem for Literary Criticism and Philosophical Hermeneutics', p.324.
18. Ricoeur, 'Writing as a Problem for Literary Criticism and Philosophical Hermeneutics', pp.324-325.
19. Ricoeur, 'Writing as a Problem for Literary Criticism and Philosophical Hermeneutics', p.325.
20. Ricoeur, 'Appropriation', p.94.
21. Ricoeur, 'Explanation and Understanding', p.131. The emphasis is Ricoeur's.

unlimited series of readings, themselves situated in different sociocultural conditions. In short, the text must be able, from the sociological as well as the psychological point of view, to "decontextualize" itself in such a way that it can be "recontextualized" in a new situation — as accomplished, precisely, by the act of reading.[22]

Whereas the intentional fallacy denies the semantic autonomy of the text, the fallacy of the absolute text does the exact opposite, it,

> ... forgets that a text remains a discourse told by somebody, said by someone to someone about something. It is impossible to cancel out this main characteristic of discourse without reducing texts to natural objects, i.e., to things which are not man-made, but which are like pebbles found in the sand.[23]

While the text interrupts the dialogue it does not suppress it,[24] but it is not until the text is read that the event occurs and the sense of the text is appropriated as reference. If the autonomy of the text is radicalized to the point that the recognition of the nature of the text as discourse is lost, the text, "has no outside but only an inside; it has no transcendent aim, unlike speech which is addressed to someone about something".[25] This is the approach taken by structuralists such as Claude Lévi-Strauss, who applied the explanatory attitude of linguistics to texts:

> ... it is possible to treat the text according to the explanatory rules that linguistics successfully applies to the simple system of signs which constitute language [*langue*] as opposed to speech [*parole*]. As is well known, the language-speech distinction is the fundamental distinction which gives linguistics a homogenous object; speech belongs to physiology, psychology, and sociology, whereas language, as rules of the game of which speech is the execution, belongs only to linguistics. As is equally well known, linguistics considers only systems of units devoid of proper meaning, each of which is defined only in terms of its difference from all of the others. These units, whether they be purely distinctive like those of phonological articulation or significant like those of lexical articulation, are oppositive units. The interplay of oppositions and their combinations within an inventory of discrete units is what defines the notion of structure in linguistics.[26]

Thus the structuralists reduce the text to the interplay of various opposing units into which they divide its narrative. This is the explanatory attitude towards texts, which considers only the internal structures of a text, "treating it as a worldless and authorless object".[27] Ricoeur does not deny the legitimacy of this project although it is clear that, "the structural model of explanation does not exhaust the field of possible attitudes which may be adopted in regard to a text".[28] Whereas the attitude of explanation suspends the text's reference to a surrounding world, the attitude of understanding or interpretation, "lifts the

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22. Ricoeur, 'The Hermeneutical Function of Distanciation', p.83.
23 Ricoeur, 'Writing as a Problem for Literary Criticism and Philosophical Hermeneutics', p.325.
24. Ricoeur, 'What Is a Text?', p.47.
25. Ricoeur, 'What Is a Text?', p.51.
26. Ricoeur, 'What Is a Text?', p.52.
27. Ricoeur, 'What Is a Text?', p.51.
28. Ricoeur, 'What Is a Text?', p.52.
29. Ricoeur, 'What Is a Text?', p.56.

suspense and completes the text in present speech".[29] For Ricoeur hermeneutics involves the dialectic of explanation and understanding, which leads to appropriation. In this way hermeneutics "eludes the alternative of genius or structure",[30] that is to say, it avoids the Romantic intentional fallacy and the Structuralist fallacy of the absolute text.

Before considering the dialectic of distanciation and appropriation, which is, "the final figure which the dialectic of explanation and understanding must assume"[31] and which constitutes the hermeneutical circle, we must first briefly familiarise ourselves with the potential misunderstandings that can arise from an inaccurate assessment of the relation between the reader and the text in light of the semantic autonomy of the latter. Secondly we must take a necessary excursion into the ontological hermeneutics of Heidegger and Gadamer, which have reoriented the entire discipline of philosophical hermeneutics.

2.02 The Text and The Reader

Just as the text is free of its author it is also free of any particular reader. This is another important difference between spoken and written discourse. The speech act precisely determines its audience, who is of course the person being addressed. This direct relation is shattered in written discourse, to such an extent that a text is addressed potentially to anyone who can read. The liberation of discourse from the "narrowness of the face-to-face situation"[32] has far reaching hermeneutical consequences. In the light of this autonomy one can no longer validly equate the meaning of a text with the meaning that it held for its original audience, for part of the meaning of the text is its openness to "an indefinite number of readers and therefore interpretations".[33] This fallacious attitude is the reader-text counterpart of the author-text intentional fallacy. Here it is the psychology and sociology of the original audience with which the reader seeks to coincide.[34] Ricoeur characterises the autonomy of the text in relation to its author, its situation and its original audience as freedom from its *Sitz-im-Leben*: the meaning of a text,

> ... is rendered *autonomous* with respect to the intention of the author, the initial situation of discourse, and the original addressee. Intention, situation, and original addressee constitute the *Sitz-im-Leben* [place-in-life] of the text. The possibility of multiple interpretations is opened up by a text that is thus freed from its *Sitz-im-Leben*. Beyond the polysemy of words in a conversation is the polysemy of a text that invites multiple readings. This is the moment of interpretation in the technical sense of *textual exegesis*. It is also the moment of the hermeneutical circle between the understanding initiated by the reader and the proposals of meaning offered by the text.[35]

One of the consequences of the text's ability to "procure new readers for itself",[36] and consequently new interpretations, is that interpretation never comes to an end; there can never be a complete interpretation. I shall return to this point.

The other end of the spectrum to the misidentification of the meaning of the text with that of its original audience, and equally fallacious, is the subsumption of "interpretation to the finite capacities of understanding of the present reader",[37] in other words, the attitude

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30. Ricoeur, 'The Hermeneutical Function of Distanciation', p.84.
31. Ricoeur, 'Appropriation', p.87.
32. Ricoeur, 'Writing as a Problem for Literary Criticism and Philosophical Hermeneutics', p.326.
33. Ricoeur, 'Writing as a Problem for Literary Criticism and Philosophical Hermeneutics', p.326.
34. Ricoeur, 'Appropriation', p.94.
35. Ricoeur, 'Phenomenology and Hermeneutics', p.32. The emphasis is Ricoeur's.
36. Ricoeur, 'Appropriation', p.96.
37. Ricoeur, 'Appropriation', p.94.

that the text only means what it means to me the reader. This attitude, very common among undergraduates studying English literature, is the counterpart of the fallacy of the absolute text, only here the solipsism is on the part of the reader rather than directed towards the text. Like the fallacy of the absolute text, it fails to recognise the text as discourse and thus objectifies it. However here the text as object merely serves as a screen upon which the reader projects his own meaning.

2.03 Heidegger and the Ontological Foundation of Hermeneutics

What alternative does Ricoeur offer to the various hermeneutical errors that we have just considered? His alternative draws on the philosophy of Heidegger and Gadamer.[38] Before Heidegger, interpretation was considered to be one epistemology, one theory of knowing, among others. Heidegger shifted or returned the question of interpretation or explication (*Auslegung*) to its proper ontological ground by linking the question of interpretation directly to the meaning of being.[39] He begins *Being and Time* by showing that thinking has moved so far from the question of the meaning of being that we have forgotten that it is even of any importance at all. The single goal of Heidegger's prolific philosophical life was the recovery of this very question.

The place where the question of being arises, and "the site of the understanding of being",[40] is *Dasein*:

> Regarding, understanding and grasping, choosing and gaining access to, are constitutive attitudes of inquiry and are thus themselves modes of being of a particular being, of *the* being we inquirers ourselves in each case are. Thus to work out the question of being means to make a being – he who questions – transparent in its being. Asking this question, as a mode of *being* of a being, is itself essentially determined by what is asked about in it – being. This being which we ourselves in each case are and which includes inquiry among the possibilities of its being we formulate terminologically as Da-sein.[41]

What, among beings, is unique about *Dasein* is that part of its very constitution is that it reflects upon its own being:

> Da-sein is a being that does not simply occur among other beings. Rather it is ontically distinguished by the fact that in its being this being is concerned *about* its very being. Thus it is constitutive of the being of Da-sein to have, in its very being, a relation of being to this being. And this in turn means that Da-sein understands itself in its being in some way and with some explicitness. It is proper to this being that it be disclosed to itself with and through its being. *Understanding of being is itself a determination of being of Da-sein.* The ontic distinction of Da-sein lies in the fact that it is ontological.[42]

Thus the inquiry of the meaning of being must not only start with, but must also make its

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38. An overview of this nature cannot hope to do justice to the subtleties of the thought of two such philosophers. Therefore this overview is limited to the explication of those aspects of their thought which are highlighted by and are directly relevant to Ricoeur's hermeneutics.
39. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. by J. Stambaugh, pp.8-9.
40. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. by J. Stambaugh, p.7.
41. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. by J. Stambaugh, p.6. The emphasis is Heidegger's.
42. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. by J. Stambaugh, p.10. The emphasis is Heidegger's.

central focus the interrogation of *Dasein*, for "the ontological analysis of Da-sein in general constitutes fundamental ontology".[43] There are two inter-related reasons for this starting point: firstly *Dasein* is, in its nature, already related to that which is sought; and secondly the very question of being is no more than "the radicalization of an essential tendency of being that belongs to Da-sein itself",[44] namely its inherent concern with being that arises from the knowledge that it itself *is*, which Heidegger calls the "pre-ontological understanding of being".[45]

The investigation of being through *Dasein* can and must, "precede the positive sciences",[46] since, each of them, "arises from the domain of beings themselves".[47] Thus the, "preliminary research that creates the fundamental concepts", which lead to an understanding that precedes and guides all positive investigation, "amounts to nothing else than interpreting these beings in terms of the basic constitution of their being".[48] Ontology, or phenomenology, does not concern itself with the methodology of the human sciences, rather it "will dig beneath this methodology in order to lay bare its foundations".[49] Heidegger illustrates this approach in reference to history: "Thus, for example, what is philosophically primary is not a theory of concept-formation in historiology, nor the theory of historical knowledge, nor even the theory of history as the object of historiology; what is primary is rather the interpretation of genuinely historical beings with regard to their historicality".[50]

What does this insight into fundamental ontology have to do with hermeneutics? The answer is that ontology is hermeneutics, in the original signification of the word. The following passage is long, but it encapsulates Heidegger's understanding of the intimate relation of ontology and hermeneutics.

> As far as content goes, phenomenology is the science of the being of beings – ontology. In our elucidation of the tasks of ontology the necessity arose for a fundamental ontology which would have as its theme that being which is ontologically and ontically distinctive, namely, Da-sein. This must be done in such a way that our ontology confronts the cardinal problem, the question of the meaning of being in general. From the investigation itself we shall see that the methodological meaning of phenomenological description is *interpretation*. The *logos* of the phenomenology of Da-sein has the character of *hermēneuein*, through which the proper meaning of being and the basic structures of the very being of Da-sein are *made known* to the understanding of being that belongs to Da-sein itself. Phenomenology of Da-sein is *hermeneutics* in the original signification of that word, which designates the work of interpretation. But since discovery of the meaning of being and of the basic structures of Da-sein in general exhibits the horizon for every further ontological research into beings unlike Da-sein, the present hermeneutic is at the same time "hermeneutics" in the sense that it works out the conditions of the possibility of every ontological investigation. Finally, since Da-sein has ontological priority over all other beings – as a being in the possibility of existence [*Existenz*] – hermeneutics, as the interpretation of the being of Da-sein, receives a specific third and, philosophically understood, *primary* meaning of an analysis of the

43. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. by J. Stambaugh, p.12.
44. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. by J. Stambaugh, p.12.
45. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. by J. Stambaugh, p.12.
46. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. by J. Stambaugh, p.9.
47. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. by J. Stambaugh, p.8.
48. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. by J. Stambaugh, pp.8-9.
49. Ricoeur, 'The Task of Hermeneutics', p.65.
50. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. by J. Stambaugh, p.9.

existentiality of existence. To the extent that this hermeneutic elaborates the historicity of Da-sein ontologically as the ontic condition of the possibility of the discipline of history, it contains the roots of what can be called "hermeneutics" only in a derivative sense: the methodology of the historical humanistic disciplines.[51]

In this way Heidegger shows that phenomenology is itself hermeneutical, and in case the reader is tempted to class phenomenology and ontology as sub-groups within philosophy as a whole, Heidegger emphasises their fundamental nature:

> Ontology and phenomenology are not two different disciplines which among others belong to philosophy. Both terms characterize philosophy itself, its object and procedure. Philosophy is universal phenomenological ontology, taking its departure from the hermeneutic of Da-sein, which, as an analysis of *existence*, has fastened the end of the guideline of all philosophical inquiry at the point from which it *arises* and to which it *returns*.[52]

The recognition of the ontological priority of *Dasien* regarding the question of understanding, alters the grounds of the inquiry. Whereas before, for such thinkers as Dilthey, the question of understanding was linked, "to the problem of the other person; how to gain access to another mind was a problem that dominated all of the human sciences, from psychology to history",[53] with Heidegger this is no longer a viable option. Ricoeur points out that in *Being and Time*, "the question of understanding is wholly severed from the problem of communication with others".[54] Instead the investigation is shifted from the relation with another to the relation of being-in-the-world:

> It is not without interest to recall why Dilthey proceeded as he did. He posed the problematic of the human sciences on the basis of a Kantian argument. The knowledge of things runs up against an unknown, the thing itself, whereas in the case of the mind there is no thing-in-itself; we ourselves are what the other is. Knowledge of the mind therefore has an undeniable advantage over the knowledge of nature. Heidegger, who read Nietzsche, no longer has this innocence; he knows that the other, as well as myself, is more unknown to me than any natural phenomenon can be. Here the dissimulation no doubt goes deeper than anywhere else. If there is a region of being where inauthenticity reigns, it is indeed in the relation of each person with every other; hence the chapter on *being-with* is a debate with the "one," as the center and privileged place of dissimulation. It is therefore not astonishing that it is by a reflection of *being-in*, rather than *being-with*, that the ontology of understanding may begin; not *being-with* another who would only duplicate our subjectivity, but *being-in-the-world*. This shift of the philosophical locus is just as important as the movement from the problem of method toward the problem of being. The question of the *world* takes the place of the question of the other. In thereby making understanding *worldly*, Heidegger *depsychologizes* it.[55]

51. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. by J. Stambaugh, p.33. The emphasis is Heidegger's.
52. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. by J. Stambaugh, p.34. The emphasis is Heidegger's.
53. Ricoeur, 'The Task of Hermeneutics', p.65.
54. Ricoeur, 'The Task of Hermeneutics', p.65.
55. Ricoeur, 'The Task of Hermeneutics', pp.65-66. The emphasis is Ricoeur's.

Ricoeur emphasises the importance of this depsychologizing move away from understanding as the relation of being with another towards understanding as the relation of being-in-the-world, of *Dasien*. Many of the existentialist readings of Heidegger have misunderstood this shift, and have read his analyses of care, anguish and being-toward-death as a kind of, "refined existential psychology", rather than as parts of "a meditation on the *worldliness of the world*".[56] These analyses,

> seek essentially to shatter the pretension of the knowing subject to set itself up as the measure of objectivity. What must be reaffirmed in place of this pretension is the condition of *inhabiting* the world, a condition that renders situation, understanding and interpretation possible. Hence the theory of understanding must be preceded by the recognition of the relation of entrenchment which anchors the whole linguistic system, including books and texts, in something that is not primordially a phenomenon of articulation in discourse.[57]

Before human articulation there must be a world in which one is and to which one responds. This point is as decisive as it is obvious. Understanding, then, interpreted as a "fundamental existential", is a "fundamental mode of the being of Da-sein",[58] while "understanding", as one possible kind of cognition among others, must be seen as, "an existential derivative of the primary understanding".[59] This primary understanding is "not concerned with grasping fact but with apprehending a possibility of being".[60] Heidegger speaks of *Dasein*, existentially, as always a being-possible. This possibility is not a "free-floating potentiality of being in the sense of the 'liberty of indifference' (*libertas indifferentiae*)",[61] for *Dasein* is essentially attuned:

> Da-sein has already got itself into definite possibilities. As a potentiality for being which it *is*, it has let some go by; it constantly adopts the possibilities of its being, grasps them, and goes astray. But this means that Da-sein is a being-possible entrusted to itself, *thrown possibility* throughout. Da-sein is the possibility of being free *for* its ownmost potentiality of being.[62]

56. Ricoeur, 'The Task of Hermeneutics', p.66. The emphasis is Ricoeur's.
57. Ricoeur, 'The Task of Hermeneutics', p.66. The emphasis is Ricoeur's. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. by J. Stambaugh, pp.50-51: "... being-in designates a constitution of being of Dasein, and is an *existential*. But we cannot understand by this the objective presence of a material thing (the human body) 'in' a being objectively present. Nor does the term being-in designate a spatial 'in one another' of two things objectively present, any more than the word 'in' primordially means a spatial relation of this kind. 'In' stems from *innan-*, to live, *habitare*, to dwell. '*An*' means I am used to, familiar with, I take care of something. It has the meaning of *colo* in the sense of *habito* and *diligo*. We characterized this being to whom being-in belongs in this meaning as the being which I myself always am. The expression '*bin*' is connected with '*bei*.' '*Ich bin*' (I am) means I dwell, I stay near ... the world as something familiar in such and such a way. Being as the infinitive of 'I am': that is, understood as an existential, means to dwell near ... , to be familiar with. ... *Being-in is thus the formal existential expression of the being of Da-sein* which has the essential constitution of being-in the-world". The emphasis is Heidegger's.
58. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. by J. Stambaugh, p.134.
59. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. by J. Stambaugh, p.134.
60. Ricoeur, 'The Task of Hermeneutics', p.66. Ricoeur continues, "We must not lose sight of this point when we draw the methodological consequences of this analysis: to understand a text, we shall say, is not to find a lifeless sense that is contained therein, but to unfold the possibility of being indicated by the text".
61. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. by J. Stambaugh, p.135.
62. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. by J. Stambaugh, p.135. The emphasis is Heidegger's.

This is to say that part of the very nature of *Dasein* is that it has orientation, it is always being *towards*, which Heidegger speaks of in terms of its concern with complete being-in-the-world,[63] or concern for the fulfilment of its ownmost possibilities. From here Heidegger characterises understanding as "*projection* within a prior *being-thrown*":[64]

> The project character of understanding constitutes being-in-the-world with regard to the disclosedness of its there as the there of a potentiality of being. Project is the existential constitution of being in the realm of factical potentiality of being. And, as thrown, Da-sein is thrown into the mode of being of projecting. Projecting has nothing to do with being related to a plan thought out, according to which Da-sein arranges its being, but, as Da-sein, it has always already projected itself and is, as long as it is, projecting. As long as it is, Da-sein always has understood itself and will understand itself in terms of possibilities. ... As projecting, understanding is the mode of being of Da-sein in which it *is* its possibilities as possibilities.[65]

The thrownness of *Dasein* consists in its finding itself in the world that is already there, the history and destiny of which is already at play, and to which it must respond through the projection of its possibilities. However, there is no choice on the part of *Dasein* as to whether or not to project, for as long as it is it projects. Even the choice of total withdrawal from the world is the projection of one of its possibilities. The projecting nature of *Dasein* gives it the quality of being, "constantly 'more' than it actually is": "...only because it *is* what it becomes or does not become, can it say understandingly to itself: 'become what you are!'".[66]

The development of understanding as projection, or the development of the being toward possibilities of *Dasein*, is called interpretation.

> The project of understanding has its own possibility of development. We shall call the development of understanding *interpretation*. In interpretation understanding appropriates what it has understood in an understanding way. In interpretation understanding does not become something different, but rather itself. Interpretation is existentially based in understanding, and not the other way around. Interpretation is not the acknowledgement of what has been understood, but rather the development of possibilities projected in understanding.[67]

It would, however, be a misunderstanding of the specific disclosive function of interpretation to think of interpretation as a secondary understanding of something that is initially merely objectively present.

> Interpretation does not, so to speak, throw a "significance" over what is nakedly objectively present and does not stick a value on it, but what is encountered in the world is always already in a relevance which is disclosed in the understanding of the world, a relevance which is made explicit by interpretation.[68]

63. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. by J. Stambaugh, p.135.
64. Ricoeur, 'The Task of Hermeneutics', p.66. The emphasis is Ricoeur's.
65. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. by J. Stambaugh, p.136. The emphasis is Heidegger's.
66. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. by J. Stambaugh, p.136. The emphasis is Heidegger's.
67. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. by J. Stambaugh, p.139. The emphasis is Heidegger's.
68. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. by J. Stambaugh, p.140.

Ricoeur points out that this analysis does not, "expressly aim at problems of exegesis",[69] rather it discloses the unavoidable, ontological structure of the *hermeneutical circle*. At the epistemological level the hermeneutical circle may appear to be a failure:

> It has been noted many times that in the human sciences the subject and object are mutually implicated. The subject itself enters into the knowledge of the object; and in turn, the former is determined, in its most subjective character, by the hold that the object has upon it, even before the subject comes to know the object. Thus stated in the terminology of subject and object, the hermeneutical circle cannot but appear as a vicious circle.[70]

The ontological structure of the hermeneutical circle, which fundamental ontology discloses, is what Heidegger calls *preunderstanding*. This structure cannot be described accurately in the epistemological terms of subject and object, but must be understood in terms of the analytic of *Dasein*.[71]

One of the fundamental consequences of the projecting nature of *Dasein* is that interpretation is necessarily founded on a preunderstanding, though still veiled, of that which is being appropriated through interpretation, and is thus being unveiled. "As the appropriation of understanding in being that understands, the interpretation operates in being toward a totality of relevance which has already been understood".[72] Thus every interpretation is grounded in anticipation, in a fore-conception of that which is to be interpreted:

> The interpretation of something as something is essentially grounded in fore-having, fore-sight, and fore-conception. Interpretation is never a presuppositionless grasping of something previously given. When the particular concretion of the interpretation in the sense of exact text interpretation likes to appeal to what "is there," what is initially "there" is nothing else than the self-evident, undisputed prejudice of the interpreter, which is necessarily there in each point of departure of the interpretation as what is already "posited" with interpretation as such, that is, pre-given with fore-having, fore-sight, fore-conception.[73]

There is, then, no escaping this circle, which is only the "shadow, on the methodological plane, of this structure of anticipation".[74] From one who would make the epistemological claim of objectivity, preunderstanding is obviously prejudice and would be derided as such. However, Heidegger's analysis reveals the untenable nature of the "illusion or pretension of neutrality".[75] There is no such thing as a presuppositionless interpretation. Nevertheless, it is a mistake to view the hermeneutical circle as vicious: "*to see a vitiosum in this circle and to look for ways to avoid it, even to 'feel' that it is an inevitable imperfection, is to misunderstand understanding from the ground up*".[76] The question that follows this realization is not how to get out of the hermeneutic circle, which is the existential fore-structure of *Dasein* itself, but how to come into it in the right way.[77]

69. Ricoeur, 'The Task of Hermeneutics', p.67.
70. Ricoeur, 'The Task of Hermeneutics', p.67.
71. Ricoeur, 'The Task of Hermeneutics', p.67.
72. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. by J. Stambaugh, p.140.
73. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. by J. Stambaugh, p.141.
74. Ricoeur, 'The Task of Hermeneutics', p.68.
75. Ricoeur, 'The Task of Hermeneutics', p.54.
76. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. by J. Stambaugh, p.143. The emphasis is Heidegger's.
77. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. by J. Stambaugh, p.143.

> A positive possibility of the most primordial knowledge is hidden in it [the circle] which, however, is only grasped in a genuine way when interpretation has understood that its first, constant, and last task is not to let fore-having, fore-sight, and fore-conception be given to it by chance ideas and popular conceptions, but to guarantee the scientific theme by developing these in terms of the things themselves. Because in accordance with its existential meaning, understanding is the potentiality for being of Da-sein itself, the ontological presuppositions of historiographical knowledge transcend in principle the idea of rigor of the most exact sciences. Mathematics is not more exact than historiographical,[78] but only narrower with regard to the scope of the existential foundations relevant to it.[79]

Ricoeur now returns to the question of discourse. He points out that the main thrust of Heidegger's meditation in *Being and Time* does not bear directly upon discourse. The question of language is only introduced after those of the structures of being of situation, understanding and interpretation, which order emphasises the necessity of situating discourse within those structures rather than situating the structures within discourse.[80] Discourse, which has, "its roots in the existential constitution of the disclosedness Da-sein", is the "articulation of intelligibility",[81] which is to say the, "'significant' articulation of the intelligibility of being-in-the-world".[82] Ricoeur sees in these statements an anticipation of, "the later philosophy of Heidegger, which will ignore *Dasien* and begin directly with the manifestative power of language".[83] Yet even in *Being and Time*, saying (*reden*), the existential constitution, is recognised as being superior to speaking (*sprechen*), the mundane aspect.[84] The superiority of saying is that discourse is founded not on speaking but on hearing: "It is not a matter of chance that we say, when we have not heard 'rightly,' that we have not 'understood'. Hearing is constitutive of discourse", to the extent that it, "constitutes the primary and authentic openness of Da-sein for its ownmost possibility".[85] From this existentially primary potentiality for hearing arises the possibility for hearkening:

> Hearkening is itself phenomenally more primordial than what the psychologist "initially" defines as hearing, the sensing of tones and the hearing of sounds. Hearkening, too, has the mode of being of a hearing that understands. "Initially" we never hear noises and complexes of sound, but the creaking wagon, the motorcycle. ...
>
> It requires a very artificial and complicated attitude in order to "hear" a "pure noise." The fact that we initially hear motorcycles and wagons is, however, the phenomenal proof that Da-sein, as being-in-the-world, always already maintains itself *together with* innerworldly things at hand and initially not at all with "sensations" whose chaos would first have to be formed to provide the springboard from which the subject jumps off finally to land in a "world." Essentially understanding, Da-sein is initially together with what is understood.[86]

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78. "Historiographical", here should read "historiography", Macquarrie and Robinson, *Being and Time*, p.195, translate it as "historiology".
79. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. by J. Stambaugh, p.143.
80. Ricoeur, 'The Task of Hermeneutics', p.68.
81. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. by J. Stambaugh, p.150.
82. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. by J. Stambaugh, p.151.
83. Ricoeur, 'The Task of Hermeneutics', p.68.
84. Ricoeur, 'The Task of Hermeneutics', p.68.
85. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. by J. Stambaugh, p.153.
86. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. by J. Stambaugh, p.153. The emphasis is Heidegger's.

The methodological consequences that Ricoeur draws from the recognition of the priority of hearing are considerable:

> ... linguistics, semiology, and the philosophy of language adhere ineluctably to the level of speech and do not reach the level of saying. In this sense, fundamental philosophy no more ameliorates linguistics than adds to exegesis. While speaking refers back to the man who speaks, saying refers back to the things said.[87]

We have now travelled as far along our path as Heidegger can take us, but as important as this step of subordinating epistemology to ontology is, it is not enough. This move has demonstrated the inadequacy of the main aporia, or perplexing difficulty, of the theory of understanding as presented by Dilthey as the opposition within epistemology between a 'naturalistic' explanation and an objective, scientific one.[88] However it has only served to move the aporia to the relation between epistemology and ontology. Heidegger's work, being the continuous return to the foundations of philosophy, is not capable of returning to the properly epistemological questions which concern Ricoeur, such as the nature of the interpretation of texts.

> It is ... along this return path that we can witness and demonstrate the claim that the hermeneutic circle in the sense of the exegetes is *grounded* in the fore-structure belonging to understanding on the plane of fundamental ontology.[89]

2.04 Gadamer and the Fusion of Horizons

The problematic between fundamental ontology and epistemology as the consequence of Heidegger's return of the question of interpretation to its ontological grounds, became the main concern of the philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer. Gadamer, whose work marks, "the beginnings of the movement of return from ontology towards epistemological problems",[90] takes up the epistemological debate over the human sciences in terms of Heidegger's ontology.[91] The focus of his work, and especially of *Truth and Method* his *magnum opus*, is the modern ontological presupposition that underlies the human sciences' striving for objectivity:

> The core experience around which the whole of Gadamer's work is organised ... is the scandal constituted, at the level of modern consciousness, by the sort of *alienating distanciation* (*Verfremdung*) that seems to him to be the presupposition of these sciences. For alienation is much more than a feeling or a mood; it is the ontological presupposition that sustains the objective conduct of the human sciences. The methodology of these sciences ineluctably implies, in Gadamer's eyes, a distancing, which in turn expresses the destruction of the primordial relation of belonging (*Zugehörigkeit*) without which there would be no relation to the historical as such.[92]

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87. Ricoeur, 'The Task of Hermeneutics', p.69.
88. Ricoeur, 'The Task of Hermeneutics', p.69.
89. Ricoeur, 'The Task of Hermeneutics', p.69.
90. Ricoeur, 'The Task of Hermeneutics', p.71.
91. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p.265, "Our question ... is how hermeneutics, once freed from the ontological obstructions of the scientific concept of objectivity, can do justice to the historicity of understanding".
92. Ricoeur, 'The Task of Hermeneutics', p.70.

For Ricoeur's purposes the section of *Truth and Method* on historical consciousness is particularly significant.[93] Gadamer's argument here is that, "the consciousness of being carried by the traditions that precede me is what makes possible any exercise of a historical methodology at the level of the human and social sciences".[94] He draws on Heidegger's explication of preunderstanding as the anticipatory structure of human experience, which leads him to a theory of historical consciousness that "marks the summit of Gadamer's reflection on the foundation of the human sciences".[95] This theory is called *wirkungsgeschichtliches Bewußtsein* or the *consciousness of the history of effects.*[96]

> This category no longer pertains to methodology, to historical *inquiry*, but rather to the reflective consciousness of this methodology. It is the consciousness of being exposed to history and to its action, in such a way that this action upon us cannot be objectified, because it is part of the historical phenomenon itself.[97]

Gadamer summarises this position in his paper 'On the Scope and Function of Hermeneutical Reflection':

> My thesis is – and I think it is the necessary consequence of recognizing the operativeness of history in our conditionedness and finitude – that the thing which hermeneutics teaches us is to see through the dogmatism of asserting an opposition and separation between the ongoing, natural "tradition" and the reflective appropriation of it. For behind this assertion stands a dogmatic objectivism that distorts the very concept of hermeneutical reflection itself. In this objectivism the understander is seen – even in the so-called sciences of understanding like history – not in relationship to the hermeneutical situation and the constant operativeness of history in his own consciousness, but in such a way as to imply that his own understanding does not enter into the event.
>   But this is simply not the case. Actually, the historian even the one who treats history as a "critical science," is so little separated from the ongoing traditions (for example, those of his nation) that he is really *himself engaged* in contributing to the growth and development of the national state. He is one of the "nation's" historians; he belongs to the nation.[98]

One of the great insights that arises from *wirkungsgeschichtliches Bewußtsein* is that hermeneutical understanding, like self-understanding, can never be completely achieved:

93.   Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, pp.265-379.
94.   Ricoeur, 'The Task of Hermeneutics', p.71.
95.   Ricoeur, 'The Task of Hermeneutics', p.72.
96.   Ricoeur, 'The Task of Hermeneutics', p.72. This is translated as, "The Principle of History of Effect" in Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, pp.300-307.
97.   Ricoeur, 'The Task of Hermeneutics', p.72. The emphasis is Ricoeur's.
98.   Gadamer, 'On the Scope and Function of Hermeneutical Reflection', p.28. The emphasis is Gadamer's. Ricoeur, 'The Task of Hermeneutics', p.72, quotes from Gadamer's Kleine Schriften: "... we cannot remove ourselves from historical becoming; we cannot place ourselves at a distance from it in order to make the past an object for ourselves. ... We are always situated in history. ... I mean that our consciousness is determined by real historical becoming in such a way that it does not have the freedom to situate itself over against the past. In addition, I mean that for us it is always a matter of becoming conscious once again of the action exerted upon us in this way, so that every past that we have just experienced obliges us to take charge of it, to assume in a way its truth", *Philosophie, Hermeneutik*, vol. 1 of *Kleine Schriften* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1967), p.158.

> Consciousness of being affected by history (*wirkungsgeschichtliches Bewußtsein*) is primarily consciousness of the hermeneutical situation. To acquire an awareness of a situation is, however, always a task of peculiar difficulty. The very idea of a situation means that we are not standing outside it and hence are unable to have any objective knowledge of it. We always find ourselves within a situation, and throwing light on it is a task that is never entirely finished. This is also true of the hermeneutic situation — i.e., the situation in which we find ourselves with regard to the tradition that we are trying to understand. The illumination of this situation-reflection on effective history — can never be completely achieved; yet the fact that it cannot be completed is due not to a deficiency in reflection but to the essence of the historical being that we are. *To be historically means that knowledge of oneself can never be complete.*[99]

A fundamental insight that arises from the realization that knowledge of *any* historical being can never be complete, is that the complete knowledge, or interpretation, of a text as one such historical being can never be complete. No interpretation of a text, however detailed, can be exhaustive; there can be no claim to absolute knowledge:

> ... all interpretation places the interpreter in medias res and never at the beginning or the end. We suddenly arrive, as it were, in the middle of a conversation which has already begun and in which we try to orient ourselves in order to be able to contribute to it. ... the key hypothesis of hermeneutic philosophy is that interpretation is an open process that no single vision can conclude.[100]

The notion of *wirkungsgeschichtliches Bewußtsein* provides the background for some decisive suggestions made by Gadamer that become the point of departure for Ricoeur's own reflection,[101] which is concerned with the dialectic of distanciation and appropriation within the hermeneutical enterprise. The first suggestion is that *wirkungsgeschichtliches Bewußtsein* holds within itself an element of distanciation:

> To begin with, in spite of the general opposition between belonging and alienating distanciation, the consciousness of effective history contains within itself an element of *distance*. The history of effects is precisely what occurs under the condition of historical distance. It is the nearness of the remote; or to say the same thing in other words, it is efficacy at a distance. There is thus a paradox of otherness, a tension between proximity and distance, which is essential to historical consciousness.[102]

The second idea of Gadamer's that is of central importance to Ricoeur's hermeneutics is that of *Horizontverschmelzung* or the *fusion of horizons*. Gadamer traces the use of the word in philosophy back to Nietzsche and Husserl, who use it to characterise, "the way in which thought is tied to its finite determinacy, and the way one's range of vision is gradually expanded":

> A person who has no horizon does not see far enough and hence overvalues

99. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, pp.301-302. The emphasis is Gadamer's.
100. Ricoeur, 'Phenomenology and Hermeneutics', p.33.
101. Ricoeur, 'The Task of Hermeneutics', p.73.
102. Ricoeur, 'The Task of Hermeneutics', p.73. The emphasis is Ricoeur's.

what is nearest to him. On the other hand, "to have a horizon" means not being limited to what is nearby but being able to see beyond it. A person who has an horizon knows the relative significance of everything within this horizon, whether it is near or far, great or small. Similarly, working out the hermeneutical situation means acquiring the right horizon of inquiry for the questions evoked by the encounter with tradition.[103]

Gadamer also points out that the concept of horizon has been used in the sphere of historical understanding, where the historian seeks to "acquire an appropriate historical horizon"[104] and by thus transposing himself into the other situation he is able to understand it in its own terms and horizon, and not in terms of his own horizon. While on the face of it this seems to be a legitimate hermeneutical requirement, Gadamer questions its adequacy. He likens this practice to a conversation where one is simply trying to get to know where the other person "is coming from", or oral examinations and certain kinds of conversations between doctor and patient. Each of these instances is not a true conversation, where the interlocutors are seeking agreement on a subject, "because the specific contents of the conversation are only a means to get to know the horizon of the other person".[105] The historian is doing the same thing when he attempts to acquire the right historical horizon. When this horizon is acquired the historian can understand the meaning of the historical evidence, "without necessarily agreeing with it or seeing himself in it".[106] The problem that Gadamer finds with this enterprise is that the historian here has removed himself from the discourse, and has, "stopped trying to reach an agreement".[107] By factoring the other person's or text's standpoint into what he or it is claiming to say, the historian is making his standpoint "safely unattainable"[108] and denies the other any claim to truth. Historical thinking

> ... makes this ambiguous transition from means to ends i.e., it makes an end of what is only a means. The text that is understood historically is forced to abandon its claim to be saying something true. We think we understand when we see the past from a historical standpoint — i.e., transpose ourselves into the historical situation and try to reconstruct the historical horizon. In fact, however, we have given up the claim to find in the past any truth that is valid and intelligible for ourselves. Acknowledging the otherness of the other in this way, making him the object of objective knowledge, involves the fundamental suspension of his claim to truth.[109]

Again Gadamer questions whether this description, which posits separate and entirely closed horizons into which one transposes oneself, really fits the hermeneutical phenomenon. This description is inaccurate because no horizon is truly closed.

> ... the closed horizon that is supposed to enclose a culture is an abstraction. The historical movement of human life consists in the fact that it is never absolutely bound to any one standpoint, and hence can never have a truly closed horizon. The horizon is, rather, something into which we move and that moves with us. Horizons change for a person who is moving. Thus the

103. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p.302.
104. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p.303.
105. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p.303.
106. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p.303.
107. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p.303.
108. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p.303.
109. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p.303.

horizon of the past, out of which all human life lives and which exists in the form of tradition, is always in motion. The surrounding horizon is not set in motion by historical consciousness. But in it this motion becomes aware of itself.[110]

Thus, when historical consciousness transposes itself into historical horizons, this does not involve a movement into an entirely alien world, rather it involves the constitution of, "one great horizon that moves from within and that, beyond the frontiers of the present, embraces the historical depths of our self-consciousness".[111] This is not to deny that understanding tradition requires a historical horizon, but such understanding does not come about by the simple transposition of oneself into the historical situation while disregarding oneself, for this is to deny one's own historical horizon. One must, of course, take the imaginative step into the other situation, but in that step one must bring oneself. Thus one only truly transposes oneself by putting *oneself* in the other's position.[112] This transposition is neither the empathy of one person for another nor the subordination of another to one's own standards, "rather, it always involves rising to a higher universality that overcomes not only our own particularity but also that of the other".[113] Here the concept of horizon comes into its own, since it, "expresses the superior breadth of vision that the person who is trying to understand must have. To acquire a horizon means that one learns to look beyond what is close at hand — not in order to look away from it but to see it better, within a larger whole and in truer proportion".[114] Such an understanding is no easy task since the interpreter must constantly work to be aware of his own preunderstanding:

> It requires a special effort to acquire a historical horizon. We are always affected, in hope and fear, by what is nearest to us, and hence we approach the testimony of the past under its influence. Thus it is constantly necessary to guard against overhastily assimilating the past to our own expectations of meaning. Only then can we listen to tradition in a way that permits it to make its own meaning heard.[115]

Gadamer speaks of preunderstanding in terms of foregrounding (*abheben*). The prejudices that the reader brings with him constitute, "the horizon of a particular present".[116] Gadamer stresses the importance of avoiding the error that the horizon of the present is fixed, for the present horizon is in fact capable of fusing with those, apparently self-contained and separate, historical horizons, which the interpreter seeks to appropriate:

> In fact the horizon of the present is continually in the process of being formed because we are continually having to test all our prejudices. An important part of this testing occurs in encountering the past and in understanding the tradition from which we come. Hence the horizon of the present cannot be formed without the past. There is no more an isolated horizon of the present in itself than there are historical horizons which have to be acquired. *Rather, understanding is always the fusion of these horizons supposedly existing by themselves.*[117]

110. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p.304.
111. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p.304.
112. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p.305.
113. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p.305.
114. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p.305.
115. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p.305.
116. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p.306.
117. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p.306. The emphasis is Gadamer's.

Why, then, Gadamer asks, speak of a fusion of horizons at all if, in fact, there are no distinct horizons; why not just speak of one? The answer involves the first of Gadamer's suggestions, which was just touched upon: what Ricoeur calls *distanciation*.

> Every encounter with tradition that takes place within historical consciousness involves the experience of a tension between the text and the present. The hermeneutic task consists in not covering up this tension by attempting a naive assimilation of the two but in consciously bringing it out. This is why it is part of the hermeneutic approach to project a historical horizon that is different from the horizon of the present. Historical consciousness is aware of its own otherness and hence foregrounds the horizon of the past from its own. On the other hand, it is itself, as we are trying to show, only something superimposed upon continuing tradition, and hence it immediately recombines with what it has foregrounded itself from in order to become one with itself again in the unity of the historical horizon that it thus acquires.[118]

Ricoeur summarises the importance of Gadamer's concept of the fusion of horizons to hermeneutics in this way:

> ... according to Gadamer, if the finite condition of historical knowledge excludes any overview, any final synthesis in the Hegelian manner, nevertheless this finitude does not enclose me in one point of view. Wherever there is a situation, there is a horizon that can be contracted or enlarged. We owe to Gadamer this very fruitful idea that communication at a distance between two differently situated consciousnesses occurs by means of the fusion of their horizons, that is, the intersection of their views on the distant and the open. Once again, an element of distanciation within the near, the far, and the open is presupposed. This concept signifies that we live neither within closed horizons nor within one unique horizon. Insofar as the fusion of horizons excludes the idea of a total and unique knowledge, this concept implies a tension between what is one's own and what is alien, between the near and the far; and hence the play of difference is included in the process of convergence.[119]

The final insight, offered by Gadamer, that Ricoeur incorporates into his hermeneutics is that of the, "universal *linguality* of human experience"[120] or *Sprachlichkeit*. This means that one's, "belonging to a tradition or traditions passes through the interpretation of the signs, works, and texts in which cultural heritages are inscribed and offer themselves to be deciphered"[121] or as Gadamer succinctly puts it, "*language is the universal medium in which understanding occurs*".[122] The structure of understanding through language is discourse *about something*: "It is like a real conversation in that the common subject matter is what binds the two partners, the text and the interpreter, to each other. When a translator interprets a conversation, ... in relation to a text it is indispensable that the

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118. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p.306.
119. Ricoeur, 'The Task of Hermeneutics', p.73.
120. Ricoeur, 'The Task of Hermeneutics', p.73. The emphasis is Ricoeur's.
121. Ricoeur, 'The Task of Hermeneutics', p.73.
122. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p.389. The emphasis is Gadamer's.

interpreter participate in its meaning".[123] What enables the communication at a distance
that a text offers, is the "matter of the text"[124] which belongs neither to its author nor to its
reader:

> The text brings a subject matter into language, but that it does so is
> ultimately the achievement of the interpreter. Both have a share in it.
>   Hence the meaning of a text is not to be compared with an immovably
> and obstinately fixed point of view that suggests only one question to the
> person trying to understand it, namely how the other person could have
> arrived at such an absurd opinion. In this sense understanding is certainly
> not concerned with "understanding historically" - i.e., reconstructing the
> way the text came into being. Rather, one intends to understand the text
> itself. But this means that the interpreter's own thoughts too have gone into
> re-awakening the text's meaning. In this the interpreter's own horizon is
> decisive, yet not as a personal standpoint that he maintains or enforces, but
> more as an opinion and a possibility that one brings into play and puts at
> risk, and that helps one truly to make one's own what the text says. I have
> described this above as a "fusion of horizons." We can now see that this is
> what takes place in conversation, in which something is expressed that is
> not only mine or my author's, but common.[125]

2.05 Ricoeur and the Dialectic of Distanciation and Appropriation

We are now in a position to return to Ricoeur's reflection and to see how, by building
on the ontological hermeneutics of Heidegger and Gadamer, he works to overcome the
hermeneutical errors that were considered earlier. Ricoeur considers Gadamer's
hermeneutical position to lead, ultimately, to the opposition of the alienating distanciation
of the human sciences and the belonging brought about through the consciousness of
effective history. This opposition leads to an untenable alternative:

> ... on the one hand, alienating distanciation is the attitude that renders
> possible the objectification that reigns in the human sciences; but on the
> other hand, this distanciation, which is the condition of the scientific status
> of the sciences, is at the same time the fall that destroys the fundamental
> and primordial relation whereby we belong to and participate in the
> historical reality that we claim to construct as an object. Whence the
> alternative underlying the very title of Gadamer's work *Truth and Method*:
> either we adopt the methodological attitude and lose the ontological density
> of the reality we study, or we adopt the attitude of truth and must then
> renounce the objectivity of the human sciences.[126]

Ricoeur's reflection arises from his rejection of this alternative and his attempt to
overcome it. He finds in the problematic of the text one that reintroduces a positive and
productive notion of distanciation. His choice of the problematic of the text is not
arbitrary, for in it he sees not simply a particular case of intersubjective communication,
but rather "the paradigm of distanciation in communication".[127] The importance of the

123. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p.388.
124. Ricoeur, 'The Task of Hermeneutics', p.74.
125. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p.388.
126. Ricoeur, 'The Hermeneutical Function of Distanciation', p.75.
127. Ricoeur, 'The Hermeneutical Function of Distanciation', p.76.

text lies in the fact that it, "displays a fundamental characteristic of the very historicity of human experience, namely, that it is communication in and through distance".[128] In light of his positive understanding of distanciation, Ricoeur in his paper 'The Hermeneutical Function of Distanciation', organises the problematic of the text around the five features that constitute the criteria of textuality: "(1) the realization of language as *discourse*; (2) the realization of discourse as a *structured work*; (3) the relation of *speaking to writing* in discourse and in the works of discourse; (4) the work of discourse as the *projection of a world*; (5) discourse and the work of discourse as the *mediation of self-understanding*".[129] We have, in fact, already covered the first and the third criteria and the second is easily summarised, so we shall only briefly mention their main points before considering the final two aspects in greater detail

(1) *The realization of language as discourse*: we have seen that even spoken discourse holds within it a primitive form of distanciation, that between event and meaning. Ricoeur characterises the dialectic between event and meaning by saying that, "if all discourse is realized as an event, all discourse is understood as meaning".[130] Thus what we strive to understand is not the ephemeral event but "the meaning that endures".[131] The articulation of the way discourse surpasses itself as meaning is at the centre of the hermeneutical problem. Thus we arrive at the intentionality of language. In discourse we say something to someone about something.

(2) *The realization of discourse as a structured work*: there are three distinctive features to the notion of the work. Firstly, a work is longer than a sentence and this raises new problems of understanding, for it then becomes a cumulative process. Secondly, a work has a specific form such as a story or a poem, that is to say a genre. Thirdly, a work has a "unique configuration"[132] which may be called its style. Style necessarily reflects its author:

> Since style is labor that individuates, that is, that produces an individual, so it designates retroactively its author. Thus the word author belongs to stylistics. Author says more than speaker: the author is the artisan of a work of language. But the category of author is equally a category of interpretation, in the sense that it is contemporaneous with the meaning of the work as a whole. The singular configuration of the work and the singular configuration of the author are strictly correlative. Man individuates himself in producing individual works.[133]

It is, however, important to recognise, in light of the autonomy of the text, that the style reflects the author only in so far as it becomes part of the meaning of the text, part of its world. The recognition of style and structure opens the way for the objectification of discourse and the explanatory approach of the structuralists. Yet, as necessary as this approach is it does not go far enough, for it ignores the fundamental feature of discourse, namely, that it is communication between people about something. Thus hermeneutics, "remains the art of discerning the discourse in the work; but this discourse is only given in and through the structures of the work. Thus interpretation is the reply to the fundamental distanciation constituted by the objectification of man in works of discourse".[134]

128. Ricoeur, 'The Hermeneutical Function of Distanciation', p.76.
129. Ricoeur, 'The Hermeneutical Function of Distanciation', p.76.
130. Ricoeur, 'The Hermeneutical Function of Distanciation', p.78.
131. Ricoeur, 'The Hermeneutical Function of Distanciation', p.78.
132. Ricoeur, 'The Hermeneutical Function of Distanciation', p.80.
133. Ricoeur, 'The Hermeneutical Function of Distanciation', p.82.
134. Ricoeur, 'The Hermeneutical Function of Distanciation', p.83.

(3) *The relation of speaking to writing in discourse and in the works of discourse*: we have seen that the fixation of discourse in writing affects its communicative ability, since it renders the text autonomous with respect to the intention of the author, its original socio-cultural environment and its original readers. In this way the world of the text may be said to "explode" its *Sitz-im-Leben*.[135] One of the most important hermeneutical consequences of this autonomy is the recognition that, "distanciation is not the product of methodology and hence something superfluous and parasitical; rather it is constitutive of the phenomenon of writing".[136] This recognition allows for the necessity in hermeneutics for both explanation through objectification and interpretation, rather than placing them in opposition as did the Romantic tradition. This insight has far-reaching implications for the practice of interpretation. For Ricoeur, explanation and understanding are not two irreducible modalities of being, instead they are, "relative moments" in the process of interpretation.[137] By regarding explanation as a necessary stage, "between a naïve and critical interpretation, between a surface and depth interpretation, then it seems possible to situate explanation and interpretation along a unique *hermeneutical arc* and to integrate the opposed attitudes of explanation and understanding within an overall conception of reading as the recovery of meaning".[138]

Interpretation needs both attitudes. A consequence of the autonomy of the text is that understanding calls for explanation since the direct speaking relationship of discourse no longer exists and the reader can no longer verify his interpretation as the dialogue unfolds by asking questions and being given answers.[139] Instead, the interpreter must rely on the explanatory methods of the human sciences, such as linguistics, philology and structural analysis.

> It cannot, therefore, be said that the passage by way of explanation destroys intersubjective understanding. This mediation is required by discourse itself. I am expressly using the term *discourse* and not simply *speech*, the fugitive manifestation of language. For it is discourse that calls for this ever more complicated process of exteriorization with regard to itself, a process that begins with the gap between saying and the said, continues through the inscription in letters, and is completed in the complex codifications of works of discourse, the narrative among others. Exteriorization in material marks and inscription in the *codes* of discourse make not only possible *but necessary the mediation of understanding by explanation*, of which structural analysis constitutes the most remarkable realization.[140]

On the other hand, "there is no explanation that does not reach its completion in understanding".[141] Explanation on its own renders the narrative in question 'virtual': "by this I mean stripped of its actuality as an event of discourse and reduced to the state of a variable in a system having no existence other than that of a coherent set of prohibitions and permissions".[142] A virtual narrative has no meaning, for it communicates nothing. Thus it is only by appropriating the meaning of the text, via the mediation of explanation, that the text is returned to discourse, and says something about something to someone.

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135. Ricoeur, 'The Hermeneutical Function of Distanciation', p.83.
136. Ricoeur, 'The Hermeneutical Function of Distanciation', p.84.
137. Ricoeur, 'Explanation and Understanding', p.126.
138. Ricoeur, 'What Is a Text?', p.60. The emphasis is Ricoeur's.
139. Ricoeur, 'Explanation and Understanding', p.129.
140. Ricoeur, 'Explanation and Understanding', p.130. The emphasis is Ricoeur's.
141. Ricoeur, 'Explanation and Understanding', p.130.
142. Ricoeur, 'Explanation and Understanding', p.130.

(4) *The work of discourse as the projection of a world*: we have now reached what Ricoeur sees as, "the centre of gravity of the hermeneutical question".[143] His reflection takes us further from both the position of Romantic hermeneutics and that of structuralism, that is to say it moves away from the attempt to appropriate the psychology of the author equally as far as it moves away from the simple reconstruction of the structure of the work. Instead, Ricoeur focuses his concern on what he calls, "the world of the text"[144] or "the thing of the text",[145] and which Gadamer calls the "matter of the text", as an extension of the reference of discourse. Reference is, "the truth value of the proposition, its claim to reach reality", for only discourse, "intends things, applies itself to reality, expresses the world".[146] We have seen that writing abolishes the ostensive reference of discourse because the interlocutors no longer share the same time and place. The consequence of the abolition of first-order reference is that it allows or frees the second-order or nonostensive reference of discourse, which Ricoeur follows Heidegger in calling *being-in-the-world*.

> If we can no longer define hermeneutics in terms of the search for the psychological intentions of another person which are concealed *behind* the text, and if we do not want to reduce interpretation to the dismantling of structures, then what remains to be interpreted? I shall say: to interpret is to explicate the type of being-in-the-world unfolded *in front of* the text.[147]

Here Ricoeur draws on Heidegger's reflections on understanding (*Verstehen*) as no longer being tied to the understanding of others, but rather is a structure of *Dasein* which involves the "projection of our ownmost possibilities at the very heart of the situations in which we find ourselves".[148] Ricoeur retains the idea of the, "projection of our ownmost possibilities" and applies it to hermeneutics: "For what must be interpreted in a text is a *proposed world* that I could inhabit and wherein I could project one of my ownmost possibilities. That is what I call the world of the text, the world proper to *this* unique text".[149]

(5) *Discourse and the work of discourse as the mediation of self-understanding*: the final dimension of the notion of the text concerns the subjectivity of the reader. Here we have reached the problem of the appropriation of the text. Appropriation is, "understanding at and through distance",[150] as such it is the counterpart of distanciation.[151] Thus it is dialectically linked to the autonomous nature of the text insofar as, "appropriation does not respond to the author, it responds to the sense".[152] Appropriation is also directly linked to the reader's self-understanding, because, "the text is the medium through which we understand ourselves":

> ... it must be said that we understand ourselves only by the long detour of signs of humanity deposited in cultural works. What would we know of

143. Ricoeur, 'The Hermeneutical Function of Distanciation', p.76.
144. Ricoeur, 'The Hermeneutical Function of Distanciation', p.85.
145. Ricoeur, 'Explanation and Understanding', p.131.
146. Ricoeur, 'The Hermeneutical Function of Distanciation', p.85.
147. Ricoeur, 'The Hermeneutical Function of Distanciation', p.86. The emphasis is Ricoeur's.
148. Ricoeur, 'The Hermeneutical Function of Distanciation', p.86.
149. Ricoeur, 'The Hermeneutical Function of Distanciation', p.86. The emphasis is Ricoeur's.
150. Ricoeur, 'The Hermeneutical Function of Distanciation', p.87.
151. Ricoeur, 'Phenomenology and Hermeneutics', p.35, "The concept of distanciation is the dialectical counterpart of the notion of belonging, in the sense that we belong to a historical tradition through a relation of distance which oscillates between remoteness and proximity. To interpret is to render near what is far (temporally, geographically, culturally, spiritually). ... The text is, par excellence, the basis for communication in and through distance".
152. Ricoeur, 'The Hermeneutical Function of Distanciation', p.87.

> love and hate, of moral feelings, and, in general, of all that we call the *self* if
> these had not been brought to language and articulated by literature? Thus
> what seems most contrary to subjectivity, and what structural analysis
> discloses as the texture of the text, is the very medium within which we
> understand ourselves.[153]

Appropriation, then, rather than being the imposition of the reader's prejudices upon the
text, is instead the opening of the reader's horizon to the mode of being proposed by the
text:

> Ultimately, what I appropriate is a proposed world. The latter is not *behind*
> the text, as a hidden intention would be, but *in front of* it, as that which the
> work unfolds, discovers, reveals. Henceforth, to understand is *to*
> *understand oneself in front of the text*. It is not a question of imposing upon
> the text our finite capacity for understanding, but of exposing ourselves to
> the text and receiving from it an enlarged self.[154]

Appropriation, as the dialectical counterpart of distanciation, also has the character of
making one's own what was different, it is a, "struggle against cultural distance":
"interpretation 'brings together,' 'equalizes,' renders 'contemporary and similar,' thus
genuinely making one's *own* what was initially *alien*".[155] To express this in more
ontological terms we could say that, "the reader is ... broadened in his capacity to project
himself by receiving a new mode of being from the text itself".[156]

How, then, does one go about appropriating the world of the text? I mentioned earlier
that the event of discourse does not occur until the text is read and appropriated. It is now
time to look more closely at the reading event. Unless a text is read it only has sense, that
is to say, the configuration series of internal structures and relations, in the reading event
its reference is fulfilled and it is refigured as meaning. The fulfilment of the reference of a
text is the fulfilment of the nonostensive projection of a world, which is the proposal of a
mode of being-in-the-world. Reading fulfils the discourse of the text by bringing it into
the here and now in a way similar to speech. In this way, appropriation, "underlines the
'present' character of interpretation".[157] Ricoeur likens reading to the performance of a
piece of music: it is "like the execution of a musical score; it marks the realization, the
enactment, of the semantic possibilities of the text".[158] Thus Ricoeur characterises
interpretation as the restoration of the text to "living communication", [159] and the reader
as the, "ultimate mediator between configuration and refiguration"[160] of the text. The
reader plays an essential part in realising the text's discourse, "without a reader to
appropriate it, there is no world unfolded before the text".[161] The readerless text remains
lifeless, it is no more an act of discourse than the words of a person who is speaking, but
who is addressing and is being listened or harkened to by no one.

> ... the process of composition, of configuration, does not realize itself in the
> text but in the reader, and under this condition configuration makes possible

153. Ricoeur, 'The Hermeneutical Function of Distanciation', p.87. The emphasis is Ricoeur's.
154. Ricoeur, 'The Hermeneutical Function of Distanciation', pp.87-88. The emphasis is Ricoeur's.
155. Ricoeur, 'What Is a Text?', pp.57-58. The emphasis is Ricoeur's.
156. Ricoeur, 'Appropriation', p.97.
157. Ricoeur, 'What Is a Text?', p.58.
158. Ricoeur, 'What Is a Text?', p.58.
159. Ricoeur, 'What Is a Text?', p.51.
160. Ricoeur, 'Between the Text and Its Readers', p.390.
161. Ricoeur, 'Between the Text and Its Readers', p.395.

reconfiguration of a life by the way of the narrative. More precisely: the
meaning or the significance of a story wells up from *the intersection of the
world of the text and the world of the reader*.[162]

Thus the meaning of the text is the product of the fusion of the horizons of the text and the
reader. By this Ricoeur is also saying that in the act of reading, it is not only the text but
also the horizon of the reader that is reconfigured, for the reader's horizon is enlarged by
the appropriation of the mode of being presented by the world of the text.

The shift of the focus of appropriation from the *Sitz-im-Leben* of the text to the world
that it projects overcomes the hermeneutical misunderstandings of both the Romantic
tradition and structuralism. However there still remains the question of the correct way to
enter the hermeneutical circle. Another way of posing the question is in terms of the
preunderstanding, or prejudice, that every reader necessarily brings to the text by virtue of
the projecting nature of *Dasein*. Heidegger and Gadamer have already told us of the need
for constant vigilance against submitting our preunderstanding to chance ideas and popular
conception, and by constantly testing our prejudices in terms of the matter of the text at
hand. Ricoeur extends this line of thought along the lines of appropriation being a
response to the matter of the text. From this point of view, to understand oneself in front
of the text can be seen as the distanciation of oneself from itself:

> That appropriation does not imply the secret return of the sovereign subject
> can be attested to in the following way: if it remains true that hermeneutics
> terminates in self-understanding, then the subjectivism of this proposition
> must be rectified by saying that to understand *oneself* is to understand
> oneself *in front of the text*. Consequently, what is appropriation from one
> point of view is disappropriation from another. To appropriate is to make
> what was alien become one's own. What is appropriated is indeed the
> matter of the text. But the matter of the text becomes my own only if I
> disappropriate myself, in order to let the matter of the text be. So I exchange
> the *me, master* of itself, for the *self, disciple* of the text.
>
> The process could also be expressed as a *distanciation of self from itself*
> within the interior of appropriation.[163]

Ricoeur also speaks of this self-distanciation, which is a counter to what he calls the
"narcissism of the reader",[164] as relinquishment: "appropriation is also and primarily a
'letting-go.' Reading is appropriation-divestiture".[165] This relinquishment is brought
about by the recognition of the power that the text has to reveal a new mode of being-in-
the-world, and by opening oneself to that power: "to interpret is to follow the path of
thought opened up by the text, to place oneself *en route* towards the *orient* of the text".[166]
Thus, "it is in allowing itself to be carried off towards the reference of the text that the *ego*
divests itself of itself".[167] In so doing the reader gains a greater self-understanding, that is
to say, a larger horizon.

Finally, there is the question about the validity of any interpretation. Given that there
can be no complete, definitive interpretation of the text, but only the fusion of the horizons
of the text and the reader, or community of readers, is not one interpretation as valid as

162. Ricoeur, 'Life: A Story in Search of a Narrator', p.430. The emphasis is Ricoeur's.
163. Ricoeur, 'Phenomenology and Hermeneutics', p.37. The emphasis is Ricoeur's.
164. Ricoeur, 'Appropriation', p.95.
165. Ricoeur, 'Appropriation', p.95. Ricoeur, 'Philosophical and Biblical Hermeneutics', p.100. "... self-
     critique is an integral part of self-understanding before the text".
166. Ricoeur, 'What Is a Text?', p.61.
167. Ricoeur, 'Appropriation', p.96.

any other? The answer is no, some interpretations are better than others.

Here Ricoeur speaks of the construction of the meaning of a text through the 'clues' given within the text: "a clue is a kind of index for a specific construction, both a set of permissions and a set of prohibitions; it excludes some unfitting constructions and allows some others which make more sense of the same words".[168] We have to 'construct' the meaning of a text because, unlike speaking, in reading the relation of text and reader is asymmetrical, one of the partners must speak for both. Also a text is a work, a "closed chain of meaning", and thus is more than a series of sentences, its meaning is a, "cumulative, holistic process".[169] It is for this reason that an interpretation must take the form of a narrative.

One result of the open-ended historicity of a text, and the need to construct its meaning, is that one construction may be said to be more probable than another, but it cannot be said to be true. The two general criteria by which an interpretation can be judged the most probable are: firstly that it, "accounts for the greatest number of facts provided by the text, including potential connotations, and secondly, that it, "offers a better qualitative convergence between the traits which it takes into account", thus, "a poor explication may be said to be narrow and farfetched".[170] In this way, "a good explication satisfies two principles: that of congruence and that of plenitude".[171] The aim of interpretation is to always repel the boundary between the expressed and the unexpressed in discourse a little farther.[172]

> In conclusion, if it is true that there is always more than one way of construing a text, it is not true that all interpretations are equal and may be assimilated to so-called rules of thumb. The text is a limited field of possible constructions. The logic of validation allows us to move between the two limits of dogmatism and skepticism. It is always possible to argue for or against an interpretation, to confront interpretations, to arbitrate between them, and to seek for an agreement, even if this agreement remains beyond our reach.[173]

2.06 Historicism in the Light of Hermeneutics

Considered from the hermeneutical point of view, the history of religions approach towards what was formerly called 'Gnosticism' falls into several of the traps that arise from the misunderstanding of the autonomy of the text in relation to its *Sitz-im-Leben*. The historical approach can also be criticised for its general lack of awareness of the preunderstanding that informs its practice, both on the general cultural level, that is to say on its ontological stance, and on the more specific prejudices to which the vast majority of scholars in the field have succumbed.

However, this is not to say that the history of religions enterprise is of no use in the hermeneutical appropriation of the kind undertaken in this study. Ricoeur has clearly demonstrated the necessity of explanation within the hermeneutical process, and this is where the historical approach, especially as represented by scholars such as Pagels, Williams and Thomassen, is invaluable.

Let us look at each of these points in greater detail, for they point the way to my own methodological approach in this study.

168. Ricoeur, 'Metaphor and the Main Problem of Hermeneutics', p.312.
169. Ricoeur, 'Metaphor and the Main Problem of Hermeneutics', p.312.
170. Ricoeur, 'Metaphor and the Main Problem of Hermeneutics', pp.312-313.
171. Ricoeur, 'Metaphor and the Main Problem of Hermeneutics', p.313.
172. Ricoeur, 'Metaphor and the Main Problem of Hermeneutics', p.313.
173. Ricoeur, 'The Model of the Text: Meaningful Action Considered as a Text', p.160.

2.07 Psychologization and Objectification

The two most prevalent interpretive fallacies in the historical approach to the Valentinian sources, and other groups labelled 'Gnostic', are the intentional fallacy and the fallacy of the absolute text, or psychologization and objectification.

The Romantic intentional fallacy of searching behind the text for the meaning it held for its author is most evident in the work of scholars such as Gilles Quispel.[174] The stated aim of his paper, 'The Original Doctrine of Valentinus The Gnostic'[175] is to, "reconstruct the primitive doctrine of the Egyptian heresiarch Valentinus",[176] which he attempts to do by uncovering the myth behind such Valentinian texts as the *Gospel of Truth*[177] and the *Treatise on the Resurrection*.[178] As I have already mentioned, this pursuit leads him to recklessly attribute the authorship of various of the Nag Hammadi codices to some of the most famous Valentinian teachers. Even more suspect is his tendency to impose readings onto the texts he has attempted to delve behind. For example, he unfoundedly equates the figure of Error (πλάνη) in the *Gospel of Truth* with the demiurge produced by Sophia in the myth reported by Irenaeus in *Adversus Haereses* (I 11.1). He even goes so far as to rename πλάνη Jehova![179] This is pure eisegesis, neither Sophia nor Jehova is in the *Gospel of Truth*.[180]

Quispel is not the only scholar to have fallen into the intentional fallacy. Williams and all those who follow the socio-historical approach are equally prone to making this interpretive mistake. By concentrating on finding out, "about the lives of real human beings, their involvements, their commitments, their day-to-day behavior"[181] behind the texts, Williams is looking to the *Sitz-im-Leben* for the texts' meaning. In the third chapter of *Rethinking "Gnosticism"*, where he dismantles the theory of protest exegesis, Williams gives us an insight into the socio-historical understanding of the nature of interpretation:

> ... as I mentioned toward the beginning of this chapter, conclusions about the special nature of "gnostic hermeneutics" have served as one basis in modern discussion for other inferences of a sociological or historical nature. In itself, this is a perfectly legitimate exercise. Interpretation does not take place in a vacuum, and we can expect that social, political, or economic factors will influence how interpreters look at texts. Knowing that, we may validly ask whether anything about the "shape" of interpretation can offer us some glimpse of social or other factors that might have helped to mold it.[182]

What he is arguing for in the name of interpretation could be, and often is, just as easily applied to the writing of texts. One could argue that Williams is here speaking of the

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174. The search for the original audience is less common, though it can be found in such papers as Attridge's 'The Gospel of Truth as an Exoteric Text'.
175. This is the follow-up article to his, 'The Original Doctrine of Valentine', which he wrote in the 1940's.
176. Quispel, 'The Original Doctrine of Valentinus The Gnostic', p.327.
177. Quispel, 'The Original Doctrine of Valentinus The Gnostic', p.332: "... upon close reading and persistent questioning, the reader uncovers the myth behind its [the *Gospel of Truth*'s] allusive and sophisticated style".
178. Quispel, 'The Original Doctrine of Valentinus The Gnostic', p.347: "We conclude then, that the *Letter to Rheginus* agrees with the fragments of Valentinus and with trustworthy reports about his own doctrine, and should be used to reconstruct his myth".
179. Quispel, 'The Original Doctrine of Valentinus The Gnostic', pp.332-333.
180. The eisegetical mistake is made by Jan Heldermann in his 'Isis as Plane in the Gospel of Truth'.
181. Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism"*, p.96. The full passage is quoted on p.9 above.
182. Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism"*, p.77.

preunderstanding of the historical horizon of the text. But if that is the case, it is only a very small part of what he means by, "social, political, or economic factors". He also talks about these factors as *helping* to mould interpretation. However, he does not mention any other factors that might help mould interpretation such as revelation or faith. In fact it becomes clear during the course of his book that the historical and social factors of the *Sitz-im-Leben* are the only ones that are of any importance in Williams's method. This is the intentional fallacy.

This quotation from Williams on the socio-historical understanding of the nature of interpretation is a significant passage, and we shall return to it in the section below on preunderstanding, for it is one of the clearest declarations of the preunderstanding of the · human sciences as it is applied in this field.

Although the intentional fallacy is widespread in the history of religions enterprise it is often mixed with the objectification of the texts. This apparently contradictory situation is the result of the adoption of the epistemological standpoint of the human sciences. Ricoeur uses structuralism as the purest example of the fallacy of the absolute text, but as is the case here it is also to be found in various moderated forms.

The closest that the history of religions school gets to the complete objectification of the text is in its earliest phase of "explanation by motif-derivation",[183] which would divide the myth in question into various units and would then search for their origins in the myths of earlier cultures.

However the typological or 'phenomenological' approach that followed that of motif-derivation also has the tendency to objectify the text. But in this case, rather than subdividing the myth, they would search for its 'essence', which inevitably produced a list of abstract attitudes which bear little resemblance to any of the texts from which they have been extracted, as has been described earlier in this chapter. This brings us to the question of the preunderstandings, general and specific, which dominate the historical approach to the Valentinian sources.

2.08 The Modern Preunderstanding of the Human Sciences

As Gadamer has shown us, the ontological presupposition that underlies the human sciences is one of *Verfremdung*, or alienating distanciation, which denies the belonging of the historian to the history that he studies and of which he is a part. This *Verfremdung* suffers from the lack of *wirkungsgeschichtliches Bewußtsein*, or the consciousness of the history of effects, and thus it engenders a, "dogmatic objectivism that distorts the very concept of hermeneutical reflection itself".[184] By turning the text into an object of study within a separate horizon, the historian denies his own relation to that text, he denies that it can address him directly, and thus he denies the truth claim of that text. In the face of this denial no true conversation can take place, for the true purpose of writing as discourse has been discarded and the means of understanding have been turned into an end in themselves.

Verfremdung is the product of the ontological shift that took place in western culture in the 17th century. The Thomist theologian and philosopher Josef Pieper traces this shift back to the rejection of the scholasticism of the High Middle Ages by Renaissance humanists such as Francis Bacon, Hobbes and Descartes.[185] This shift saw the alteration of the *perception* of the ground of reality. From at least the time of Plato to that of the great Renaissance Christian-Platonist Marsilio Ficino, western philosophy and theology was grounded in the knowledge of the ontological primacy of the Divine, which is to say

183. Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism"*, p.215.
184. Gadamer, 'On the Scope and Function of Hermeneutical Reflection', p.28.
185. Pieper, *Living The Truth*, pp.15-16.

the knowledge that God is the most real, and that everything that is real is so by virtue of its proximity to God. With the Renaissance humanists the ancient ontology was, for the first time, reversed. The perception of God's ontological primacy was lost, and, no longer a living presence, God was turned into an abstraction, thus nominalism was born. With the nominalist notion that the universal principles were mere intellectual constructs and all that is real is what is directly available to the senses, the perception of the location of the ontological ground was transposed to the realm of matter. The ontological shift, then, was from metaphysics to physics. This inverse ontology gave birth to the alienating distanciation of the sciences. It also necessitated an alteration in the notion of causality. The ancient ontology located the cause of everything in Divinity, as in Genesis. With the change in ontology the cause of everything was relocated to the material becoming of the cosmos, that is to say, to history. The modern theory of the 'Big Bang', for instance, is nothing other than the material search for the origin of everything in history.

One of the tendencies of the location of causation in history is the slide into historical determinism. While theological determinism is not uncommon, there has been from the beginning, a subtle theology of free will, and the same is true of ancient philosophy. The notion of history as cause has no comparable safeguard. The material realm is mechanical, and has no guiding principle such as destiny, providence or grace. If we return to the passage quoted from Williams above, its historical determinism is quite apparent. The view expressed is that people do things, write things and interpret things *because of* certain events "social, political, or economic" that have happened to them. Religion is then reduced to a social process rather than an ontological orientation.[186]

Here we have come to one of the fundamental differences between the religious presupposition that guides this thesis and the historical presupposition that has guided all other studies in this field. The religious view, in accordance with traditional ontology, holds that one does not act in a certain way because of historical circumstances (the historical-causal position), but rather people react in certain ways to their historical circumstances because of their orientation to existence. One's theological and philosophical being-toward-the-world determines the way one acts. This is a religious position because it affirms one's free will; one's ability to choose how one meets the world into which one finds oneself thrown. It is radically opposed to modern historical determinism, such as that of Williams, which argues that people historically thought and acted as a result of their conditioning by events. This is a self-defeating argument since one can, by staying true to that method, then ask what historical events and influences have caused these modern historians to think up such a method of interpretation. I doubt that any of these historians would be pleased by the suggestion that they are not possessed of reflective free will. It is for these reasons that I said, at the beginning of this section on historicism in the light of hermeneutics, that the historical approach can be criticised for its general lack of awareness of the ontological preunderstanding by which it is informed.

186. Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism"*, p.97, refers to, "... our understanding of how such persons and groups figured within dynamic social processes in the religious history of late antiquity".

2.09 'Anti-Gnostic' Prejudice

The history of religions scholars in the field of what used to be called 'Gnosticism', can also be criticised for the lack of awareness of a much more specific preunderstanding which has distorted much of their work. It is the ancient prejudice inherited from Irenaeus, namely, that the Valentinians, and other 'Gnostics', were heretics. Williams himself admits that, "the bishop's influence in setting the agenda for all subsequent discussion of the theological positions included in his list [of heresies] has been profound",[187] and this is one of the main reasons for his suggestion of the 'biblical demiurgical' category in the study of these sources, as a way to eradicate this influence. Ample evidence has already been given of the way this preunderstanding has led scholars to discover, abstract and ascribe, various 'attitudes' to the religious groups listed by Irenaeus, abstractions that tell us much more about the biases of the scholars than about the sources themselves. That this prejudice has been able to survive right up until the end of the 20th century may be partly due to the "pretension of neutrality"[188] on the part of the historians of religion, who through *Verfremdung* have refused to recognise their own involvement with their subject.

2.10 The Importance of Explanation

Having examined the pitfalls of the historical method in some detail, it is now time to reaffirm its importance to hermeneutics. I am essentially in agreement with Professor Dunn when he says:

> ... the task of clarifying the historical context as much as possible is crucial for exegesis: the more fully and sympathetically we can enter into the historical context of a writing the more likely we are to understand that writing, its character and theology[189]

What we have here is a necessary but not sufficient stage on the hermeneutical arc. As we have seen, explanation is vital, in the face of the autonomy of the text, for the necessary interrogation and validation of particular readings.

Williams's *Rethinking "Gnosticism"* is, in fact, a superb example of the power and importance of the explanatory method of the human sciences. In applying his method to the category 'Gnosticism' as formulated by the history of religions school he has convincingly demonstrated its invalidity. He uses: statistical analysis to show that there is no universal value reversal in the texts labelled 'Gnostic'; historical evidence to show that the Valentinians did not shun society; and sociological theory to show that 'Gnosticism' can not be considered a separate religion in its own right, with its own unique laws and attributes such as 'parasitism'. Without such explanatory methods, and others such as liguistics, interpretation can quickly become eisegetical, rather than entering the world of the text.

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187. Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism"*, p.44.
188. Ricoeur, 'The Task of Hermeneutics', p.54.
189. Dunn, 'Let John Be John: A Gospel for Its Time', pp.346-347, although he does then slip into the intentional fallacy by continuing, "to perceive the intention of the one(s) who determined that character and theology", but that is a different question.

2.11 The Hermeneutical Method as Applied in this Study

We have seen the importance of the historical method to hermeneutics, while also seeing that it stops short of true engagement with the world of the text. It does not bring the text into living communication.

In light of this recognition, I can now reformulate the goal of this study as the appropriation of the *Tripartite Tractate*: to enter into a conversation with its world here and now. While recognising that there can never be a complete and final interpretation of any text, this interpretation strives to meet the criteria of congruence and plenitude.

The process has, in fact, already begun through our analysis of the general and specific prejudices that hamper a true engagement with the text in our time, as well as the recognition of the pitfalls into which exegesis can fall if the true autonomy of the text is not recognised.

But before we begin the exegesis proper a few more words must be said about the preunderstanding that informs this interpretation and the dialectic of explanation and interpretation that is employed therein.

This exegesis begins with the ontological orientation of the *Tripartite Tractate*, and this is not an arbitrary beginning, rather it is crucial to an accurate appropriation of the text. If we are to open our own horizons to the mode of being in the world offered by this text, we must first recognise how radically different in orientation that mode of being is from the modern one. These two modes are actually diametrically opposed: what is most real for one is the most unreal for the other. If we do not recognise this tension and distance we will never overcome it. Thus the first fundamental aspect of the preunderstanding that underlies this exegesis is *the recognition of the ontological orientation of the text*.

We must also address the truth claim of this text if we are to come into a properly hermeneutical relation with it. True understanding does not allow us to remain comfortably neutral. The *Tripartite Tractate* is a religious text and as such we must recognise its *ultimate concern*. This phrase I have borrowed from the theologian Paul Tillich, as it is one of the clearest encapsulations of religion, and more specifically theology, as opposed to any other endeavour:

> Ultimate concern is the abstract translation of the great commandment:
> "The Lord, our God, the Lord is one; and you shall love the Lord your God
> with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with
> all your strength." (Mark 12:29). The religious concern is ultimate; it
> excludes all other concerns from ultimate significance; it makes them
> preliminary. The ultimate concern is unconditional, independent of any
> conditions of character, desire, or circumstance. The unconditional concern
> is total: no part of ourselves or of our world is excluded from it; there is no
> "place" to flee from it (Psalm 139). The total concern is infinite: no moment
> of relaxation and rest is possible in the face of a religious concern which is
> ultimate, unconditional, total, and infinite.
>
> The word "concern" points to the "existential" character of religious
> experience. We cannot speak adequately of the "object of religion" without
> simultaneously removing its character as an object. That which is ultimate
> gives itself only to the attitude of ultimate concern. It is the correlate of an
> unconditional concern but not a "highest thing" called "the absolute" or "the
> unconditioned," about which we could argue in detached objectivity. It is
> the object of total surrender, demanding also the surrender of our
> subjectivity while we look at it. It is a matter of infinite passion and interest

(Kierkegaard), making us its object whenever we try to make it our object. For this reason we have avoided terms like "*the* ultimate," "*the* unconditioned," "*the* universal," "*the* infinite," and have spoken of ultimate, unconditional, total, infinite concern. Of course, in every concern there is *something* about which one is concerned; but this something should not appear as a separated object which could be known and handled without concern. This, then, is the first formal criterion of theology: *The object of theology is what concerns us ultimately. Only those propositions are theological which deal with their object in so far as it can become a matter of ultimate concern for us.*[190]

This recognition is made all the harder by the fact that we can no longer complacently declare the theology of this text heretical. There was no such thing as heresy at the time that this text was written. The world of this text does not hold within it that notion. It does, of course, allow for disagreement, which was no doubt quite heated at times, but it was disagreement *within* the church, as Bauer and Dunn have so clearly shown. Thus we are faced with the prospect of having to read this text not only as a religious document but as a Christian one, that is if we wish to understand it. Thus we have come to the second of the fundamental aspects of the preunderstanding that informs this exegesis: *if we are to understand the* Tripartite Tractate *theologically, we must recognise both its ultimate concern and its Christianity.*

Such an appropriation does not demand that the reader try to become a Valentinian or anything of the sort. Appropriation is the imaginative excercise that takes place every time we read and understand a text, be it a novel, a poem, one of Plato's dialogues or one of the gospels. We are at a time in human history when the great religious texts of the world's religions and philosophies are available in an unprecedented manner. Never before have we had access to so much. One of the options open to the theologian or religious scholar, or anyone else who can read for that matter, is to enlarge his horizon by reading these texts. This does not necessitate that he abandon his particular faith, but it will alter his relation to it, I dare say, in a very positive way. As Gadamer says, horizon "expresses the superior breadth of vision that the person who is trying to understand must have. To acquire a horizon means that one learns to look beyond what is close at hand — not in order to look away from it but to see it better, within a larger whole and in truer proportion".[191] In his commentary on *Revelation* John Sweet touches on just this point by using,

> ... the analogy of visiting a tropical island or an art gallery, if the visitor is revolted by what he sees and hears it is no immediate help to tell him he might feel differently if he had lived all his life there, (or) to suggest that his own vision is defective. He cannot deny his repugnance or meekly agree to call ugly beautiful. But he can be asked to be patient, and to be willing to open himself to an unfamiliar context and to new ways of seeing and hearing. He may not in the end be changed, but unless he is *willing* to be changed there is no possibility of real communication and enrichment.[192]

It will quickly become clear that I make extensive use of the historical scholarship in the field, particularly the different commentaries on the *Tripartite Tractate*, and especially that of Einar Thomassen. While it remains at the explanatory level of interpretation and is

190. Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, I, pp.14-15. The emphasis is Tillich's.
191. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p.305.
192. Sweet, *Revelation*, p.52.

subject to the intentional fallacy, no serious study of the tractate could fail to acknowledge Thomassen's invaluable commentary as being of the very first class.

However the step into interpretation proper is a large one, as it involves the considerable changes in attitude and preunderstanding that I have spoken of above. This study, then, is different from a work of religious history and from a commentary in that I do not treat the text as an object of study. This is not an analysis. Rather I have tried to enter the world of the text in order to discover its intentions and concerns, on its own terms and in its own language. This involves the willingness to open oneself to the mode of being offered by the world of the text. If you are willing to relinquish all that you think you know about the text, and let it speak, it will tell itself to you. This is the opposite of reading into a text. Instead one reads from within it in order to articulate its meaning in a way that opens up its world to those reading it in an environment that is radically different from its original one. This world that I seek to enter and articulate is not an historical one, but rather one of a certain ontological and theological orientation, which is radically different from that generally held today around the world. The focus of this exegesis has thus been moved away from historical concern with the Valentinians behind that text, to the world of the text itself. Thus 'Valentinian' becomes a designation of the mode of being presented by the texts, and is no longer used as a reference to the group of Christians referred to by historians as Valentinians.

Chapter Three
From the One to the Many

3.01 The Father

> Because we shall speak about the things on high, it is fitting to begin with
> the Father, who is the Root of the All (*Tripartite Tractate* 51. 1-5)

So begins the *Tripartite Tractate* and for good reason. Where else does one start but with
that which is most real? This opening is not simply a "literary commonplace" of the time,
as Attridge and Pagels characterise it.[1] Rather, it is a fundamental, theological stance,
which sets up the entire orientation of the text; an orientation with which the reader is
being invited to align himself. The first ontological principle was the starting point of the
Greek philosophers, just as it is today. Only, in the modern age, what is taken to be most
real is the physical universe. In late antiquity, however, there was no doubt that the most
real, that which is permanent, unmoving and unchangeable, was not the cosmos, but was,
rather, its divine source.

For all of the seemingly wild differentiation there was between the schools of what we
used to call 'Gnosticism', there is fundamentally no difference between them, regarding
the nature of what is real, particularly in the Valentinian and Sethian schools. This is not
to say that the language used is uniform among the various groups, but rather that these
differences were positive and inclusive, as the Nag Hammadi Library itself bears witness.
The Valentinian *Dasein*,[2] that is to say the mode of being projected by those texts which
have been ascribed to the Valentinians, is not one that is willing to stop at a single, and
necessarily imperfect, notion of the ineffable for which it yearns. Valentinian texts
constantly rework their formulations in an attempt to say more fully the unsayable. To use
Paul Ricoeur's phrase, they recognise and value "the multiple tongues of an unfixable
Sacred".[3]

The goal of Valentinian theology was a return to reality, to the ground of being, that is
to say, a return to the Father, the Root of the All, the Monad, the One. From this point of
view, the physical cosmos is the realm of nescience and deficiency, but only to the extent
that it is considered to be real. Hence the *Treatise on the Resurrection* contrasts the
illusory world with the truth and permanence of the resurrection:

> ... do not think the resurrection (ⲁⲧⲁⲛⲁⲥⲧⲁⲥⲓⲥ / ἀνάστασις) is an
> illusion (ⲟⲩⲫⲁⲛⲧⲁⲥⲓⲁ / φαντασία). It is no illusion, but it is truth!
> Indeed, it is more fitting to say that the world is an illusion, rather than the
> resurrection which has come into being through our Lord the Saviour
> (ⲡⲥⲱⲧⲏⲣ / σωτήρ), Jesus Christ.
>
> But what am I telling you now? Those who are living shall die. How do
> they live in an illusion? The rich have become poor, and the kings have

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1. Attridge and Pagels, 'The Tripartite Tractate: I, 5:51.1-138.27', in *Nag Hammadi Codex I (The Jung Codex): Notes*, p.217.
2. For the sake of brevity I shall speak of 'Valentinian theology', by this phrase I mean the Valentinian mode of being in the world (Valentinian *Dasein*) and its theology as projected in front of those texts that have been ascribed to the historical Valentinians. At only one point (p.106 below), and no other, in the exegesis do I refer to those second and third century Christians who fall under the socio-historical designation 'Valentinian'. Thus 'Valentinian' is a useful shorthand only. Were these texts demonstrated to be historically unrelated to the historical Valentinians (unlikely as that is), it would not change this interpretation of the mode of being of these texts.
3. 'The Hermeneutics of Symbols and Philosophical Reflection', p.197.

been overthrown. Everything is prone to change. The world is an illusion!
...
     But the resurrection does not have this aforesaid character, for it is the truth (ⲦⲘⲎⲈ) which stands firm (ⲠⲈⲦⲀϨⲈ ⲀⲢⲈⲦϥ̄). It is the revelation of that which exists, and the transformation (ⲠⲰϢⲂⲈⲒⲈ) of things, and a transition into newness. For imperishability (ⲦⲘⲚ̄ⲦⲀⲦⲦⲈⲔⲞ = ἀφθαρσία) [descends] upon the perishable (ⲠⲦⲈⲔⲞ = τὸν φθάρτον); the light flows down upon the darkness, swallowing it up; and the Pleroma (ⲠⲠⲖⲎⲢⲰⲘⲀ / πλήρωμα) fills up the deficiency (Ⲙ̄ⲠⲈϢ̄ⲦⲀ = ὑστερημα). These are the symbols and the images of the resurrection. He (Christ) it is who makes the good. (48.10-49.9).[4]

This message is echoed throughout the Valentinian and, more generally, the Nag Hammadi writings. In stark contrast to the mutable cosmos, the Father is not subject to change of any kind:

> Not only is He without end — the reason He is immortal is that He is unbegotten — but He is also steadfast in that in which He is for eternity, and that which He is, and that in which He is stable, and that by which He is great. Neither will He remove himself from that in which He is, nor will any other force him to produce an end against His Will. He has not had anyone who initiated his own existence. Thus, He Himself does not change nor will another be able to remove Him from that in which is nor that which He is, nor His greatness, so that He cannot be removed, and it is impossible for another to change Him into a different form or to reduce Him, or alter Him or diminish Him, since this is in all truth the way in which He is unchangeably immutable, clothed in immutability. (*Tripartite Tractate* 52.7- 33)

     In the *Gospel of Truth* 17.14-29 the foolish attempt of Error (ϮⲠⲖⲀⲚⲎ / πλάνη) to create its own perfect world, namely this cosmos, as "the substitute for Truth", is seen to have no effect on the Father. Fashioned in the absence of Truth, the products of the Demiurge, "the anguish and the oblivion and the creature of deceit", "were nothing", whereas "the established truth is immutable, imperturbable, perfect in beauty". In their notes on this passage Attridge and MacRae comment that, in the phrase when Error "set about with a creation", the term (ⲠⲖⲀⲤⲘⲀ / πλάσμα) while meaning "creature, creation, form" can also mean "fiction, pretence, delusion".[5] This double meaning is entirely in keeping with the Valentinian view of the cosmos. Error's very attempt at setting about with a creation is at one and the same time a setting about with a delusion.[6]
     The *Gospel of Philip* clearly contrasts the perishability of the cosmos with the imperishability of sonship:

> For the world (κόσμος) never was imperishable, nor, for that matter, was He who made the world (κόσμος). For things are not imperishable, but

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4. This important passage, which encapsulates Valentinian soteriology, will be considered closely in the next chapter. Quispel in 'Valentinus and The Gnostikoi' has recently speculated that the *Treatise on the Resurrection* was written by Valentinus himself.

5. Attridge and Pagels, 'The Tripartite Tractate: I, 5:51.1-138.27', in *Nag Hammadi Codex I (The Jung Codex): Notes*, p.45.

6. See also *Tripartite Tractate* 78.29-79.11, 78.34, 79.9-11, 82.19, 98.5; *Treatise on the Resurrection* 48.6-33.

> sons are. Nothing will be able to receive imperishability if it does not first
> become a son. (*Gospel of Philip* 75.7-13)[7]

To become a son is to partake of the nature of the true Son, the Christ: to become a
Christ.[8] To become a son is to be resurrected imperishable and immortal. In several
Sethian texts 'incorruptibility' is used as one of the designations of the pneumatic realm or
a member thereof. The *Apocryphon of John* for instance refers to, "the light, which is the
Christ, and indestructibility (ⲧⲁⲫⲑⲁⲣⲥⲓⲁ / αφθαρσια)".[9] Whereas the *Hypostasis of the
Archons* uses 'incorruptibility' or 'imperishability' (ⲙⲛⲧⲁⲧⲧⲁⲕⲟ/ⲙⲛⲧⲁⲧⲧⲉⲕⲟ) as its
primary designation of the highest realm and the Saviour.[10]

Our opening statement, then, holds within itself the distinction between the reality and
permanence of the Father and the impermanence, and therefore the unreality, of the world.
It also holds within it the affirmation of the Father's essential oneness which is
fundamental to Valentinian theology. It is from unity that every real thing emerged
(emanated) and it is to unity that everything will return, hence the common reference that
is made in Valentinian texts to the Father being the Root (ⲛⲟⲩⲛⲉ) of the All.[11] The
Valentinian Exposition specifically links the Father's designation as Root of the All with
His oneness:

> ... it is these who [have known Him who] is the Father, that [is the Root] of
> the All (ⲧⲛⲟⲩⲛⲉ ⲙ̄ⲡⲧⲏⲣϥ̄), the [Ineffable one who] dwells in the Monad
> (ⲧⲙⲟⲛⲁⲥ). [He dwells alone] in Silence (ⲡⲕⲁⲣⲱϥ̄), [and Silence is]
> tranquillity (ⲡⲥϭⲣⲁϩⲧ̄·) since, after all, [He was] a Monad and no one
> [was] before Him. ... it is from the Root of the All that even His Thought
> (ⲙⲉⲩⲉ) stems, since He had this one (the Son) in Mind (ⲡⲛⲟⲩⲥ / νοῦς). ...
> Now this [is the] Root [of the All] and Monad without any [one] before
> Him. (NHC XI, 22.18-23.21)

While, at the same time, the root is the foundation of an entire organism:

> The Father is one, while being like a multitude, for He is the first, and He is
> that which He alone is, without being like a single one. Otherwise, how
> could He be a Father? For whenever there is a "father", it follows that there
> must be a "son". But the One who alone is the Father, is like a root with a
> trunk, branches and fruit. (*Tripartite Tractate* 51.8-19)

Thus the symbol of the 'Root of the All' captures the unity in multiplicity of the Father
and His Pleroma. Commenting on this symbolism Thomassen observes:

7. Compare the *Odes of Solomon* 3.7-8:
     "I was united to Him, because the lover has found the Beloved One,
     Because I love that Son, I shall become a son;
     For he who is joined to Him that does not die,
     He too will become immortal".
   As the footnotes will indicate the kinship between the world of the *Tripartite Tractate* and the other
   Valentinian texts of Nag Hammadi, and that of the *Odes of Solomon* is undeniable. Petrement, *A
   Separate God: The Christian Origins of Gnosticism*, pp.17 and 226 considers them to be Valentinian,
   see especially pp.373-376 for an overview of scholarly opinion. See also Rudolph, *Gnosis: The Nature
   and History of Gnosticism*, pp.29 and 221-222. However the investigation of the full nature of that
   relationship must be left to another study.
8. *Gospel of Philip* 61.30-31 and 67.26-27.
9. NHC II, 7.30-32; NHC III, 11.15-16; NHC IV, 12.2-4; BG 32.20-21. For 'indestructibility' NHCs II
   and IV use ⲁⲧⲧⲉⲕⲟ and ⲁⲧⲧⲁⲕⲟ respectively.
10. See Gilhus, *The Nature of the Archons: A Study in the Soteriology of a Gnostic Treatise from Nag
    Hammadi (CG II, 4)*, pp.44-51.
11. *Valentinian Exposition* 22.32-3, 23.19-32, 24.35-6; Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* I 1.1.

> D'un point de vue non gnostique, la phrase [ⲦⲚⲞⲨⲚⲈ ⲘⲠⲦⲎⲢϥ] est
> ambiguë, car τα ὅλα / πάντα sont des termes techniques pour décrire le
> Plérôme gnostique, mais ils signifient par ailleurs ‹‹l'univers››. Toutefois,
> pour les gnostiques, cette distinction n'existe pas, car le monde des
> apparences n'étant que vide et ombre, sans lien avec le Père, n'a pas
> d'existence réelle.[12]

This symbol of the root, like all of those associated with the Father and His pleromatic realm, is what Ricoeur would describe as a symbol of the beginning and the end.[13] In fact this applies to virtually all of the symbolic language of Valentinian theology. The Root is also the goal, which the pneumatic, the spiritual man, is enjoined to "heed"[14] and to "follow".[15] The ultimate concern of the Valentinian mode of being is often expressed as a return to the Father, who is the source of everything that truly exists:

> Now, the end is receiving knowledge about the one who is hidden, and this
> is the Father, from whom the beginning came forth, to whom all will return
> who have come forth from him. (*Gospel of Truth* 37.37-38.4)

The Father, as source, is often symbolised as a gushing spring: "But since He is [as] He is, [He is] a spring (ⲚⲚⲞⲨⲠⲎⲅⲎ / πηγή), which is not diminished by the water which abundantly flows from it" (*Tripartite Tractate* 60.11-15).[16]

As Unity, the Father is ineffable: Valentinian documents go to great lengths to explain how utterly incomprehensible the One is.[17] The *Apocryphon of John* offers a good example of the negative theology that is shared by many of the Nag Hammadi writings, especially of the first two codices:

> He [is the] invisible [Spirit]; it is not right [to think] about Him as God, or
> something similar. For He is more than a God, since there is no one above
> Him, ... He is [ineffable because] no one could comprehend Him to speak
> [about Him]. ... For the [perfect one] is majestic; He is pure immeasurable
> [greatness]. He is an aeon-giving aeon, [life]-giving Life, a blessedness-
> giving Blessed One, Knowledge-giving Knowledge.... [How shall I speak]
> with you concerning Him, the inconceivable? (NHC II, 1, 2, 33-4, 11.)

Tripartite Tractate makes it clear that none of the names truly applies to Him:

> ... being so good, without deficiency, perfect, full, He Himself is the All.
> for none of the names which is conceived or spoken or seen or grasped,
> none of them applies to Him, not even the most brilliant, venerable and
> honourable ones. (*Tripartite Tractate* 53.39-54.8)

12. Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.261: "From the non-Gnostic point of view, the phrase [ⲦⲚⲞⲨⲚⲈ ⲘⲠⲦⲎⲢϥ] is ambiguous, because τα ὅλα / πάντα ('the whole/All') are technical terms for describing the Gnostic Pleroma, but they otherwise signify 'the universe'. However, for the Gnostics, the distinction does not exist because the world of appearances is only empty and dark, and without connection to the Father it does not have true existence".

13. See *The Symbolism of Evil*, Part II.

14. *Gospel of Truth* 42.33.

15. *Apocryphon of John* NHC II, 31.15-16.

16. Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.262. See also *Tripartite Tractate* 74.5-10 quoted p.77 below, the *Valentinian Exposition* 23.18 and the *Odes of Solomon* 26.13 and 30.1-7.

17. *Tripartite Tractate* 51.6-57.8; *Gospel of Truth* 18.21-19.10; *Allogenes* 61.32-67.20; *Apocryphon of John* 2.25-4.26.

Such names are rightly used to glorify and praise the Father, but this reflects the capacity of the one who glorifies Him rather than His own nature (*Tripartite Tractate* 54.8-12). This is because the Father is truly unknowable:

> It is impossible for any mind (ΝΟΥC) to comprehend Him, nor can word render Him, nor can eye see Him, nor can any body (CWΜΑ) grasp Him, because of His unsearchable greatness and His unfathomable depth (ΒΑΘΟC) and His immeasurable height and His uncontainable Will. This is the nature of the unbegotten; He does not set to work starting from anything else, nor is He partnered, in the manner of that which is limited. But He has being while having neither figure nor form, those things which are contemplated by sensation, so that for this reason He is also the incomprehensible One. If He is incomprehensible then it follows that He is unknowable. (*Tripartite Tractate* 54.15-35)

3.02 Emanation: "His superabundance has become procreation".[18]

> ... it will be found that while still possessing, everything that He possesses, He gives it away, while being unaffected and not suffering by reason of that which He gives, because He is rich in that which He gives, and He rests in the graces that He bestows. (*Tripartite Tractate* 53.13-20)

It is the goodness and superabundance of the Father that leads Him to bring forth the Pleroma (πλήρωμα), the fullness, which is one of the designations of the All.[19] This superabundance, which gives without diminishing the giver, is often characterised as the unlimited wealth or richness (πλουτεῖν) of the Father:[20]

> ... He [the Father] bears His fruit (ΜΠΙΚΑΡΠΟC / καρπός), which remained unknown because of His surpassing greatness, and He wanted it to be known because of the richness of His sweetness. And He revealed the inexplicable power and He mixed it with the superabundance of His generosity. (*Tripartite Tractate* 57.23-32.)[21]

The symbolism of the fruit of the Father will be considered later,[22] but, for the moment, the significance of this passage lies in its bringing together the key symbols that are used in Valentinian theology about the Father's superabundance: riches, sweetness, abundance and generosity. These are the qualities of the Father that can be discerned in His emanation of the Pleroma:

> It is one who is worthy of His admiration and the glory and the honour and the praise that He brings forth, because of His endless greatness, and His unfathomable wisdom, and His immeasurable power and His untastable

18. *Tripartite Tractate* 59.37-38.
19. It is used for the first time at *Tripartite Tractate* 68.30-31, quoted p.80 below.
20. See Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.269 for an overview of this "doctrine" of "undiminished giving" («don sans diminution») in the Platonic and Christian traditions.
21. See Attridge and Pagels, 'The Tripartite Tractate: I, 5:51.1-138.27', in *Nag Hammadi Codex I (The Jung Codex): Notes*, p.239 on the Father being the subject of this paragraph.
22. Section 3.05 below.

sweetness.[23] It is He who exposes[24] Himself in this manner of generation, in order to receive glory and praising admiration and love, and it is He who glorifies Himself, who admires, who praises, who loves; (*Tripartite Tractate* 56.7-22)[25]

Πλήρωμα, then, is theophany, it is the self projection of the Father, the purpose of which is His self-glorification. In light of the Father's superabundance it is not difficult to understand the argument detectable in the *Tripartite Tractate* that were the Father not able to confer *gnosis* on the All, a conferral which is, paradoxically, emanation itself, then this would imply an unacceptable limitation of the Father.

> if out of the superabundance of His sweetness He wishes to grant knowledge so that He may be known, He has the ability to do so. He has His power (ⲛ̄ⲧⲉϥϭⲁⲙ), which is His Will (ⲡⲉϥⲟⲩⲱϣⲉ). (*Tripartite Tractate* 55.30-35)

The symbolic language of the sweetness and wealth of the Father is here complimented by the philosophical language of Power (ϭⲁⲙ/ϭⲟⲙ = δύναμις), Will (ⲟⲩⲱϣⲉ = θέλησις) and Thought (ἔννοια). The Will in the *Tripartite Tractate* indicates the Father's desire to grant *gnosis* to his aeons, and is very closely tied to His self-manifestation, for the granting of true existence to the All is at the same time the granting of *gnosis*. The Will is the Father's Power (δύναμις) in that it provides the drive which transforms the Thought (ἔννοια) into the Pleroma of innumerable aeons.[26]

The Thought is generated by the Father's thinking himself. There is no difference between the Father and His Thought:

> It is He alone who knows Himself as He is, with His form and His greatness and His magnitude. To Him belongs the ability to conceive of Himself, to see Himself, to name Himself, to grasp Himself, since He is His own mind (ⲛ̄ⲛⲟⲩⲥ), His own eye, His own mouth, His own form, and it is Himself that He conceives, that He sees, that He utters, that He grasps, Himself, the inconceivable, unutterable, incomprehensible, immutable. It is nourishment and delight, truth, joy and rest, that He conceives, that He sees, that He utters. (*Tripartite Tractate* 54.40-55.18)

The non-difference of the Father and His ἔννοια is also evident in the passage from the *Valentinian Exposition* above, where, "it is from the Root of the All that even His Thought stems" (22.33-34). This is also expressed in terms of the Father's self-generation: "It is in the proper sense that He begets Himself as ineffable, since He alone is self-begotten, since He conceives of Himself, and since He knows Himself as He is" (*Tripartite Tractate* 56.1-6). Thomassen reminds us that the point being emphasised here is not so much that the

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23. "Untastable sweetness" following Attridge and Pagels, 'The Tripartite Tractate: I, 5:51.1-138.27', in *Nag Hammadi Codex I (The Jung Codex): Introductions, Texts, Translations, Indices,* p.201, over Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite,* p.65, «doucer qui est au-delà de ce qui est peut gôuter», trans: "sweetness which is beyond that which can be tasted".

24. Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite,* p.282 considers ⲕⲱ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟϥ ⲉ2ⲣⲏⲓ̈ («s'expose» / "exposes Himself") to be equivalent to τιθέναι (or a compounded form). Attridge and Pagels, 'The Tripartite Tractate: I, 5:51.1-138.27', in *Nag Hammadi Codex I (The Jung Codex): Notes,* p.201 read "project": "The verb means literally 'put, lay down'. ... the verb here must mean 'to bring into existence', or in this context, 'to project'".

25. See also *Tripartite Tractate* 63.26-28 and 136.16-28.

26. Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite,* p.277 «la Volonté fournit le facteur dynamique nécessaire à la transformation de la Pensée en un Plérôme d'éons». Trans: "The Will provides the dynamic factor necessary for the transformation of the Thought into a Pleroma of aeons".

Father is self-caused, but rather that there is, ultimately, no difference between Himself and that which he generates by thinking.[27] To reinforce this point, the tractate goes on to insist that the Father's Thought is not to be confused with cognizance of any kind. Indeed, it is beyond even the highest and most subtle of attributes:

> That which He has as Thought rises above all wisdom and surpasses all mind and surpasses all glory, and surpasses all beauty and all sweetness, all greatness, all depth and all height. (*Tripartite Tractate* 55.19-26)

3.03 The Son

The Thought of the Father is the Son:

> The Father, as we have said already, is, without generation,[28] the one in whom He knows Himself, who has begotten Him [the Son], being endowed with a Thought, which is His own Thought, that is to say, His perception (†ⲁⲓⲥⲑⲏⲥⲓⲥ / αἴσθησις), which is the [...] of his eternal existence. And this [His Thought] is, in the proper sense [the] Silence, and the wisdom and the grace, which it is called by a just title in this way. (*Tripartite Tractate* 56.32-57.8)[29]

Here we encounter the very heart of Valentinian nonduality. The relationship of Father and Son is that of, "the ineffable within the ineffable, ... the inconceivable within the inconceivable" (*Tripartite Tractate* 56:26-30). These formulae express, "la coïncidence de l'unité et de la dualité du Père et de sa Pensée".[30] The ineffable Father and the manifest Son, while apparently different are ultimately identical. "He [the Father] brought Him [the Son] forth while being united with the one who has come forth from Him" (*Tripartite Tractate* 62.38-63.1). Thomassen comments that, "il est donc probable que ce passage ait signifié essentiellement que le Père est à la fois un (ⲦⲎⲦ ⲘⲈⲚ) avec le Fils et distinct du Fils".[31]

> Bien qu'il soit manifesté par le Fils, le Père reste ce qi'il est, puisque d'une façon les deux sont un et que pourtant ils sont distincts l'un de l'autre.[32]

The profundity of the nonduality of the Father and the Son is that, while they are not two they must not be conflated, either into the other, which would be a monism of sorts. The mystery is that from any perspective other than that of enlightenment, of perfect

27. Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.281
28. Attridge and Pagels, 'The Tripartite Tractate: I, 5:51.1-138.27', in *Nag Hammadi Codex I (The Jung Codex): Introductions, Texts, Translations, Indices*, p.201, read, "in an unbegotten way".
29. This is supported by the *Gospel of Truth* 16.35, 19.37, 37.13; *Valentinian Exposition* 22.32-35; and Clement, *Excerpta ex Theodoto* 7.1.
30. Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.283. Trans: "the simultaneous oneness and duality of the Father and his Thought". He goes on to note that the same can be found in *Trimorphic Protennoia* NHC XIII, 35.7-11: "invisible in the Thought of the invisible ... unattainable as I am in the unattainable".
31. Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.300. Trans: "it is thus probable that the essential meaning of the passage was that the Father is simultaneously one (ⲦⲎⲦ ⲘⲈⲚ) with the Son and distinct from him". Hence the importance of the term 'nonduality' rather than 'monism'; the Father and Son are 'not-two' rather than being a singularity, on which see section 5.02 below.
32. Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.300. Trans: "Although he is manifested by the Son, the Father remains the way he is; the two being one from one point of view and yet distinct from another".

knowledge, the Father and the Son are apparently distinct. To have *gnosis* is to see Reality as it truly is, which is why those without it are, to varying degrees, blind or asleep.[33] Until *gnosis* is attained, the ineffable Father, the "formless" One, and the manifest Son, the "form of the Formless" (*Tripartite Tractate* 66.13-14), each of whom encompasses all of reality, cannot be recognised as being the same.

The Son, being that by which the Father thinks Himself into manifestation, is the source of generation. Here we meet one of the distinctive and fascinating features of the language used by the *Tripartite Tractate*, and by the Valentinian texts in general, namely, the use of the philosophical language of Platonism and Neopythagoreanism alongside that of mythical, biblical language. Will (θέλησις) is the Father's faculty of generation, which is manifested in the Son, and through which the Pleroma is externalised.[34] Thus in the *Valentinian Exposition* the Son is designated as the "Will of the All (ϫⲉ ⲡⲟⲩⲱϣⲉ ⲙⲡⲧⲏⲣϥ̄)", "When He willed, the First Father revealed Himself in Him [the Son]. Since, after all, because [of Him] the revelation is available to the All, ... 'the Will of the All'" (*Valentinian Exposition* 24.26-31). The language of Will is complimented by that of movement and extension. The Son is, "the God who has gone forth" (*Valentinian Exposition* 22.30-31), the one "who has moved" (*Valentinian Exposition* 22.38). This contrasts with the Father who remains ever beyond movement, at rest (ἀνάπαυσις), in Silence (ⲡⲕⲁⲣⲱϥ̄. ⲧⲥⲓⲅⲏ / σιγή) and tranquillity (ⲡⲥϭⲣⲁϩⲧ̄).[35] In the *Tripartite Tractate* the Son "extends" Himself (ⲥⲁⲩⲧⲛ̄ ⲁⲃⲁⲗ / ἐκτείνειν) and "spreads Himself out" (ⲡⲱⲣϣ̄ ⲁⲃⲁⲗ / πλατύνειν) to bestow knowledge on the All and to clothe them in true existence:

> This one, however, extended Himself and spread Himself out, it is He who has given firmness and a place and a dwelling place to the All, which is a name of His through which, He is Father of the All, because of His persistent suffering for them, ... This one was given to them by way of delight and nourishment and joy and a superabundant illumination, which is His compassion (ⲧⲙⲛ̄ⲧϣⲃⲏⲣ· ϣⲱⲡ ϩⲓ̈ⲥⲉ)[36], His knowledge and His reunion with them. This one is called and is the Son; He is the All and they recognise who He is. (*Tripartite Tractate* 65:4-27)[37]

Einar Thomassen is the only scholar who, to my knowledge, has made the crucial point that, at least in the Valentinian tradition as manifested by the *Tripartite Tractate* and the *Valentinian Exposition*, the movement or passion often ascribed entirely to Sophia (or her equivalent) does in fact start with the Son. Thomassen, who detects here the historical influence of Pythagoreanism, explains that,

> This terminology, ἐκτείνειν and πλατύνειν, is used by the Pythagoreans to describe the movement from the Monad to number, a process which is associated with the Dyad. In the main system of Irenaeus we find the word ἐκτείνειν applied to Sophia (*Adv. haer.*, I, 2:2, 3:3), but in the *Tripartite Tractate* it is, as we have seen, used of the Son, reflecting the insight that

33   See MacRae, 'Sleep and Awakening in Gnostic Texts'.
34   Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, pp.275-279 has offered the most detailed study of the divine Will in Valentinianism to date.
35. See *Valentinian Exposition* 22.18-23.21 quoted p.64 above. The most comprehensive study of the theme of stability in 'Gnosticism', especially the Sethian variety, is M.A. Williams's *The Immovable Race: A Gnostic Designation and the Theme of Stability in Late Antiquity*. See also his 'Stability as a Soteriological Theme in Gnosticism'.
36. Literally, 'the taking of suffering upon oneself in friendship'.
37. See Thomassen, 'The Valentinianism of The *Valentinian Exposition* (NHC XI, 2)', p.228. As we shall see in sections 3.07 and 4.11 below, clothing symbolism is often employed in relation to baptism. Its use both protologically and soteriologically indicates the kinship between the outward and return journey of the soul.

the movement towards unlimited multiplicity which is epitomized by the last and erring aeon actually took its beginning with the first duality of the generation of the Son.

Similarly, the «movement» ascribed to the Son in the *Valentinian Exposition* is also a term traditionally connected with the Dyad. Its application here to the Son is unusual in Valentinianism, where movement is normally associated with the passion of Sophia. This is therefore another instance of how a concept used for the passion and fall can also be applied to the generation of the Son.[38]

Thomassen expands on this explanation in his commentary on *Tripartite Tractate* 65.4-27:

> La question théologique posée à la fois par Origène et par les valentiniens consiste vraisemblablement en la réconciliation des notions d'impassibilité et de providence; le Père, en effet, peut-il être impassible, tout en désirant générer une progéniture et veiller sur elle? Dans le TracTri, la distinction faite entre le Père et le Fils permet de surmonter cette difficulté.
>
> Dans ce passage du TracTri, la notion de passion acquiert une autre dimension, celle d'extension. L'extension et la passion, dans Irénée, sont liées l'une à l'autre dans le récit de la chute de Sophia; la théorie qui sous-tend cette notion est que la monade représente l'impassibilité, ... tandis que la dyade, parce qu'elle crée l'extension et la pluralité, représente la passion ... Cette théorie pythagoricienne est également à la base de l'association de l'extension et de la passion dans ce passage du TracTri. La notion de passion, πάθος, y est toutefois utilisée dans une perspective et avec des implications différentes, étant donné son association avec la notion de compassion, συμπάθεια, dans la personne du Fils. Malgré cela et sa fonction sotériologique différente, le Fils représente donc ici l'aspect de la passion dans l'extension dyadique personnifiée par Sophia dans le système principal exposé par Irénée.[39]

Later the *Tripartite Tractate* (144.30-36) itself makes the distinction between the compassion of the Saviour, in which he willingly puts on suffering, and the passion of involuntary suffering produced by the presumptuous thought of the *logos*. Nevertheless the implications of this startling association of extension and passion in the person of the Son have yet to be properly explored. The association of Sophia with passions has been used almost universally by scholars to indicate what they interpret to be the 'Gnostics'' utter contempt for the world. Sophia's, or her equivalent's, ignorant and passionate act, so the argument goes, divides the cosmos utterly from the Father, leaving it no redeeming

38. Thomassen, 'The Valentinianism of The *Valentinian Exposition* (NHC XI, 2)', p.228.
39. Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, pp.306-7. Trans: "The theological question posed at the same time by Origen and the Valentinians in all likelihood consists in the reconciliation of the notions of impassibility and providence: can the Father, in effect, be impassible while desiring to generate an offspring and to watch over it? In the *Tripartite Tractate* the distinction made between the Father and the Son overcomes this difficulty.
    "In this passage of the *Tripartite Tractate* the notion of passion acquires another dimension, that of extension. Extension and passion, in Irenaeus, are linked to one another in the account of the fall of Sophia; the theory that underlies this notion is that the monad represents impassibility ... whereas the dyad, because it creates extension and plurality, represents passion. ... This pythagorean theory is equally the basis of the association of extension and passion in this passage of the *Tripartite Tractate*. The notion of passion, πάθος, here however is utilised in a different perspective and with different implications, given its association with the notion of compassion, συμπάθεια, in the person of the Son. In spite of that and his different soteriological function, the Son here represents the aspect of passion in the dyadic extension personified by Sophia in the main system of Irenaeus".

qualities.[40] Such a view must now be reconsidered in the light of Thomassen's insight. Greater weight must be given to the *Tripartite Tractate*'s statement that the descent happened in accordance with the Father's Will (76.23-77.11). Since this is not the place to further consider Sophia's descent, suffice it to say that it is much closer to the Platonic notion of the descent of the soul than has been generally recognised.[41]

3.04 The Hymn to the Son

The extension of the Son is also expressed in terms of the name. The Son is the true name of the unnameable Father, revealing Him and receiving His doxological attributes.[42] These motifs are brought together in a hymn-like passage in the *Tripartite Tractate* concerning the Son:

> But every name which is conceived or spoken about Him is proclaimed for His Glory, as a trace of Him, according to the capacity of each one of those who glorify Him. Now He who dawned forth from Him,[43] spread Himself out for the begetting and for the knowledge of the All, He [however] is all of the names, without falsehood, and He is truly the only First Man of the Father, that is, the He whom I [call]
> the form of the formless,
> the body of the bodiless,
> the face of the invisible,
> the word (*logos*) of [the] unutterable,
> the mind of the inconceivable,
> the spring which flowed forth from Him,
> the root of those who are planted,
> and the god of those who exist,[44]
> the light of those whom He illumines,
> the will of those whom He willed,
> the providence of those for whom He provides,
> the wisdom of those whom He made wise,
> the power of those to whom He gives power,
> the assembly [of] those whom He assembles to Him,
> the revelation of the things which are sought after,
> the eye of those who see,
> the spirit of those who breathe,
> the life of those who live,
> the unity of those who are united. (*Tripartite Tractate* 65.39-66.29)[45]

40. A notable exception to this tendency is M. A. Williams, who in his recent book *Rethinking Gnosticism: An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category*, pp.96-115 has called into question the 'Gnostic anticosmic attitude' that has been taken for granted by most in the field.

41   For which see Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, pp.328-342.

42. Clement, *Excerpta ex Theodoto* 26.1.

43. Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.89 «qui de lui s'est levé (comme le soleil à l'horizon)» literally translated "who arose from Him (like the sun on the horizon)".

44. Following Attridge and Pagels, 'The Tripartite Tractate: I, 5:51.1-138.27', in *Nag Hammadi Codex I (The Jung Codex): Introductions, Texts, Translations, Indices*, p.217, which makes more sense than «le dieu de ceux qui se prosternent (?)», "the God of those who prostrate themselves (?)", about which Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.89 indicates he is uncertain. Furthermore, "the god of those who exist" agrees with the designation of the aeons as "those who exist" (*Tripartite Tractate* 58.21-22 and 81.27 etc.).

45. For the relation of this passage to 'Primordial Man' mythology see Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite* pp.307-309. This translation of the Hymn follows Attridge and Pagels, 'The Tripartite Tractate: I, 5:51.1-138.27', in *Nag Hammadi Codex I (The Jung Codex): Introductions, Texts, Translations, Indices*, p.217, while being very close to Thomassen's in content it brings out the parallelism of the Hymn more clearly.

This Hymn to the Son poetically encapsulates the nondual theology of the entire tractate. We will see repeatedly how these lines resonate throughout the work. Notice how the beginning of this passage echoes that at *Tripartite Tractate* 53.39-54.12, in which the Father is said to be the All. While we should not conflate the Father, Son and the All, they are, ultimately, not different. It is crucial that we formulate this relation in negative terms.

We find in the Hymn an embodiment of the theology of the name. The Valentinian theology of the name closely interweaves protological and soteriological aspects, that is, things of the beginning, the movement from the One to the many, and salvation, the movement from the many to the One. In terms of the beginning of the procession from the One to the many, the Father's self-reflection that produces the Son as Thought is described, in the *Tripartite Tractate*, as the Father's taking "a name for Himself" (*Tripartite Tractate* 55.4-5). While in the *Gospel of Truth* it is described in terms of the Father conferring upon the Son His name:

> Now the name of the Father is the Son. It is He who in the beginning gave a name to the one who came forth from Him, who was Himself, and He begot Him as a son. He gave Him His name which belonged to Him ... His is the name; His is the Son. It is possible for Him to be seen. The name, however, is invisible because it alone is the mystery of the invisible which comes to ears that are completely filled with it by Him. For indeed, the Father's name is not spoken, but it is apparent through a Son. (*Gospel of Truth* 38.7-24)

Attridge and MacRae note that the Son is the name of the Father in two senses. Not only is the Son called by the Father's, unspoken name,[46] but more significantly the Son, as the "comprehensible part of the Godhead", *is* that name:

> the term "name" has at least two distinct but related senses. On the one hand, it is that which designates something else. Hence, the Son, *qua* "name," is distinct from the Father. But the "name" also is the essence of the thing named. Hence, the Son is identical with the Father. It is because the Son shares the very being of the Father, yet is distinct from Him, that He can reveal Him to all other beings dependent on Him. [47]

Soteriologically, the name is conferred at the moment of salvation: it is received "as a gift" (*The Gospel of Philip* 64.25-27). Einar Thomassen, in his paper 'Gnostic Semiotics: The Valentinian Notion of The Name", has shown how the theology of the name fuses generation and salvation, as in such passages as, "And He gives it name, and causes it to make them come into existence" (*Gospel of Truth* 27.29-31). The implication here is that the movement from the one to the many is ultimately identical to the return of the many to the one.

> By being accorded the Name of the Father the Son is saved, as it were, in the sense that He is reunited with the Father from whom His coming into being separates Him. But if naming and generation are in fact the same,

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46. *Gospel of Philip* NHC II, 3, 54.5-13: "One single name is not uttered in the world, the name which the Father gave to the Son; it is the name above all things: the name of the Father. For the Son would not become Father unless He wore the name of the Father. Those who have this name know it, but they do not speak it. But those who do not have it do not know it".

47. Attridge and MacRae, 'The Gospel of Truth: I,3:16.31-43.24', in *Nag Hammadi Codex I (The Jung Codex): Notes*, p.118.

both come simultaneously to mean unity as well as separation, so that the act *of* salvation is, logically, identical to the act *producing the need for* salvation. By implication, all the entities of Father, Son, and Name find themselves by virtue of their mutual and simultaneous unity and difference in the role of saviour as well as that of *salvandus*, just as the Son will be His own Father.[48]

The Hymn to the Son is followed by a more philosophical exposition on the relation between that Name and its names, this being the relation between the Son and the aeons/ All:

As the All exist entirely in the One, who is completely clothed with Himself and in His unique name, He is never called by it. And in this same way they are equally unique and the All. He is neither divided as a body, nor is He divided between the names in which He is, so as to be one in this manner, another in [that manner, nor] does He change by [the na]mes which He is, being now this one, now something else, so that He is now being one thing and something else at another time, but rather He is permanently whole. [He] is each one of the All eternally at the same time. He is what they all are, as Father of the All, also the All are Him. For He is His own knowledge, and He is each one of His qualities. (*Tripartite Tractate* 66.29-67.14)

The primary intention of this exposition is to emphasise the ultimate non-difference between the Son and the All. The symbolism of clothing is very important in this context, and it lies behind the statement that the All, "wear Him (and) He wears them" (*Tripartite Tractate* 63.12-13). This relation is repeatedly returned to, but each time from a slightly different point of view. Its importance to the nature of reality as presented by the world of the *Tripartite Tractate* and the other Valentinian texts cannot be underestimated.

Later on in the *Tripartite Tractate* the relation between the Father and His names is further explored:

For each of the aeons is a name, which is each of the qualities and powers of the Father. Because He is in many names, mingled and in mutual harmony (oyϯ мєтє), it is possible for them to speak of Him because of the wealth of the *Logos*, in such a way that although the Father is a single name, because He is one, nevertheless He is innumerable in His qualities and names. For the emanation of the All, which is out of the one who is, did not take place according to a cutting off from one another, as if it were a separation from the one who begets them, but, their begetting is in the form of a spreading out, the Father spreading Himself out to those whom He wills, so that those who have come forth from Him might become Him as well.[49] (*Tripartite Tractate* 73.8-28)

48. Thomassen, 'Gnostic Semiotics: The Valentinian Notion of the Name', p.146. For the Jewish and Platonic background to the Valentinian teaching that the Son is the name of the Father see Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.273, which also refers to the designation of the Son as the ὄνομα ἀνωνόμαστον "unnameable name" in Clement, *Excerpta ex Theodoto* 31.3.
49. I agree with Attridge and Pagels, 'The Tripartite Tractate: I, 5:51.1-138.27', in *Nag Hammadi Codex I (The Jung Codex): Notes*, pp.290-291, translation here of єγναϣωπє ñтαϥ αν πє as 'might become Him' as opposed to Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.107, «viennent à l'existence eux», trans: "come to their own existence". It is another expression of the radical nonduality of the Father and the Pleroma. See section 5.02 below.

This passage links many of the themes that we have already come across: the unity in multiplicity of the manifest Father and his Pleroma; the linking of extension with naming; and the very process of emanation having as its end the granting of true existence to the aeons, that is to say the granting of *gnosis*.

It is important to recognise that there are three stages to the Father's self-manifestation in the generation of the noetic realm.[50] The first is where the Church remains in Silence (σιγή),[51] immanent within the depths (Βάθος) of the Father.[52] Here the aeons:

> were in the Thought of the Father, that is to say, when they were in the
> hidden depths (ⲡⲃⲁⲑⲟⲥ / Βάθος), the depths, on its part, knew them, but
> they could not know the depths in which they were, nor could they know
> themselves, nor know anything else; that is they existed with the Father, but
> they did not exist to themselves; but the being that they had was like a seed,
> so that they in fact exist like an embryo. (*Tripartite Tractate* 60.16-37)[53]

This is one of the most explicit statements of the nonduality of the Father and His Thought, the Son, for here the Thought of the Father is declared to be Βάθος. When we recall that the Thought is equated with Silence, Wisdom and Gnosis earlier in the tractate at 57.5-6,[54] we see that not only is the Son in Silence, but the Son is Silence, and that any difference between the Father and Son is an imperfect perception of their relation. Thomassen makes the very important point, here, that,

> Il faut observer ... que les notions présentées dans ce passage constituent
> non seulement une théorie de la génération, mais aussi un myth
> sotériologique. La génération préfigure la régénération; l'état
> d'inconscience et de non-être dans le sein du Père exprime aussi la
> condition des spiritueles qui n'ont pas encore atteint à la *gnose*.
> L'extériorisation et la manifestation signifient le formation et l'acquisition
> de l'être vrai sur le plan sotériologique.[55]

However, in order that they should exist to, and for, themselves, as well as simply for the Father, "He showed grace, and He gave the first form, so that they might perceive who the Father is" (*Tripartite Tractate* 61.11-13), which He did by sowing a thought "as a seed" (*Tripartite Tractate* 61.8) in them. This is the second stage:

> The name of the Father He gave them, by means of a voice which

50. See Thomassen, 'The Structure of the Transcendent World in the Tripartite Tractate (NHC I, 5)', p.370. According to Thomassen the first and last of these stages (Irenaeus, Hippolytus and the *Gospel of Truth* tend to refer to only two, see Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.296) are named Silence and *Logos*, and are also reflected in the designation of the Son as the Thought (Ἔννοια) and as the Will (Θέλησις) of the Father respectively.
51. *Tripartite Tractate* 55.37-38: "a Silence (ⲟⲩⲙⲛ̄ⲧⲕⲁⲣⲱⲥ) which is He, the Great one".
52. See Clement, *Excerpta ex Theodoto* 29 (Sagnard, pp.122-123) and *Gospel of Truth* 22.25, 35.15, 37.8, 40.26. On the meaning and use of Βάθος in the New Testament see Blaz & Schneider, *The Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, I, p.190.
53. See Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, pp.292-296 for the literary relationship between this passage and *Gospel of Truth* 27.22-25, 27.34-28.4 and 37.7-8, and for a detailed explanation of this aspect of Valentinian theology and its relation to Neoplatonism.
54. Quoted p.68 above.
55. Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.295. Trans: "It must be observed ... that the notions in this passage do not exclusively constitute a theory of generation, but also constitute a soteriological myth. Generation prefigures regeneration; the state of unconsciousness and not-being in the bosom of the Father also expresses the condition of the spirituals who have not yet attained *gnosis*. Exteriorization and manifestation signifies the formation and acquisition of true being on the soteriological level".

proclaimed to them that He who is, exists through that name, which they possess as their coming into being. (*Tripartite Tractate* 61.14-18)

This is the beginning of the second stage in the process of generation, where the Son and the Church are manifested as a unity-in-multiplicity. Still, they were not yet able to realize "exaltedness in the name" (*Tripartite Tractate* 61.18-19). So, while they now know that they exist, and they know that the Father is, and they yearn for and want to find that which exists, they do not know Him. Although He "withheld the perfection for a time" (*Tripartite Tractate* 62.14-15) from the All, "not through jealousy, but in order that the aeons should not receive their perfection from the beginning and raise themselves up to the glory towards the Father, thinking to themselves that it was out of themselves that they did this" (*Tripartite Tractate* 62.20-26),[56] the Father does bestow upon them, "a perfect and beneficent Thought in order that they should become perfect" (*Tripartite Tractate* 62.30-33). This bestowal of the perfect Thought, the third stage, is, of course, that of the "full and faultlessly perfect" (*Tripartite Tractate* 62.37) Son, who the Father, "caused to appear as a light for those who had come forth from Him, He after whom they are named" (*Tripartite Tractate* 62.34-36). This brings us to the hitherto unmentioned Church.

3.05 Ecclesia and Glory

The innumerable aeons of the Pleroma, which are the myriad attributes of the Father as manifested by the Son, compose the Church (ⲉⲕⲕⲗⲏⲥⲓⲁ / ἐκκλησία) in the *Tripartite Tractate* and the *Gospel of Truth*. The relation of the Ecclesia with the Father and Son is nondual. The Son and the Church, which, from one point of view, are distinct are ultimately identical.[57] This identity is grounded in the unbegotten nature that they share, "for not only the Son existed from the beginning, but also the Church existed from the beginning. Now, he who thinks that the discovery that the Son is an only son contradicts this statement [is wrong] — because of the mystery of the matter this is not so" (*Tripartite Tractate* 57.33-40) This nonduality is encapsulated in the phrase, "the Son is found to be brother to Himself, without generation and without beginning" (*Tripartite Tractate* 58.5-7).[58] Thus, as the Father begets Himself in the Son, and so is "Father to Himself" (*Tripartite Tractate* 58.3-4), the Son is brother to Himself in the Church. For the Father, "admires Himself as Father and glorifies and praises and loves, and it is also He in whom He conceives of Himself as Son, in accordance with the dispositions of 'without beginning' and 'without end'" (*Tripartite Tractate* 58.8-16). The love of the Father for Himself as Son and Church is brought out in the extraordinary symbolism of the kiss (ⲡⲓ):

Being innumerable and immeasurable, His procreations, those who exist, are indivisible (ⲛ̄ⲁⲧⲡⲁⲣⲭⲟⲩ ⲁⲃⲁⲗ). It is in the manner of kisses that they have issued from Him, Son and Father (ⲡⲩⲏⲣⲉ ⲙⲛ̄ ⲡⲓⲱⲧ), by the

56. See *Gospel of Truth* 18.36-19.2 and Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* IV 38.
57. Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.286 finds the same idea in the *Gospel of Truth*: "the living book of the living, written in the Thought and the mind [of the] Father, which from before the foundation of the All was within His incomprehensibility" (*Gospel of Truth* 19.35-20.3), «le Livre des Vivants étant le registre des citoyens du royaume de dieu», trans: "the Book of the Living is the register of the citizens of the kingdom of God".
58. Attridge and Pagels, 'The Tripartite Tractate: I, 5:51.1-138.27', in *Nag Hammadi Codex I (The Jung Codex): Notes*, pp.240-241 are mistaken in thinking that the *Tripartite Tractate* is stressing the Son's superiority to the Church here. In fact, the *Tripartite Tractate* is stressing that the only way to realise the mystery to the Church's existence from the beginning, when nothing else exists besides the only Son from the beginning (*Tripartite Tractate* 57.13-22), is to recognise the nondual identity of the two, which is expressed, uniquely, as the Son's being a brother to Himself.

superabundance of some who embrace[59] one another in a good and
insatiable Thought, the kiss (ϯⲡⲓ) being unique although it consists of many
kisses. This is the Church (ϯⲉⲕⲕⲗⲏⲥⲓⲁ) of many men, which exists before
the aeons, that which is justly called the "aeons of the aeons". This is the
nature of the holy imperishable spirits, upon which the Son rests Himself,
because it is His essence (ⲧⲉϥⲟⲩⲥⲓⲁ), just as it is upon the Son that the
Father rests Himself. [....] the Church exists in the dispositions and the
qualities in which the Father and the Son exist. (*Tripartite Tractate* 58.19-
59.4)[60]

One can see the power of the kiss as a symbol of the unity of spirit (πνεῦμα), for in the
kiss two share the same breath (πνεῦμα). The Hymn to the Son is relevant here, since He
is called, "the spirit of those who breathe" (τὸ πνεῦμα τῶν πνεόντων) (*Tripartite
Tractate* 66.27) and "the assembly of those whom He assembles to Him" (*Tripartite
Tractate* 66.25-26).[61] It also should be noticed that so great is the unity between "Son and
Father" (ⲡϣⲏⲣⲉ ⲙⲛ̄ ⲡⲓⲱⲧ) that they together are referred to as Him.

This spirit/breath symbolism is also used to express the attraction that the aeons feel
towards the unknown Father, which is the result of "a great and powerful inbreathing"
(*Tripartite Tractate* 72.20):

> For the Father, who is on high, they know by His Will, which is the spirit
> which breaths in the All and inspires them to search for the unknown, just
> as someone is moved by a fragrance to search for the reason of its existence,
> because the fragrance of the Father surpasses the unworthy things. [His]
> sweetness plunges the aeons into indescribable pleasure, and it gives them
> the Thought that they should melt themselves with Him who desires that
> they know Him in oneness. (*Tripartite Tractate* 71.36-72.17)

It is the Will of the Father breathing in the All that instills in them the powerful yearning
to mingle with and to know the Father in oneness, and is at the same time part of the
process by which that knowledge is conferred in the manifestation of the All. This breath
is the fragrance of the Father whose sweetness is blissful. Sweetness, as we have already
seen,[62] is closely associated with the Father's superabundance as is the movement of the
Son who is His Thought and Will. It is possible that "the spirit which breathes in the All"
is the third person of the Trinity, though the equivalence is never explicitly made between
the Will of the Father and the Holy Spirit, while it is between the Will and the Son.[63]
Thus we have in this passage an intricate set of symbolic relations, especially in light of
the kiss, where the breath, fragrance and sweetness refer simultaneously to the Father, the

59. Attridge and Pagels, 'The Tripartite Tractate: I, 5:51.1-138.27', in *Nag Hammadi Codex I (The Jung
    Codex): Introductions, Texts, Translations, Indices*, p.203 read "kiss" rather than embrace.
60. For the Platonic background of the intelligible world as indivisible (ἀμέριστος) see Thomassen &
    Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.287. Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.288 finds a
    direct historical link with the "church of many men" here and the texts of the Qumran community, such
    as *1QS* (*The Community Rule*) VI-VII; *CD* (*The Damascus Document*) XIV 7, XV 8; and especially
    1QS (*The Community Rule*) VI 16.
61. The Nag Hammadi text with the strongest relation to the *Tripartite Tractate* here, symbolically and in
    terms of its intention to express the unity and multiplicity of the emanation of the Pleroma, is *Eugnostos*
    NHC III, 3, 81.1-10, "He created angels, myriads without number, for retinue. The whole multitude of
    those angels is called 'Assembly of the Holy Ones, the Shadowless Lights'. Now when they greet each
    other, their kisses become angels like themselves". While the *Gospel of Philip* 59.2-6 says, "it is by a
    kiss that the perfect conceive and give birth. For this reason we also kiss one another. We receive
    conception from the grace which is in one another". The kiss is also a part of the symbolism of the
    Bridal Chamber.
62. Section 3.02 above.
63. See p.150 below regarding *Tripartite Tractate* 125.5-11.

Son, the All and probably the Holy Spirit, in His superabundance. Thus this language of the spirit can also be read from the trinitarian perspective, which we shall find made explicit later in the tractate.[64]

We have seen that the symbolism of the Father as a root with "a trunk, branches and fruit" (*Tripartite Tractate* 51.18-19) is one of the first in the tractate and evokes both the unity and plurality of the Father and His Pleroma. When we meet this motif of the unity of the organism again it is in the context of the superabundant progression of the pleromatic Church, the "true aeon", from the Father:

> the true aeon is single yet many, being glorified by small and by great names according to that which each is able to comprehend; by way of analogy, again, (He is) like a spring which remains what it is while flowing into rivers, lakes, canals and aqueducts; like a root which spreads out into trees and branches with its fruits; like a human body, which is indivisibly divided into members of members, primary members and subordinate ones, into big ones and small ones. (*Tripartite Tractate* 74.1-18)

This is because,

> the emission of the All, which exist out of the one who is, is not provided by way of a cutting off from one another, as if it were a separation from Him who produced them, but their production was in the form of a spreading out, the Father spreading Himself out to those whom He wills, so that those who have come forth from Him might exist as well. (*Tripartite Tractate* 73.18-28)

These passages strongly emphasise the ultimate non-difference between the Father, Son and Church, while presenting the dynamic tension between the absolute being of the Father and the Church's becoming the perfect manifestation of the Father. The Father's spreading of Himself, through the conception of Himself as Son, is the gift of complete existence to the aeons, the members of the Church. Hence they can be called 'those who exist', for all that exists is of the nature of the Father. Once again the Hymn to the Son can be seen to inform these passages, for He is "the body of the bodiless", "the spring which flowed forth from Him, the root of those who are planted, and the god of those who exist" (*Tripartite Tractate* 66.14, 17-19).

The association of the symbolism of the body and its members with that of the root and its limbs is also worth noting. The relation of these symbols will take on their full significance in the light of the *Tripartite Tractate*'s understanding of the sacrament, which we shall consider in Chapter 4.[65]

The recognition of the nonduality of Father, Son and Church takes us back to the beginning of the process of generation to consider it from a different point of view, for the Father's self-manifestation, or self begetting (*Tripartite Tractate* 56.2), as the Son, is a self glorification. This self glorification is very closely linked with the Father's superabundance as we have seen in the quote from *Tripartite Tractate* 56.7-22 above.[66]

Certain passages seem to be referring to the Father's motive for emanating the Pleroma, such as: "and He wanted it to be known because of the richness of His sweetness" (*Tripartite Tractate* 57.26-29). I should emphasise here that these statements must be read with the understanding that it is impossible to make any positive assertion at all about the Father,[67] and that whatever is posited is more a reflection of the capacity of the one

64. See section 4.10 below.
65. See sections 4.10-4.11 below.
66. See pp.66-67 above.
67. See *Tripartite Tractate* 53.39-54.12 above pp.66-67 and *Tripartite Tractate* 65.39-66.5 above p.71.

making the statement than it is of the nature of the unknowable Father. To talk of the Father wanting to do something is to talk about the Father's Will, the Son, for there is no difference, in the noetic realm, between the intention to do something and its being done. Thus the Father's abundant sweetness is His becoming known through His self-manifestation as the Son, and at the same time the Son, being the paternal Will and Thought, is the vehicle of that manifestation. We can see now that in such statements the emphasis should be placed on the Father's superabundance rather than that ascription of motive to the Father.[68]

The process of the manifestation of the Son and the Ecclesia has a double aspect, being at the same time the generation of the aeons and the communication of knowledge of the Father to them. The extension of the Thought of the Father and the education of His myriad offspring is set in motion by the Father's Will, which reaffirms the centrality of the Son to this process:

> And the one whom they think, and the one whom they speak, and the one towards whom they move, and the one in whom they are, and the one whom they hymn, thereby glorifying Him, they have as Son. (*Tripartite Tractate* 64:15-22)

The aeons' generation and their attainment of *gnosis* is their illumination by and knowledge of the Son.[69]

However, as with every feature of the noetic realm, this is neither a linear nor a one-way development. Since the aeons are themselves the qualities of the Father about which they are gaining knowledge, emanation, and the knowledge of the Son it confers is also a process of self knowledge on the part of the aeons. To add even further complexity and, it seems, to emphasise the nonduality of Father, Son and Church, the *Tripartite Tractate* also characterises this unfoldment in terms of the generation of the Son by the aeons:

> For He whom they glorify they begot. For they have knowledge and understanding, and they realised that it was from the knowledge and the understanding of the All that they had come forth. (*Tripartite Tractate* 68.10-16)

The glorification of the Father and the fruit it produces is divided into three aspects, just as the Pleroma is traditionally divided into three; the ogdoad, the decad and the duodecad.[70] But, just as the Pleroma is a unity, so too the three glorifications and their fruits are not separate events. The Fruit is both Son and All, their mutual manifestation being ultimately a self-manifestation, just as the glorification is ultimately the self glorification of the Father. The fruit is also *gnosis*. It is through glorifying the Father that the aeons come to know Him in the Son, which is the same as their manifesting Him. Thus the Son is at the

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68. For a contrasting view see J. Pépin 'Theories of Procession in Plotinus and the Gnostics' who, relying on a single statement made by Hippolytus (*Refutatio Omnuim Haeresium* VI. 24) to the effect that the Father was "not fond" of His original state of solitude and so "projected and produced Nous and Aletheia", incorrectly ascribes some kind of deficiency to the Father, which he then contrasts with the teaching of Plotinus. But see also, in the same volume, C. L. Hancock's excellent paper, 'Negative Theology in Gnosticism and Neoplatonism', who demonstrates the compatibility of the negative theology of the Valentinians and the Sethians with that of Plotinus, including the specific formulations that the "One/Father is absolutely without need" and that the "One/Father is undiminished in production" pp.169-178.

69. See Thomassen, 'The Structure of the Transcendent World in the Tripartite Tractate (NHC I, 5)', pp.364-366.

70. See Macdermot, 'The Concept of Pleroma in Gnosticism', p.77.

same time that which knows, the knowing itself and the object known;[71] He is the means by which the All come to know the Father, the self revelation of the Father, and the knowledge of the Father; as the Gospel of John puts it, "Jesus saith to him, I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no man cometh to the Father, but by me. If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him" (John 14:6–7).

> The identity of the knower and the known which characterizes the paternal mind is not dissolved by the generation of the mental substance as an autonomous subject. Even though the aeons become independent minds they still are the substance of the Father's mind; and even though the motive behind their generation was the Father's desire to be known by a subject independent of Himself, their knowledge of Him is still also in a sense the Father's knowledge of Himself.
>
> The mind of the Father thus exists on two levels, or runs through two stages, which apparently correspond to the two formations. At the level of the Father there is a positive identity of knower and known, oneness and multiplicity. At the level of the Son this has been evolved into what we, using a modern term, may well call a dialectical identity: Subject and object, oneness and multiplicity are distinct and identical at the same time.[72]

This is not different from the Plotinian characterization of the vision of the noetic realm in *Ennead* 6.9.10:

> In our self-seeing There, the self is seen as belonging to that order, or rather we are merged into that self in us which has the quality of that order. It is a knowing of the self restored to its purity. No doubt we should not speak of seeing; but we cannot help talking in dualities, seen and seer, instead of, boldly, the achievement of unity. In this seeing, we neither hold an object nor trace distinction; there is no two. The man is changed, no longer himself nor self-belonging; he is merged with the Supreme, sunken into it, one with it: centre coincides with centre, for centres of circles, even here below, are one when they unite, and two when they separate; and it is in this sense that we now (after the vision) speak of the Supreme as separate. This is why the vision baffles telling; we cannot detach the Supreme to stare it; if we have seen something thus detached we have failed of the Supreme which is to be known only as one with ourselves.[73]

71. Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.303, «À l'instar de la Pensée du Père, l'activité intellectuelle des éons, dans leur état de formation parfaite, implique l'identité du sujet, du procès et de l'objet, identité qui est fournie par le Fils, lequel est à la fois leur aptitude intrinsèque à concevoir, ou à glorifier, le bénéficiaire de leur glorification, et la glorification elle-même. Il n'y a donc aucune incompatibilité entre représenter le Fils comme le révélateur et l'illuminateur qui fournit cette aptitude à la glorification aussi bien qu'un objet vers ou la diriger (62.33ss), et le représenter comme le produit de cette glorification». Trans: "Just as with the Thought of the Father himself, the intellectual activity of the aeons in their state of perfect formation implies identity of subject, act and object, and this identity is provided by the Son, who is both the capacity within them to conceive, or glorify, the recipient of their glorification, and the glorification itself. There is thus no contradiction between the representation of the Son as the revealer and illuminator who provides this capacity for glorification, and an object towards which to direct it (62.33ff), and as the outcome of the glorification".
72. Thomassen, 'The Structure of the Transcendent World in the Tripartite Tractate (NHC I, 5)', p.367.
73. MacKenna's translation.

What is so important about this passage is the formulation of the relationship There as "no two". This is probably the most explicit statement of nonduality, not-twoness, recorded in late antiquity. It is even repeated several lines later,

> There were not two (ἐπεὶ τοίνυν δύο οὐκ ἦν); beholder was one with beheld; it was not a vision compassed but a unity apprehended. The man formed by this mingling with the Supreme ... is become the Unity, nothing within him or without inducing any diversity; no movement now, no passion, no outlooking desire, once his ascent is achieved. ... utterly resting he has become rest. (*Ennead* 6.9.11)[74]

Clarity demands that each aspect of the Glorification be looked at as though it were a separate act. The first glorification and the perfect "first-fruit" (ⲉⲟⲩⲁⲡⲁⲣⲭⲏ / ἀπαρχή)[75] (*Tripartite Tractate* 69.3) that it produces, namely the Son, concerns the unitary aspect of the Pleroma. Though a multitude the All is a unity. It is only by their united hymning of the Father that they are able to make, "a glorification that was worthy of the Father by the Pleroma of the assembly" (*Tripartite Tractate* 68.29-31):

> Through the singing of hymns of glorification and through the power of the unity of Him from whom they had issued they were drawn into a mutual intermingling, reunion and a unity. (*Tripartite Tractate* 68.22-28)

It is through their mutual glorification that the All is united. These two elements of the first glorification are brought together in the symbolism of the hymn. The silent[76] hymnody of the aeons in the loving glorification of the Father, through which they beget Him as Son, captures the unitive and harmonious nature of the Pleroma as perceived within Valentinian theology. This united hymning of the myriad qualities of the Father, according to His Will, manifests Him in the Son, who is "the word of the unutterable" and "the unity of those who are united" (*Tripartite Tractate* 66.15-16, 28-29). As a symbol of the nondual unity in multiplicity of the Church hymnody has no real match, for it incorporates all of its essential attributes: the harmonious manifestation of the single-minded glorification of God. Its beauty also lies in the very concreteness of the liturgical practice of singing hymns. The hymn was integral to the Christian rite even before the gospels were written. The use of symbolism that works on all levels at once is a hallmark of Valentinian theology. This Glory is, paradoxically, "a tribute from the [aeons] to He who brought forth the All" (*Tripartite Tractate* 69.1-2) who is Himself the All (*Tripartite Tractate* 68.18-19; 35-36). The perfection and fullness of the ἀπαρχή is particularly emphasised:

> it was a first-fruit of the immortals and eternal, because when it came forth from the living aeons, it left them perfect and full because of the one who is perfect and full, since they were full and perfect, having rendered glory in a perfect way through communion. (*Tripartite Tractate* 69.3-9)

The second glorification concerns the manifestation of the All in their perfection. Here, the Father "returns the glory to those who glorify [Him]", and in so doing confers on them their true existence. As has already been said the Father's manifestation of the All is at the same time the granting of *gnosis*:

74. MacKenna's translation. Greek text from *Plotinus*, ed. by Armstrong vol. VII p.340.
75. See Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.315 for the combination of Pauline (1 Corinthians 15:20) and Judaic (*Psalms of Solomon* 15.5) uses of ἀπαρχή here. For Paul the first-fruit is the beginning of salvation by the Holy Spirit, the fulfilment of which is the redemption of resurrection, see Dunn, 'Spirit and Holy Spirit in the New Testament', pp.14.
76. *Tripartite Tractate* 63.17-33.

> when they understood the favour by which they had borne fruit through the
> grace of the Father for one another, so that just as they had been brought
> forth to render glory to the Father, so also in order that they should be
> revealed as perfect they were manifested as producing through glorification.
> (*Tripartite Tractate* 69.17-24)

The third glorification concerns the autonomy (ⲀⲨⲦⲈⲜⲞⲨⲤⲒⲞⲤ / αὐτεξούσιος)
(*Tripartite Tractate* 69.26), the free will, of the aeons.[77]

> The fruit (καρπός) of the third, however, is glorification by the will of each
> one of the aeons and of each one of the qualities of the Father and of His
> powers. (*Tripartite Tractate* 69.37-42)

Were each aeon not capable of autonomous action the united action of the All could not be
said to manifest the Father's Will, which is of course the Son. As Thomassen observes:

> It is clear that the three glorifications are not separate acts but indicate
> dialectically identical aspects of this process: Knowledge of the Father,
> knowledge of oneself as cosubstantial with the Father and the realisation of
> one's individual autonomy are one.[78]

Along with autonomy, wisdom (σοφία) is conferred to the aeons in the third fruit.
Thomassen takes this to be the classical cardinal virtue of Prudence (φρόνησις), which
allows the aeons the discrimination to apply their freedom for the good. It is also
receptivity to instruction that enables one to turn to a higher level of *gnosis*, to ascend to
and be reborn by it.[79] One can detect the trinitarian structure of the three glorifications.
The first glorification is of the undifferentiated Father, the second is of manifestation of
and as the Son, the third is of the inbreathing of the Holy Spirit, the which confers the
ability to deny Truth and simultaneously provides the gracious return to the Father for
those who recognise, affirm and orient themselves towards the Truth.

The striving towards ever higher levels of *gnosis* is a fundamental aspect of the
Pleroma, and more generally of existence, as understood by Valentinian theology. The
'rite' that embodies this process of spiritual development is the sacred marriage; a
conjunction (σύζυγος) between the soul and a higher power. This relationship is found at
all levels of existence: between aeons within the Pleroma, between the Saviour and the
logos and even between members of the cosmic church, and reinforces the constant
emphasis placed on grace (χάρις) in Valentinian writings. Ultimately it is not through
good works that one attains perfection, but through union with one's consort (σύζυγος).
Though this is not to say that spiritual works must not be done, for the *Treatise on the
Resurrection* clearly states that, "It is right for each one to practice (ⲀⲤⲔⲈⲒⲚ / ἀσκεῖν) in
a number of ways, and he shall be released from this element so that he may not fall into
error (ⲠⲖⲀⲚⲀ / πλάνη) but shall himself receive again what at first was" (*Treatise on the
Resurrection* 49.30-36),[80] while at the same time warning against the erroneous view held

77. See Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.317.
78. 'The Structure of the Transcendent World in the Tripartite Tractate (NHC I, 5)' p.369. Thomassen adds
      a very important footnote to this comment, even though it is couched in terms of the intentional fallacy:
      "The author's point is that free will is the necessary implication of the Father's desire to emanate, and
      the tractate itself is a conscious effort to transcend the antinomy of divine omnipotence and human free
      will". On this subject see also, W. A. Löhr, 'Gnostic Determinism Reconsidered'.
79. Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, pp.325-326.
80. See Peel, *The Epistle to Rheginos: A Valentinian Letter on the Resurrection: Introduction, translation,
      analysis and exposition*, pp.132-133 for further consideration of ἀσκεῖν in the *Treatise on the
      Resurrection*.

by the "philosopher" that he is "a man who returns himself by himself" (*Treatise on the Resurrection* 46.10-14) without faith (πίστις), or, presumably, the Grace (χάρις) of the Saviour who "swallowed up death" (*Treatise on the Resurrection* 45.13-15).[81] This is a fundamentally Christian stance; one which most clearly distinguishes Valentinian Christianity from the Platonism upon which it draws so heavily and fruitfully.

While the relation does operate at all levels of existence, the *Tripartite Tractate* contents itself with a description of the nature of syzygy at its most real: the pleromatic level. The aeon who is ready to ascend to the next station, cannot do so without help from a superior "brother":

> Without one who resides in the superior name and in the superior station he does not receive that which he desires. Then this one rises above himself to a superior level. And he begets himself, as it were, himself and by his intermediary, he begets himself with the latter and he renews himself with that which has come to him from his brother; and he sees him and entreats him about this thing: that to which he has desired to ascend. (*Tripartite Tractate* 74.35-75.10)[82]

It is significant that the aeon that descends is always the last member of the dodecad, the expression of the third glorification, and that it acts without its consort, for it is at this point that the division of the Pleroma becomes possible, where its unity-in-multiplicity can lose its integrity. This brings us to the autonomous act of the youngest aeon and the subsequent movement away from unity and into multiplicity. This is also a movement away from the atemporality of the *Tripartite Tractate*'s protology to the cosmological arena of the economy of salvation.

3.06 The Passion of the *Logos* and the Creation of the Cosmos

The name given to the youngest aeon, in Valentinian sources, is usually Sophia (σοφία 'wisdom'), however in the *Tripartite Tractate* this aeon is called a *logos* (ⲗⲟⲅⲟⲥ / λόγος 'word').[83] This difference need not concern us here, *logos* and Sophia play the same part

81. In his *Sin in Valentinianism* Desjardins, although also caught in the intentional fallacy, clearly demonstrates that Valentinian theology was very concerned with correct, sinless action in the world (p.116). "Sin in Valentinianism refers to a human act or thought not in harmony with the supreme God or Father. This view of sin is implied in the patristic sources and it is stated forcefully in the works from Nag Hammadi, where Christians are exhorted constantly to 'do the Father's Will'. Moreover, ... the ethical directives of the Sermon on the Mount are often noted explicitly. This suggests that Valentinians were extremely concerned about acting and thinking correctly. Ethical indifference definitely is not a feature of Valentinianism" (p.118). He shows that the Valentinian attitude towards sin, "is essentially Pauline. Paul often argues that salvation is not based on works, but insists at the same time that the Christian who is truly 'in Christ' will live in accordance to God's law. ... Some Christians, then, may have argued that *gnosis* allowed them to do as they pleased (and there are hints of this already in 1 Corinthians), but the Valentinians were not among them. They insisted that the Father would reward only those who followed his Will.

    "The crucial question for the Valentinians is how to stop sinning. They claimed that outside help is required. The Son's descent brings *gnosis* to those able to receive it, thereby revealing the Father's Will. Without this knowledge a sinless existence is not possible. Equally important, though, are the salvific rites instituted by the Son, notably the baptism(s)" (pp.119-120). This view is of course caught in the intentional fallacy, but Desjardins's findings apply equally to the world of the Valentinian texts.
82. See Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, pp.326-327.
83. I have chosen not to capitalise the first letter of *logos* when referring to this aeon called by that designation as a reminder that it is not *the Logos* of the prologue to the Gospel of John and the *Gospel of Truth*, which, I will argue later has a place in the theology of the *Tripartite Tractate*.

in the drama, and for our purposes will be treated as identical.[84]

The third fruit, being the gift of the free will to the aeons, is fundamental to the error of the *logos*/Sophia in the Valentinian world view:

> For the autonomous will which was produced with the All was a cause for this one [the *logos*] to do what he wished with nothing restraining him. (*Tripartite Tractate* 75.35-76.2)[85]

That action was to, "rush forward in order to glorify the Father" (*Tripartite Tractate* 76.5-6), for "he acted high-mindedly, out of an overflowing love" (*Tripartite Tractate* 76.19-21). The error of this "presumptuous glorification"[86] is not in the attempt to acquire perfect knowledge itself, so much as the, "unguided, independent and premature" nature of that attempt.[87] It is a misuse of will, which should be directed towards the mutual and united glorification of the Father by the aeons. The correct use of autonomy is in fact faith (πίστις) the end of which is *gnosis*.[88] This statement will strike to modern reader as strange. This is because, since the Middle Ages the original meaning of faith (greek: πίστις, Latin: *credo*) has been obscured and it has come to be equated with belief, as Wilfred Cantwell Smith has so eloquently shown in his book, *Faith and Belief: The Difference Between Them*. Faith was understood in the early Christian world not as an act in which the mind plays the dominant role and one thinks that something is true, rather it is primarily an act of will in which one commits oneself to a certain way of being in the world.[89] Cantwell Smith traces the meaning of faith to, "to set one's heart on".[90] Faith, then, is a specific orientation of being-towards, of *Dasein*.

While the united glorification of the Pleroma manifests the Father as Son, the individual

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84. The choice of word used will depend on which text is being considered at the time. Perkins in her 'Logos Christologies in The Nag Hammadi Codices', p.380, has overstated the case in her argument that the *Tripartite Tractate* represents a *logos* tradition that is independent of the other Nag Hammadi texts. She has minimised the very strong links between the Valentinian writings of Nag Hammadi, including the direct contact of the *Tripartite Tractate* with the *Gospel of Truth* see Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, pp.292 and 352. Her main mistake seems to be her reading of the aeon which is simply called "a *logos*" as *the Logos*, but, as we shall see, the *Tripartite Tractate* hints at the Son being the true *Logos*, which is in total agreement with the *Gospel of Truth*.

85. See Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.330 for further references to Sophia's free will in Valentinian texts.

86. Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.328 «glorification présomptueuse».

87. Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p329. See also p.331 for the regular distinction made between the aeon's αὐτεξούσιον ('free power') which caused the descent and its προαίρεσις (intention) which did not.

88. Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p321: «il est intéressant de remarquer que la foi est vue comme un processus dont le but est la *gnose*, est comme une préparation indispensable conçue par la pédagogie divine en vue d'atteindre à la gnose, et non comme quelqun chose en soi limité par opposition à la gnose. En outre, l'autonomie individuelle, dont l'utilisation correcte est la foi, n'est pas une charactéristique des natures inférieures». Trans: "It is interesting to remark that faith is conceived as a process whose terminus is *gnosis*, and as an indispensable preparation designed by the divine pedagogy for the attainment of gnosis, and not as something which is limited through opposition to *gnosis*. Similarly, individual autonomy, the proper use of which is faith, is not a characteristic of inferior natures".

89. It was Thomas Aquinas who first emphasised the role of the intellect over that of will in Faith, Smith, *Faith and Belief*, p.79.

90. Smith, *Faith and Belief*, p.76. In his extensive notes he shows that the creeds, which originally arose as performative statements in baptism, had at first, as in the 'Apostle's Creed', no finite verbs, "Even those who might strive to translate πιστευω or *credo* here by 'I believe' are confronted with the fact that its object is in no instance a proposition" (p.255 note 29). This only began to alter as the creeds were subsequently used doctrinally for, "specifying orthodoxy and excluding heresy" and in exorcisms (p.256 note 29).

action of one of the aeons can only manifest an inferior image of the Pleroma. Thomassen notes that σοφία (wisdom) and will are regularly associated in the *Tripartite Tractate*, wisdom being, of course, the soul's ability to distinguish between good and evil, and hence to make the correct use of autonomy.[91]

The incorrect use of autonomy is often expressed in terms of the youngest aeon's acting without its syzygos.[92] In the *Valentinian Exposition*, Sophia is said to, "cut herself off from her consort (ⲡⲉⲥⲥⲩⲍⲩ[ⲅⲟⲥ]· / σύζυγος)" (*Valentinian Exposition* 34.38) and that, "she dwells in herself alone without her consort" (*Valentinian Exposition* 36.36-38). The *Apocryphon of John*, drawing on the same tradition, states:

> And the Sophia of the Epinoia, being an aeon, conceived a thought from herself and the conception of the invisible Spirit and foreknowledge. She wanted to bring forth a likeness out of herself without the consent of the Spirit, — he had not approved — and without her consort (ⲡⲉⲥⲥⲩⲛⲍⲩⲅⲟⲥ/σύνζυγος), and without his consideration. And though the person of her maleness had not approved, and she had not found her agreement, and she had thought without the consent of the Spirit and the knowledge of her agreement, (yet) she brought forth. (*Apocryphon of John* II 9.25-35, III 14.10-15.2, BG 36.16-37.10)

The attempt to grasp the unknowable is, as we have seen, at one and the same time the attempt to manifest it.

Of all of the Valentinian systems of which we have knowledge the *Tripartite Tractate* offers the most optimistic view of the descent. This is not to say, however, that it is incompatible with the others, which are not as pessimistic as the first generation of scholars made them out to be.[93]

The *Tripartite Tractate* emphasises the necessity of the downward movement of the *logos*.

> And before he had yet brought forth anything to the glory of the Will (of the Father) and in union with the All, he acted highmindedly, out of an overflowing love (ⲟⲩⲁⲅⲁⲡⲏ), (and) rushed forwards towards that which is found in the sphere of the perfect glory. For it is not without the Will of the Father that this *logos* was produced, nor was it without it that he should rush

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91. See *Tripartite Tractate* 71.33-35; 74.22-23; 75.26-35. Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.321: «Quoi qu'il en soit, le TracTri ... apporte une explication à l'association qu'on y trouve des concepts de σοφία et de volonté: elles constituent toutes deux, en psychologie philosophique, des caractéristiques essentielles de l'âme, à laquelle elles accordent une position neutre entre le bien et le mal, de même que la capacité de choisir entre eux, de façon à se tourner vers la connaissance supérieure, ou vers les passions et la matière inférieure.

   «Par conséquent, a moins de trouver une autre interprétation plausible de l'association entre Sophia et la volonté, il semble que nous devrons tenir compte de l'emploi que fait le TracTri de ces termes, pour interpréter les textes, même ceux où Sophia apparait comme une entité mythologique».

   Trans: "The *Tripartite Tractate* provides a comprehensible reason for combining the concepts of σοφία and will: both are, in philosophical psychology, essential characteristics of the soul, placing it in a neutral position between good and evil, enabling it to choose one or the other, to turn to superior knowledge, or to the passions and inferior matter.

   "Consequently, unless some plausible alternative interpretation can be found for the association of Sophia and volition in these texts, the *Tripartite Tractate*'s usage of these terms will have to be taken into account in the interpretation even of those texts where Sophia appears as a mythological entity".

92. See Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* I 2.2, 14.2; Clement, *Excerpta ex Theodoto* 32.1.

93. See Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism"*, chapter 5. The explicit rejection of the pessimistic position in *Tripartite Tractate* 77.6-7 must be taken seriously, not only for the *Tripartite Tractate* but also in relation to the wider body of Valentinian texts. Another way of saying this is that they manifest the same being in the world.

forward, but on the contrary the Father had brought him forth for those
things which he knows must of necessity take place—for the Father and the
All withdrew from him, in order that the boundary ({ⲁ}ⲡ2ⲟⲣⲟⲥ) which the
Father had fixed should become firm; for it (the *logos*) is not a being issued
from the unattainability, but by the Will of the Father — and also in order
that the things which took place should take place for an economy
(ⲁⲩⲟⲓⲕⲟⲛⲟⲙⲓⲁ), — for it was not right that it did not exist in the
manifestation of the Pleroma. Because of this it is not right to condemn the
movement which is the *logos*, but it is right that we should speak of the
movement of the *logos* as a cause of an economy which has been ordained
to take place. (*Tripartite Tractate* 76.16-77.11)

The production and rushing forward of the *logos* are here closely related to the Will of the
Father. This relation has two primary aspects. Firstly, "it is not without the Will of the
Father that this *logos* was produced" since the Son, as the Father's Will, is the generative
principle. All that is, flows from the Son.[94] Secondly, as we have just seen, the third
Glorification, being the mutual manifestation of the Son and the All, entails the free will of
each of the aeons. The nature of the Son as Will of the Father necessarily includes free
will.[95] However, this passage goes further than that and states that, "the Father had
brought him forth for those things which he knows must of necessity take place". The
very purpose of the *logos* was to rush highmindedly forward and to bring about the
consolidation of the limit or boundary, the *horos* (2ⲟⲣⲟⲥ / ὅρος), of the Pleroma and the
economy (οἰκονομία) of the extra-pleromatic world.[96]

Thomassen states that οἰκονομία,

> fait ici référence au projet du Père de conduire progressivement le Plérôme
> à la gnose parfaite, et il s'applique particulièrement au monde psychique
> dont la création constitue une étape essentielle dans la réalisation de ce
> projet. L'utilisation du terme «économie» pour désigner le monde
> psychique constitue la plus commune parmi ses nombreuses applications
> dans le valentinisme.[97]

94. See the *Gospel of Truth* 37.22-24.
95. Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.334 notes that in Middle Platonism these two aspects
are considered two distinct, and not entirely compatible, theories of the descent of the soul.
96. For the movement of the *logos* as the "first departure ... from the rest or stability of the aeonic realm"
see Williams *The Immovable Race*, p.118. For the close relation of this notion with the τόλμα of
Plotinus see Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, pp.332-333.
97. Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.334. Trans: "here refers to the Father's design to
progressively conduct the Pleroma to perfect *gnosis*, and its application particularly to the psychic
world, of which the creation constitutes an essential stage in the realisation of this design. The
utilisation of the term 'economy' to designate the psychic world constitutes the most common of its
various applications in Valentinianism".
    This use of οἰκονομία surely is founded in Ephesians, where the Father is said to have "made
known (γνωρίσας) to us the mystery (μυστήριον) of his Will (θελήματος αὐτοῦ)" (1:9), namely,
"That in the dispensation (οἰκονομίαν) of the fulness (πληρώματος) of times he might gather together
in one all things in Christ (τὰ πάντα ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ), both which are in heaven, and which are on
earth; [even] in Him" (Ephesians 1:10). And also Colossians 1:24–27, in which Paul declares that he
has been made a minister of His [Christ's] body, the Church (ἐκκλησία), "according to the
dispensation of God (οἰκονομίαν τοῦ θεοῦ) which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God
(πληρῶσαι τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ); [Even] the mystery (μυστήριον) which hath been hid from ages
(αἰώνων) and from generations, but now is revealed to his saints: To whom God would make known
(γνωρίσαι) what [is] the riches of the glory (τὸ πλοῦτος τῆς δόξης) of this mystery among the
Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory (ἡ ἐλπὶς τῆς δόξης·)". For a survey of the uses of
οἰκονομία in the New Testament and in classical Greek, see Blaz & Schneider, *The Exegetical
Dictionary of the New Testament*, II, pp.498-500.

The *horos* is to be found in all Valentinian texts, where it is emphasised to a greater extent, as in the case of the *Valentinian Exposition*, or lesser extent, as here in the *Tripartite Tractate*. The *horos* generally has two basic functions or powers (δύναμις),[98] both of which are referred to here: the separating of the Pleroma from what is inferior to it, and its fortification.[99] Little is made of the *horos* in the *Tripartite Tractate* primarily because its two main powers are encompassed by the Son, whose "firmness" (ⲧⲁϪⲢⲟ / στήριγμα) provides the necessary containment of the movement towards infinity by the Pleroma:[100] "it is he who has given firmness (ⲚⲚⲞⲨⲦⲀϪⲢⲞ) and a place (ⲞⲨⲦⲞⲠⲞⲤ) and a dwelling place to the All" (*Tripartite Tractate* 65.7-9).

In most Valentinian sources, such as those described by Irenaeus and Hippolytus, the perfection of the Pleroma is completed by the return to it of the higher Sophia, as Thomassen puts it, "de sort que se complète la version archétype et première de l'histoire du salut".[101] However the nature of the Pleroma in the *Tripartite Tractate* is far more dynamic, and its goal of perfection cannot be said to be fully attained until the return and restoration of all things. In this way the fate of the intellectual Church cannot ultimately be differentiated from that of the cosmic Church. This relation is also to be found in the *Gospel of Truth* where reference is constantly made to the noetic and cosmic spheres simultaneously.

One, very interesting, word in this passage that, to my knowledge, has received no attention is "love" (ⲀⲄⲀⲠⲎ / ἀγάπη): "he acted highmindedly, out of an overflowing love (ⲞⲨⲀⲄⲀⲠⲎ)" (*Tripartite Tractate* 76.19-20). Though ἀγάπη is a Pauline term, its link here with the downward movement of the soul, and subsequent creation of the extra-noetic cosmos, seems much more akin to the generative aspect of the Platonic ἔρως.[102] This, again, fits with the positive valuation of the descent of the soul as necessary. The Platonists recognised two aspects of love, described in the *Symposium* (180d) as the two Aphrodites, the first contemplates and glorifies the One, the second recreates that beauty in material form. Both are pure and necessary, their mutual end being to glorify and express the superabundance of the One. Everything is brought into being, and ultimately

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98. The *Valentinian Exposition* (26.31-34 and 27.30-37) attributes four powers to the *horos*, see Attridge and Pagels, 'The Tripartite Tractate: I, 5:51.1-138.27', in *Nag Hammadi Codex I (The Jung Codex): Notes*, p.298. «l'ExpVal ... lui attribue un rôle sotériologique plus global, dans une opposition consciente à d'autres interprétations». Trans: "The *Valentinian Exposition* attributes to it a more comprehensive soteriological role, in conscious opposition to other interpretations". Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.328.

99. See Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.335. Williams *The Immovable Race*, p.128 "Some versions of the Sophia myth in Valentinian sources also illustrate the equation of immovability with absence of passion. In Irenaeus's account of what is apparently Ptolemaic Valentinianism (*Adv. haer.* I 1.1-8.6), the 'rushing forth' of Sophia and the resultant breaking out of passion is halted by Horos or Limit, who finally separates Sophia from her passion and 'firmly establishes' (*stērizein*) her (1.2.2ff). Horos has two functions, that of making stable and that of dividing; insofar as he makes stable and establishes (*hedrazei kai stērizei*) he is called Cross, and insofar as he divides and separates, he is called Horos (l.3.5). The pair Christ and Holy Spirit are also brought forward for the 'fixing' and 'establishing' (*eis pēxin kai stērigmon*) of all the aeons, so that they will not be in danger of experiencing Sophia's passion (1.2.5). Holy Spirit brings in the 'true rest' (*tēn alethinēn anapausin*), and everything is firmly established (*stērichthenta*) and perfectly at rest (*anapausamena teleōs*). This 'fixing' function assigned to Christ and the Holy Spirit is also found in ApocryJn, where the whole aeonic realm is said to have been 'firmly fixed' (*tajro*) by the Will of the Holy Spirit, through the Selfbegotten, i.e., Christ (II 8,25-28 par)". For a treatment of the relation between the cross at the crucifiction and the 'Limit', Horos, see Painchaud, 'Le Christ Vainqueur de la Mort dans *L'Évangile Selon Philippe*: Une Exégèse Valentinienne de Matt. 27:46', pp.388-391.

100. See Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite* p.305.

101. Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite* p.332, Trans: "so that the first and archetypal version of the salvation history is brought to completion".

102. But we shall see at section 4.11 below, its end, the redemption of the incarnation is entirely agapastic.

everything returns to its source through the love of Beauty. It is not difficult to discern the contemplative love in the hymning glorification of the Father by the All: "the entire system of the aeons yearns and seeks after the complete and perfect discovery of the Father, and this is their blameless union" (*Tripartite Tractate* 71.7-12). Similarly generative love is evident in the passionate movement of the *logos*, which, though initially directed towards the Father, because of its nature results in the creation of "shadows and likenesses" of the Pleroma.[103]

> ... those things which he (the *logos*) desired to grasp and attain he brought forth as shadows [and] likenesses and imitations. For he could not bear the vision of the light, but he looked into the depths. He faltered. Out of this he suffered a division and a turning (ОΥΡΙΚΕ). Out of the faltering and the division <arose> oblivion (ОῩΒѠЕ) and ignorance (ОΥΜΝ̄ТАТ·ϹАΥΝΕ) of himself and <of that> which is. For his raising himself upwards and his expectation to attain the unattainable became firm for him; he was in it. But the sickness which ensued after he had become beside himself, arose from his faltering, that is, his failure to approach the glories of the Father, He whose exaltedness is without end. That, however, he did not attain, because he could not contain him. (*Tripartite Tractate* 77.15-36)

This passage is a good example of the *Tripartite Tractate*'s use of both symbolic and metaphysical (philosophical) language, both *mythos* and *logos*, to reveal the same truth, but for which one of them alone would be insufficient in some way. The symbolic language here is that of light, sight and movement: because he is unable to sustain the light the *logos* looked down into the depths (ΒΑΘΟϹ / βάθος) upon doing so he suffered a turning (νεῦσις or ῥοπή) and brought forth shadows, likenesses and imitations of the Pleroma. The metaphysical language is that of failure, faltering, division and ignorance: upon failing to attain the unattainable the *logos* discovers the impossibility of his intention, falters (lit: is of 'two hearts/minds' ϹΝΕΥ ΑΒΑΛ)[104] and suffers the sickness of division. The part of him subject to passion and afflicted with ignorance (ἄγνοια / ἀγνωσία) and oblivion (λήθη)[105] is separated from that in him which is perfect. He is beside himself.

Williams links the inability of the *logos* to sustain the light with the nature of the third glorification:

> Because of free will it is theoretically possible for only one of the properties to attempt its own, limited glorification of the Father. The myth presented by the author portrays exactly that kind of event. There is an attempt by one of the aeons — the *logos* — to grasp on its own the essence of the Father (75.17ff). But since it is impossible for the Father to be comprehended by any *one* of his properties, the *logos* is successful only in begetting himself.
>
> What is being conveyed by this portion of the myth is an important presupposition about attempts to attain to knowledge of the highest God, a presupposition which the *Tripartite Tractate* shares with many other gnostic texts, including the *Apocryphon of John*: The message is that any given description of the Father involving only one (or a few) of his aspects can be

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103. See Edwards, 'Gnostic Eros and Orphic Themes', p.35, "Two kinds of love are distinguished in the *Symposium*: if a soul inspired by the Uranian Aphrodite seeks a 'begetting in the beautiful' (*Symposium* 206 c), the offspring of the Pandemic Aphrodite will be entirely devoid of beauty, being conceived without any knowledge or suspicion of the ideal (cf. Xenophon, *Symposium* VIII.9-10)". See also his 'The Tale of Cupid and Psyche', section *V Gnostic and Valentinian Parallels* pp.87-92.

104. Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.337.

105. Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.342.

successful in grasping only that single attribute, while a true grasp of the Father is actually beyond reach, since his attributes are infinite. Therefore, while the *logos* brings *himself* forth as a perfect "single one" (77.12ff), everything else which he sought to grasp is brought forth in inferior shadows and imitations (77.15-17). [106]

As Thomassen[107] notes *Tripartite Tractate* 77.15-36 is closest to Plotinus's account of the descent of the soul and the creation of matter in *Ennead* III 9.3.9-13:

> The partial Soul is illuminated by moving towards the Soul above it; for on that path it meets Authentic Existence. Movement towards the lower is towards non-Being: and this is the step it takes when it is set on self; for by willing towards itself it produces its lower, an image of itself- a non-Being- and so is wandering, as it were, into the void, stripping itself of its own determined form. And this image, this undetermined thing, is blank darkness, for it is utterly without reason, untouched by the Intellectual-Principle, far removed from Authentic Being.
>
> As long as it remains at the mid-stage it is in its own peculiar region; but when, by a sort of inferior orientation, it looks downward, it shapes that lower image and flings itself joyfully thither.[108]

Thomassen continues:

> L'égo-centrisme de la volonté en tant que cause du mouvement, l'inclination vers le bas, la création d'images en tant que principe matériel du cosmos, l'identification de la descente dans la matière avec la création même de matière, tous ces éléments appartiennent à la fois aux récits plotinien et valentinien de la chute, ce qui démontre qu'ils puisent touts aux mêmes sources moyen-platoniciennes.[109]

The division of the youngest aeon is another hallmark of Valentinianism.[110] In many systems it is the *horos* that divides the two aspects of Sophia.[111] However, in the *Tripartite Tractate* it is the very nature of the passion itself that produces the division.[112]

Having suffered this division, the higher, perfect part of the *logos* abandons his lower deficient part and its unreal products. He,

> hastened upwards to that which was his, and to his kin in the Pleroma, and he abandoned that which had come into being by the deficiency (ΠϢΤΑ = ὑστέρημα) — those things which had come forth from him as an illusion (ΝΟΥϕΑΝΤΑϹΙΑ) — as not belonging to him.(*Tripartite Tractate* 78.2-8)[113]

106. Williams *The Immovable Race*, p.117.
107. Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, pp.339-340.
108. Trans. by MacKenna. See also *Ennead* V 2.1.18-21.
109. Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.340. Trans: "The egocentrism of the will as the cause of the movement, the inclination downwards, the subsequent creation of images as the material principle of the cosmos, the identification of the descent into matter with the actual creation of matter, all these elements are shared between the Plotinian and the Valentinian accounts of the fall, indicating a common Middle-Platonic source".
110. See Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* I 2.3, 4.2, 11.1; Clement, *Excerpta ex Theodoto* 32-33.
111. Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* I 2.4, 5, 4.1.
112. Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.338.
113. Following Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.117.

There he works, with his fellow aeons, to help the perfection and return of the lower *logos*. The opposing movements of the higher and lower *logos* clearly illustrate the nature of the route that the soul must take on its journey into matter and its subsequent return to the Pleroma. All of which is necessary and according to the Will of the Father. The inclination downwards and sinking (ῥοπή) of the lower *logos* is contrasted with the hastening upwards (ⲡⲱⲧ ⲁⲧⲡⲉ = σπεύδειν or φεύγειν) of the higher *logos*.[114] Upon its ascent the higher *logos* gains wisdom, for the recollection of one's origin and true being is the very meaning of the conversion and return to the Pleroma.[115]

Deficiency (ὑστέρημα) is a technical term in Valentinian theology. K. N. Booth has shown that it at once refers to "Sophia herself", "to the material universe outside the Pleroma", and to "man's deficiency and suffering ... through his existence in a deficient and suffering universe".[116] The *Gospel of Truth* links deficiency very closely to one's ignorance of the Father:

> For the place where there is envy and strife is deficient (ⲟⲩⲱⲧⲁ), but the place where (there is) Unity is perfect. Since the deficiency (ⲡⲓⲱⲧⲁ) came into being because the Father was not known, therefore, when the Father is known, from that moment on the deficiency (ⲡⲓⲱⲧⲁ) will no longer exist. As in the case of the ignorance of a person, when he comes to have knowledge, his ignorance vanishes of itself, as the darkness vanishes when light appears, so also the deficiency (ⲡⲓⲱⲧⲁ) vanishes in the perfection (ⲡⲓϫⲱⲕ). So from that moment on the form is not apparent, but it will vanish in the fusion of Unity. (*Gospel of Truth* 24.25-25.6)

One striking metaphor used of the deficiency of the lower *logos*, uncomfortable to the modern reader, is that of femaleness: "he became weak like a female nature which has been abandoned by her male element" (*Tripartite Tractate* 78.11-13). This equation of weakness (ἀσθένεια) and femaleness also lies behind saying 114 in the *Gospel of Thomas*[117] in which Jesus promises to make Mary male, "so that she too may become a living spirit" (NHC II, 2, 51.22-23).

We are faced with an interesting problem here, this is the aporia of distanciation. Today there can be no question of accepting the literalness of female deficiency, our modern preunderstanding simply does not allow that. It is at such moments when we feel most acutely the cultural distance between the preunderstanding of the modern world and that of the text. As I see it, we have two options before us if our goal of appropriation is the attempt to reach agreement with the world of the text with which we are in conversation.

The first option is to recognise this symbolism as having a literal reference as at least part of its meaning. If we do this it seems inevitable that we will not reach agreement with the world of the text on this particular point. This is not a hermeneutical failure, only a fact of life that agreement cannot always be reached in conversation. Sometimes interlocutors must agree to differ.

114. Thomassen, 'The Valentinianism of The *Valentinian Exposition* (NHC XI, 2)', p.232, "σπεύδειν or φεύγειν ... are traditional Platonist terms describing the liberation of the soul from matter and its ascent towards the intelligible".

115. Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.344. See also Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* I 2.2 and Clement, *Excerpta ex Theodoto* 31.2.

116. "Deficiency': A Gnostic Technical Term', pp.194-195.

117. In drawing on the *Gospel of Thomas* I make no claim that it is fully Valentinian, but only that there is a close relation between the theology of some of the sayings of the *Gospel of Thomas* and that of the *Tripartite Tractate*. Valantasis, *The Gospel of Thomas*, pp.12-21, offers the most convincing dating. He places, "the composition of the complete Greek version of the Gospel of Thomas somewhere in the years 100-110 CE influenced by the same dynamics that produced both the Gospel of John and the Letters of Ignatius. ... It is certain that some of the material of the Gospel of Thomas comes from the First Stratum (30-60 CE) and there is always the possibility that one of the copyists of the Coptic version included sayings other than those contained in his archetype".

The other option, and the one that I prefer, is to focus on the purely pneumatic reading of this symbolism. One could argue that this is not out of keeping with the Valentinian *Dasein*, for while the Valentinian world view does not deny the literal meaning of any text, such a reading remains on the hylic level. The concern of the Valentinian orientation is with a pneumatic understanding, which is necessarily closer to the truth. From the point of view of Valentinian theology, everything below the Pleroma is 'female' or deficient to the extent that it is not of the Pleroma, as Meyer explains,

> Since for Gnostics femaleness can encompass passion, earthliness and mortality, it is reasonable to see how they can propose that all humans are involved in femaleness. Such universal participation in femaleness is made even more obvious by virtue of Hellenistic theory on the soul. ... the feminine term for 'soul', is presented throughout the Greek-speaking world as a female, and the subsequent myths of the soul show the career of the female ψυχή of all human beings.[118]

The perfect and unitary harmony of the Pleroma is beyond all attributes, including femaleness and maleness. The *Gospel of Thomas* logion 22 says:

> Jesus said to them (His disciples), "When you make the two one, and when you make the inside like the outside and the outside like the inside, and the above like the below, and when you make the male and the female one and the same, so that the male not be male nor the female female; and when you fashion eyes in place of an eye, and a hand in place of a hand, and a foot in place of a foot, and a likeness in place of a likeness; then will you enter [the kingdom]". (*Gospel of Thomas* 37.24-35)

If we consider the concern, the ultimate concern, of the world of the *Tripartite Tractate*, which here is to do with the nature of creation and its relation to the Father, we see that the symbolism of female deficiency is not about sexuality. To turn it into a form of misogyny would be to abstract it from its theological context, in which every human being, including the incarnate Christ who compassionately put on mortality in order to redeem us, is 'female'.

The choice between these readings is, in the end, up to the particular reader, but what is important is that neither is a retreat into the neutrality of the historian.

In the *Tripartite Tractate*, deficiency includes the nature of the *logos*'s erroneous use of free will,[119] the fruits of which are the shadows and likenesses of the material cosmos.[120] We find this designation in the *Valentinian Exposition* also: "the creature is a shadow of pre-existing things" (35.28-29).[121] Like the *Gospel of Truth* and *Valentinian Exposition*, the *Tripartite Tractate*, emphasises the non-existence of these shadows:

> For the things which [had] come into being by means of the presumptuous thought resemble the pleromas of whom they are imitations, but they are

118. Meyer, 'Making Mary Male: The Categories 'Male' and 'Female' in the Gospel of Thomas', pp.565-566. He considers the thought of Philo of Alexandria to be especially relevant here quoting *De Fuga et Inventione* 51, "For that which comes after God, even though it may be the highest of all other things, occupies a second place when compared with that omnipotent Being, and appears not so much masculine as feminine, in accordance with its likeness to everything else. For as the male always has precedence, the female always falls short and is inferior in rank" (Trans. by Yonge).
119. Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.343.
120. For the Demiurge as 'fruit of the deficiency' see, Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* I 17.2. K. N. Booth ''Deficiency': A Gnostic Technical Term', p.195.
121. See also *Valentinian Exposition* 36.12-19.

> likenesses (ⲉ2ⲚⲈⲓⲀⲰⲟⲚ), shadows (2Ⲛ2ⲀⲉⲓⲃⲈⲤ) and illusions
> (2ⲚⲫⲀⲚⲦⲀⲤⲓⲀ) empty of *logos* and of light, those belonging to the vain
> thought, being offspring of nobody. That is why their end shall be like their
> beginning: they came out of that which did not exist, they shall return to
> that which does not exist. (*Tripartite Tractate* 78.28-79.4)

Having arisen from the inauthentic, presumptuous thought of the lowest aeon they do not partake of true being, they are not real. Rather they are "likenesses (ⲉ2ⲚⲈⲓⲀⲰⲟⲚ) and shadows (2Ⲛ2ⲀⲉⲓⲃⲈⲤ) and illusions (2ⲚⲫⲀⲚⲦⲀⲤⲓⲀ)". In the *Gospel of Truth* Error and the matter it produces has "no root" (*Gospel of Truth* 17.30). As we have seen, the Father is the Root of the All, that is to say, the root of all that truly exists. Thus, "error is empty, having nothing inside" (*Gospel of Truth* 26.26-27), and its product, oblivion, "was not manifested. It is not ... from the Father" (*Gospel of Truth* 17.36-18.1):

> For he who has no root has no fruit (ⲞⲨⲦⲀ2) either, but though he thinks to
> himself, "I have come into being", yet he will perish by himself. For this
> reason, he who did not exist at all will never come into existence. What,
> then, did He wish him to think of himself? This: "I have come into being
> like the shadows (Ⲛ̄Ⲛⲓ2ⲀⲉⲓⲃⲈ) and illusions (ⲚⲓⲫⲀⲚⲦⲀⲤⲓⲀ·) of the night".
> (*Gospel of Truth* 28.16-28)

Their imitation of reality extends to the structure of their hierarchy, their appearance and the names they assume:

> But in their own eyes (they) exist as great and powerful, and more
> [beauti]ful than the names which [ado]rn them—the ones [whose] shadows
> they are, as they are made beautiful by way of imitation. For [the figure] of
> the likeness receives its beauty from that of which it is a likeness.
> (*Tripartite Tractate* 79.4-11)

By adopting the names of the Pleroma the Archons, as the shadows and likenesses are called, disguise their unreal nature. This, Thomassen argues, is to be found in the *Gospel of Philip*:

> The archons wanted to deceive man, since they saw that he had a kinship
> with those that are truly good. They took the name of those that are good
> and gave it to those that are not good, so that through the names they might
> deceive him and bind them to those that are not good. (*Gospel of Philip*
> 54.18-25)

Despite their lack of authentic existence, the material powers believe themselves to be what is most real. The ignorance and arrogance of the archons is a very common theme in Nag Hammadi and patristic evidence,[122] for the nature of the material powers is the opposite of that of the All. Where the Pleroma is characterised by the mutual assistance and unity of the aeons, their shadows, "showed themselves disobedient and rebellious" (*Tripartite Tractate* 79.17-18), having a "vain love of glory" (*Tripartite Tractate* 79.22) and "a lust for dominion" (*Tripartite Tractate* 79.27-28) which leads inevitably to strife. And, consequently,

122. *On the Origin of the World* NHC II, 5, 100.29-33; *Apocryphon of John* NHC II, 11.19-23; *Hypostasis of the Archons* 86.27-87.4; *Second Treatise of the Great Seth* NHC VII, 2, 53.28-31; Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* I 5.4.

many issued from them as offspring: fighters, warriors, trouble makers, re[bels], and disobeyers who love domination (*Tripartite Tractate* 80.4-9)

When the *logos* sees the result of his "highminded" action he is deeply disturbed:

He became even more desperate, and he was dumbfounded. Instead of perfection he saw deficiency; instead of unification he saw division; instead of stability he [saw] disorder, instead of [rest], agitation. And he did not have the capacity to bring their love of trouble to cease, nor the capacity to destroy it; he had become powerless [...] after his All and his p[erfection] had left him. (*Tripartite Tractate* 80.13-24)

His difficulty (ἀπορία) leads him to judge and condemn his passions and their products. Out of this judgement (κρίσις) of his πάθος arises his "conversion (ⲡⲓⲛⲟⲩⲟⲩϩ ⲁϩⲟⲩⲛ / ἐπιστροφή) which is called repentance (ⲙⲉⲧⲁⲛⲟⲓ̈ⲁ / μετάνοια)" (*Tripartite Tractate* 81.20-21), in which, "having turned away from evil, he turned toward the good" (*Tripartite Tractate* 81.24-25), which is at the same time a turning towards himself (*Tripartite Tractate* 81.28-29).[123]

Thomassen notes here another instance of the combination of religious and philosophical language:

Le thème de l'ἐπιστροφή, que traduit probablement ⲡⲓⲛⲟⲩⲟⲩϩ ⲁϩⲟⲩⲛ en 81:20, et de la μετάνοια (cf. *ExpVal*, 34:23; Clément, *Paed.*, I, 32: I; cf. *EvVer*, 35: 22-23) constitue un autre exemple de la rencontre des vocabulaires philosophique et judéo-chrétien dans le valentinisme: en plus de conserver la connotation religieuse du repentir des péchés, ces mots ont le sens métaphysique de l'ἐπιστροφή néo-platonicienne, du fait qu'ils dénotent le point où l'aliénation par rapport à l'influence formatrice et unifiante du Plérôme cesse, l'éon déchu pouvant alors y retourner et y être formé.[124]

The conversion is followed by remembrance and a prayer (ἱκετεία) of supplication (δέησις).[125] Here the *logos* remembers, "those who exist" (*Tripartite Tractate* 81.27), namely the All and their root. The supplicatory prayer comes both from the *logos* and from the members of the All, who "one by one ... then all of them (together)" (*Tripartite Tractate* 81.33-34), respond to and join the supplication.[126]

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123. See also McGuire, 'Conversion and Gnosis in *The Gospel of Truth*'.
124. Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.350. Trans: "The theme of the ἐπιστροφή, which probably translates ⲡⲓⲛⲟⲩⲟⲩϩ ⲁϩⲟⲩⲛ of 81.20 and the μετάνοια (compare *Valentinian Exposition*, 34.23; Clément, *Paedagogus*, I, 32: 1; compare *Gospel of Truth*, 35.22-23) is another example of the Valentinian merging of Judeo-Christian and philosophical vocabulary: while retaining the religious connotation of repentance of sins, these words also have the metaphysical significance of the Neoplatonic ἐπιστροφή, denoting the point at which the alienation from the form-giving and unifying realm of the Pleroma is arrested so as to enable the fallen aeon to return to it and to be formed by it".
125. See Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* I 2.3, 4.5; *Valentinian Exposition* 34.24.
126. See Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* I 2.3; *Apocryphon of John* III 21.2-4. Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.358, «... cette prière trouve un écho dans la partie remontée de l'éon et dans le reste du Plérôme, et se voit amplifiée par leur prière d'intercession. L'ordre du souvenir, par conséquent, n'est pas seulement le produit de l'éon déchu, mais il retient des caractéristiques du mode d'action du Plérôme». Trans: "... this prayer finds an echo in the reascended part of the aeon and in the rest of the Pleroma, and is amplified by their intercessory prayer. Consequently, the order of the rememberance is not solely the product of the fallen aeon, but retains characteristics of the mode of action of the Pleroma".

> This prayer of the supplication, therefore, was a help that [he] might turn
> <towards> himself and the All, for it caused him to remember the pre-
> existent ones, (and) them to remember him, and this is the Thought which
> calls out from afar and makes him turn around. (*Tripartite Tractate* 82.1-9)

As a model for the stages of the return of the soul to the Pleroma, conversion and remembrance occur at the psychic level, remembrance being further advanced than conversion. While conversion is the turning away from the hylic passions, the remembrance is a recollection of the reality of the Pleroma and the nature of the soul's true being.

> Les passions sont essentiellement hyliques, tandis que la conversion est
> psychique; c'est de la conversion que sont issus le dieu et la religion des
> juifs et leurs Écritures. Il en est de même pour le TracTri: la conversion, «la
> loi du jugement», la condamnation et la colère caractérisent le groupe
> inférieur des puissances psychiques (97: 32-36); le groupe supérieur
> provenant, lui, du souvenir et de la supplication.[127]

In the remembrance, the *logos* reminds the Pleroma of his plight, while the Pleroma reminds him of his true nature and ground. As indicated by the lines "this is the Thought which calls out from afar and makes him turn around" (*Tripartite Tractate* 82.7-9), the remembrance is also closely linked to the theology of the 'call', which is most clearly enunciated in the *Gospel of Truth*:

> Those whose name He knew in advance were called at the end, so that one
> who has knowledge is the one whose name the Father has uttered. For he
> whose name has not been spoken is ignorant. Indeed, how is one to hear if
> his name has not been called? For he who is ignorant until the end is a
> creature of oblivion, and he will vanish along with it. If not, how is it that
> these miserable ones have no name, (how is it that) they do not have the
> call? Therefore, if one has knowledge, he is from above. If he is called, he
> hears, he answers, and he turns to Him who is calling him, and ascends to
> Him. And he knows in what manner he is called. Having knowledge, he
> does the will of the one who called him, he wishes to be pleasing to Him, he
> receives rest. Each one's name comes to him. He who is to have
> knowledge in this manner knows where he comes from and where he is
> going. He knows as one who having become drunk has turned away from
> his drunkenness, (and) having returned to himself, has set right what are his
> own. (*Gospel of Truth* 21.25-22.20)

This passage beautifully encapsulates the path of redemption as conceived by Valentinian theology, which really begins with remembrance; the response of the soul to the graceful call of the Saviour. Salvation is ultimately the work of the Saviour, not of the soul. This divine initiative brings about a *metanoia*, a turning, a returning, a reorientation of the soul to the Father from whence it came. The next stage in the return is the correct use of one's will, which is the evaporation of the individual will into that of the Father, this being true

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127. Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.350. Trans: "The passions are essentially hylic, whereas the conversion is psychic; from it arises the god and the religion of the Jews and their scriptures. This also applies to the *Tripartite Tractate*: 'the law of judgement', condemnation and wrath characterise the lower group of psychic powers (97.32-36); the higher group deriving from the remembrance and supplication".

faith. The Will of the Father is of course the Son, and so in attaining the Pleroma, in returning to oneself and setting right what are one's own, one becomes the Son.

But let us return to the remembrance. Pagels explains Sophia's conversion as it is found in *Adversus Haereses* and the *Excerpta ex Theodoto*:

> Each stage of the process of Sophia's restoration — and the result of each stage — must be distinguished. First her "passions" are separated from her — the incorporeal sufferings that are to be transformed into the material element (τὸ ὑλικόν). Then the experience of her "conversion" (ἐπιστροφή) is separated from her — to be later transformed into the psychic element (τὸ ψυχικόν). These two substances are to become the elements of the cosmic creation, which Sophia is to form through the demiurge: they become the elements of "heaven and earth, of the right and the left" (*Adversus Haereses* I 5.1-2; *Excerpta ex Theodoto* 47.1-4).[128]

The remembrance and prayer, being products of the *logos*, are powers in themselves, "for there was nothing barren in his thought" (*Tripartite Tractate* 82.13-14). And they constitute the psychic order of powers in the cosmos. They are higher than the hylic order of "shadows and imitations" that arose from deficiency.

> For these powers were much better and greater than those of the imitation. For those—those of the imitation—they are of a substance of da[rkness.] It is of an illusory imitation and a presumptuous and v[ain] thought that they have come into being. These ones, however, are out of the [Thought] which knew them beforehand. (*Tripartite Tractate* 82.15-24)

The oblivion of the hylic order is described in terms of a nightmare:

> For those ones ... are like oblivion and a heavy sleep, they are like those who have troubled dreams, who are pursued by <someone> while they are encircled. (*Tripartite Tractate* 82.25-31)

There is probably a direct literary relationship between this passage and the *Gospel of Truth* 29.1-31:

> Thus they were ignorant of the Father, He being the one whom they did not see. Since it was terror and disturbance and instability and doubt and division, there were many illusions at work by means of these, and (there were) empty fictions, as if they were sunk in sleep and found themselves in disturbing dreams. Either (there is) a place to which they are fleeing, or without strength they come (from) having chased after others, or they are involved in striking blows, or they are receiving blows themselves, or they have fallen from high places, or they take off into the air though they do not even have wings. Again, sometimes (it is as) if people were murdering them, though there is no one even pursuing them, or they themselves are killing their neighbours, for they have been stained with their blood. When those who are going through all these things wake up, they see nothing, they who were in the midst of all these disturbances, for they are nothing.[129]

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128. Pagels, 'Conflicting Versions of Valentinian Eschatology', p.40.
129. See Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.352.

The psychic powers, though still without "much substance" or "much glory" (*Tripartite Tractate* 83.3-5), are, in contrast:

> ... like beings of light as when one turns his regard towards the rising of the sun, and it has come to pass that they see dreams in it which are truly sweet. (*Tripartite Tractate* 82.33-37)

Being, "out of the Thought that knew them beforehand" they do partake, to some degree, of the nature of the Pleroma, "of whom they were likenesses" (*Tripartite Tractate* 84.27-28). This is reflected in the, "predisposition to seek after and pray to the glorious pre-existent" (*Tripartite Tractate* 83.19-21), which is sown into them by the *logos*,[130] although, "they did not know what it was" (*Tripartite Tractate* 83.25-26).

> La condition des puissances psychiques est semblable à la première forme du Tout telle que décrite aux lignes 6l:7ss: elles perçoivent l'existence d'un niveau de réalité supérieur dont elles ignorent toutefois la nature, mais qui devient l'objet de leur recherche. Ce parallèle, de même que l'emploi des termes μόρφωσις κατ' οὐσίαν et μ. κατὰ γνῶσιν pour décrire les formations progressives d'Achamoth dans le système principal d'Irénée, reflète probablement une théorie sotériologique générale, employée dans différents contextes: le niveau — ou stade — psychique est relié à la connaissance de l'existence, ce qui équivaut, sur le plan ontologique, à l'être potentiel; de même, le pneumatique possède à la fois la connaissance de l'essence du divin et l'être parfait.[131]

The other proof of their pleromatic nature is that they acted with and brought forth, "harmony and mutual love" (*Tripartite Tractate* 83.27-28), "they acted in unity and unanimity, for by the unity and the unanimity they had received their existence" (*Tripartite Tractate* 83.29-33), "for the order of these was thus in harmony with itself and with its fellows" (*Tripartite Tractate* 84.28-31). This also reflects the qualities of the turning towards oneself that characterises the conversion. This contrasts strikingly with the hylic powers who are in perpetual strife and who arrogantly think that, "they were self-originated and were without beginning" (*Tripartite Tractate* 84.4-6).

The "vain love of glory" ignites in the hylic order the "desire of lust for dominion" (*Tripartite Tractate* 84.18-21) and they attack the psychic order. As *Tripartite Tractate* 84:33-35 puts it, "the order of those who belong to the imitation (ⲦⲀⲚⲦⲚ̄ /εἴδωλον) warred against the likenesses (ⲈⲓⲚⲈ / ὁμοίωσις)".[132] Thomassen points out that Platonists such as Numenius, Origen the Platonist and Porphyry express the struggle of the

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130. Later, at *Tripartite Tractate* 130.30-131.2, it is stated that the seed is sown, "by that which is superior", rather than by the *logos*. See Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.353.

131. Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.353. Trans: "The condition of the psychic powers is similar to the first form of the All as described in lines 61.7ff: they perceive the existence of a superior level of reality the nature of which, however, they are ignorant, but which becomes the object of their search. This parallel, together with the use of the terms μόρφωσις κατ' οὐσίαν and μόρφωσις κατὰ γνῶσιν to describe the progressive formations of Achamoth in the main system of Irenaeus, probably reflects a general soteriological theory being employed in different contexts: the psychic level, or stage, is linked to the knowledge of existence, which is equivalent, in the ontological plan, to potential being; correspondingly the pneumatic possesses both knowledge of the essence of the divine and perfect being".

132. Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.355 «La «ressemblance» psychique s'opposera à l'«image» (εἰκών) spirituelle comme à l'«imitation» hylique. Cette triple distinction est propre au TracTri».

   Trans: "The psychic 'likeness' will be opposed to the spiritual 'image' (εἰκών) as well as the hylic 'imitation'. This triple distinction is peculiar to the *Tripartite Tractate*".

opposing movements of the soul, downwards and upwards, in terms of the war between good and evil demons. The *Tripartite Tractate* is certainly within this tradition, though it adds a new motif:

> alors que les puissances psychiques affrontent et combattent les puissances matérielles, elles semblent être victimes du même type de passions qui domine leurs ennemis, désir de dominer (peut-être < φιλαρχία) et vaine gloire (κενοδξία). Le résultat est une confusion des orders, que seule l'intervention du Sauveur pourra faire cesser.[133]

The mutual confusion and entanglement of the two orders is expressed in the products of the conflict, which were, "various matters and powers of different kinds, mixed and numerous" (*Tripartite Tractate* 85.10-12), that comprised qualities from both orders.

3.07 The Mission of the Son

We now return to the work of the higher *logos*, who "hastened upwards" (*Tripartite Tractate* 86.6) to the Pleroma after his division by the passions. There he works on behalf of the lower *logos* as an intercessor by entreating his fellow aeons for their help to restore, "the one who had become deficient" (*Tripartite Tractate* 86.9), to which they consent, "with joy and benevolence and the harmony of consent (ϨⲚⲤⲨⲘⲫⲰⲚⲒⲀ ⲘⲠϮ ⲘⲈⲧⲈ)" (*Tripartite Tractate* 86.12-14). Moved by compassion (*Tripartite Tractate* 85.33-37) the aeons in turn entreat the Father, "by an agreeable thought" (*Tripartite Tractate* 86.16) with glorification and prayer for His help and glory.

> For the one who had become deficient could not be made perfect in any other way than if the Pleroma of the Father, which He had drawn to Himself, consented, manifested Him and gave to the one who had become deficient. (*Tripartite Tractate* 86.19-23)[134]

This consent (Ϯ ⲘⲈⲧⲈ / εὐδοκία), then, is the manifestation of the Father, "as unique yet as belonging to the All, manifesting the face (Ⲛ̄ϨⲞ) of the Father" (*Tripartite Tractate* 86.26-29),[135] it is the manifestation of the Son as the Fruit of the All, "the face (ⲠϨⲞ) of the invisible" (*Tripartite Tractate* 66.14-15). This is not different from the fruit discussed in section 3.05, only here we see the nonduality of the Father, Son and All from the perspective of the glorification and supplication of the Father by the All, whereas before we saw it as the manifestation of the qualities of the Father by the Son as the All.

As in all Valentinian texts, the εὐδοκία is itself the Saviour-Paraclete, "qui, comme entité personnelle singulière, manifeste l'unanimité du Plérôme".[136] With the advent of the Saviour we are introduced to a new aspect of the Son-Fruit, namely that which

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133. Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.354. Trans: "when the psychic powers confront and combat the material powers, they seem to fall victim to the same type of passions which dominate their enemies, desire for dominion (perhaps < φιλαρχία) and vainglory (κενοδξία). The result is a confusion of the orders, which only the intervention of the Saviour will be able to make cease". The Saviour accomplishes the separation of the orders through His manifestation to them as a stroke of lightning (*Tripartite Tractate* 88.30-35).
134. See *Treatise on the Resurrection* 45.28-39.
135. Both Attridge and Pagels, and Thomassen translate Ⲛ̄ϨⲞ as either "face" or "countanance" / «représentation», I use only the first, as the others rob the word of its immediacy and poetry.
136. Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.358. Trans: "whose singularity as a person manifests the unanimity of the Pleroma".

manifests the transcendent world to the inferior one.[137]

While still being linked with the Father's Will (*Tripartite Tractate* 86.36-37) the symbolic language of clothing is expanded upon here: the Son, "placed Himself as a garment on them, by means of which He gave perfection to them who had become deficient, and firmness to those who are perfect" (*Tripartite Tractate* 87.2-5). While invoking the Son's role as *Horos* in making firm the Pleroma, a central aspect of which is, as we have seen,[138] the downward movement of the *logos*, this symbolism is extended to include and redeem the erring aeon who is thus perfected. The compassionate fulfilment of deficiency is at the heart of the Saviour's mission, as our early quote from the *Treatise on the Resurrection*[139] makes clear:

> For imperishability [descends] upon the perishable; the light flows down upon the darkness, swallowing it up; and the Pleroma fills up the deficiency. These are the symbols and the images of the resurrection. He (Christ) it is who makes the good. (*Treatise on the Resurrection* 48.38-49.9)[140]

It is Christ who makes the good, for He himself is *gnosis*: "for He is the Knowledge of the Father" (*Tripartite Tractate* 87.15-6). In His manifestation as the All to "the one who had become deficient", the Son, "clothed in the names of the existences" (*Tripartite Tractate* 87.12), reveals both the unity of the Father and the multiplicity of the Pleroma. And in so doing He "fills up the deficiency". This is "the power of the All" (*Tripartite Tractate* 87.33). As we shall see, this resurrection works in both the supercosmic and the cosmic realms. In the *Gospel of Truth*, clothing symbolism is used for the perfection of the deficiency:

> He draws himself down to death though life eternal clothes Him. ... Having entered the empty spaces of terrors, He passed through those who were stripped naked by oblivion, being knowledge and perfection, proclaiming the things that are in the heart. (*Gospel of Truth* 20.28-39)

The importance of these symbols in the rites of Baptism and Confirmation will become clear in Chapter 4.[141]

As the downward movement of the *logos* is intimately connected to the establishment of the οἰκονομία, that too is now brought under the charge (ⲦⲈⲦⲞⲨⲈ) of, and is entrusted (ἐπιτρέπειν) to, the Saviour (*Tripartite Tractate* 88.3), as is the, "administration (οἰκονομία) of the All" (*Tripartite Tractate* 88.4). Thomassen points out the threefold reference of the latter phrase:

> «L'économie (οἰκονομία) du Tout» est sans doute volontairement ambigu. L'expression fait référence à (1) une notion cosmologique: le Fils apporte au monde une structure organisée (le Tout = le cosmos); (2) une notion apocalyptique: le Fils régit l'histoire du salut (le Tout = l'éon actuel); (3) une notion proprement gnostique, où le Fils est considéré comme celui à qui

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137. Section 2.06 above.
138. Above pp.62-63.
139. See Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.360. For the titles of the Saviour-Son see Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, pp.361-362.
140. This passage clearly draws on I Corinthians 15:53-54, "For this perishable (φθαρτὸν) must put on the imperishable (ἀφθαρσίαν), and this mortal (θνητὸν) [must] put on immortality (ἀθανασίαν). So when this perishable shall have put on the imperishable, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written. Death is swallowed up (Κατεπόθη) in victory".
141. Especially section 4.11.

a été confié le Plérôme, qu'il doit manifester à ce qui est devenu déficient, de façon à porter remède à sa déficience (le Tout = le Plérôme).[142]

3.08 The Manifestation of the Son

As part of His administration of the All, the Son manifests Himself to the *logos*:

> For He in whom the Father lives, and He in whom the All lives, appeared (ⲁϥⲉⲉⲓϥ ⲛ̄ϣⲁⲣⲡ̄ / προγίνεσθαι) to the one who was lacking in vision. (*Tripartite Tractate* 88.8-12)[143]

This is effectively the beginning of His salvific work. The symbols used to depict this manifestation all relate to the faculty of sight. The Son "showed Himself to those who were seeking their sight, by means of the shining of the perfect light" (*Tripartite Tractate* 88.12-14). This is the "first joy" (*Tripartite Tractate* 88.20), the first perfection of the *logos*, in which the Son, "made him perfect for himself as a perfect one, and He gave him also that which is one by one" (*Tripartite Tractate* 88.17-19). It is a first joy and perfection in that it is the first stage in the salvation of the *logos*:

> l'épouse voit l'époux qu'elle a prié et attendu, mais n'a pas encore été réunie à lui dans la chambre nuptial du Plérôme.[144]

The first joy can be seen as the cosmic equivalent of the first-fruit of pleromatic glorification. The symbolism of the Bridal Chamber as the fulfilment of redemption, which was not uncommon in early Christian soteriology, was highly favoured within Valentinian theology. It will be given close consideration in Chapter 4.[145]

That the Saviour gave the *logos* "that which is one by one (ⲟⲩⲉⲉⲓ ⲟⲩⲉⲉⲓ)" indicates, according to Thomassen, his perfection both individually and with the aspect of pleromatic multiplicity.[146]

At the same moment:

> He sowed in him invisibly, a *logos* destined for knowledge. And He gave him strength to separate (from) and turn away from those who were disobedient to him. (*Tripartite Tractate* 88.20-25)

142. Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.363. Trans: "'the administration (οἰκονομία) of the All' is without doubt intentionally ambiguous. The expression makes reference to (1) a cosmological notion: the Son provides the world with an organized structure (the All = the cosmos); (2) an apocalyptic notion: the Son supervises salvation history (the All = the present aeon); (3) a particularly Gnostic notion, where the Son is considered as the one who has been entrusted with the Pleroma in order to manifest it to that which has become deficient and to remedy its deficiency (the All = the Pleroma)".

143. Following Thomassen's interpretation of ⲁϥⲉⲉⲓϥ ⲛ̄ϣⲁⲣⲡ̄ as προγίνεσθαι Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.363.

144. Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.364. Trans: "the bride has seen the bridegroom for whom she has prayed and awaited, but has not yet been united with him in the bridal chamber of the Pleroma".

145. Sections 4.08-4.09 and 4.11-4.12 below.

146. Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.364. The translation by Attridge and Pagels, "he also gave him what is appropriate to each individual", where the individuals would be, "the members of the two orders which the *logos* engendered outside the Pleroma. The Saviour thus provides the *logos* with what is needed to perfect each of his offspring" (Attridge and Pagels, 'The Tripartite Tractate: I, 5:51.1-138.27', in *Nag Hammadi Codex I (The Jung Codex): Notes*, p.348) is problematical gramatically, as Attridge and Pagels themselves recognise, and does not fit quite so well theologically.

Here, the *logos* that is sown into the *logos* by the Son is *gnosis*.[147] It is invisible to the
lower orders who are unable to perceive that which is superior to them. In the next chapter
we shall see that all things of the spirit are invisible to the psychic and hylic powers.[148]
This revelation also gives the *logos* the ability to properly carry out his conversion and
separation from the products of his passions.

The Son's manifestation to the psychic and material orders is of a quite different nature.
In fact it is not a true manifestation but "a mock form" (ⲚϬⲰⲂⲈ)[149] (*Tripartite Tractate*
88.29):

> He directed a stroke against them as He suddenly manifested Himself to
> them and withdrew, in the way of lightning. (*Tripartite Tractate* 88.30-34)

This lightning stroke brings to an end the mutual entanglement (�2ⲗⲎⲘ = ⲯⲗⲟⲙⲗⲘ̄ /
συμπλοκή),[150] which comes about through the conflict of the two orders,[151] for though
both orders "could not bear" the stroke and "fell down" (*Tripartite Tractate* 89.5) the
reaction of each is markedly differently. Those of the remembrance, the psychic order,
having had implanted in them "the wonder about that which is superior which will be
manifested" (*Tripartite Tractate* 89.13-15),[152]

> greeted (ⲁⲩⲣ̄ ⲁⲥⲡⲁⲍⲉ·) His manifestation and fell down before Him.
> They became convinced witnesses of <Him> (and) acknowledged the light
> which had appeared. (*Tripartite Tractate* 89.15-19).

The greeting (ἀσπάζεσθαι) of the manifestation of the Father is also to be found in the
Gospel of Truth:

> Truth appeared; all its emanations knew it. They greeted (ⲁⲩⲣ̄ ⲁⲥⲡⲁⲍⲉ·)
> the Father in truth with a perfect power that joins them with the Father. For,
> as for everyone who loves the truth — because the truth is the mouth of the
> Father; His tongue is the Holy Spirit — he who is joined to the truth is
> joined to the Father's mouth by His tongue, whenever he is to receive the
> Holy Spirit, since this is the manifestation of the Father and His revelation
> to His aeons. (*Gospel of Truth* 26.28-27.7)

Here, the *Gospel of Truth* is not concerned simply with the divine revelation to the
psychics, but, characteristically, is working on many different levels at once. The use of

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147. See Attridge and Pagels, 'The Tripartite Tractate: I, 5:51.1-138.27', in *Nag Hammadi Codex I (The
       Jung Codex): Notes*, p.349.
148. The blindness of the Archons is a strong motif in the *Hypostasis of the Archons*, on which see Gilhus,
       *The Nature of the Archons: A Study in the Soteriology of a Gnostic Treatise from Nag Hammadi (CG II,
       4)*, especially pp.37-43.
149. See Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.365.
150. See Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, pp.368-369 where Thomassen links the Valentinian
       application of cosmogonic διάκρισις (parting) with their "Pythagorean" concern with "the derivation
       of matter within the framework of a metaphysical monism" («la dérivation de la matière dans le cadre
       du monisme métaphysiqueé»).
151. Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.365 notes that, whereas the motive for the Saviour's
       manifestation to the *logos* was soteriological, His manifestation to the lower orders, although presented
       in terms of apocalyptic eschatology («bien que présentée dans des termes d'eschatologie
       apocalyptique») is cosmogonical («cosmogonique»). He also notes (p.368) that the theophanic symbol
       of the lightning flash stands in both the Christian Son of Man tradition of Matthew 24.27 and the
       Hellenistic tradition of Clesus and Iamblicus.
152. *Tripartite Tractate*, 83.19-26. See p.95 above.

the Judaic[153] symbolism of Truth being the mouth and tongue of the Father befits the characterisation of the different levels of baptism as 'sound', 'voice' and '*Logos*' and the *gnosis* or truth that each confers. It may also be related to symbolism of the harmony and consent of the All as manifesting the face of the Father. The characterization of the Holy Spirit as the tongue of the Father in the *Gospel of Truth* raises a possible interpretation of its role in the tractate, which is not made explicit. The tongue is the power in the mouth that enables it to disclose itself, that is, to speak. We could say, then, that the Holy Spirit is that power which manifests the Truth. In the *Tripartite Tractate* this power is called Will[154] and is identified with the Son. This indicates that the theology of the tractate does not consider it necessary to differentiate between the second and third persons of the Trinity at the pleromatic level. This is also indicated by the Son's role as *horos* which as Will is usually ascribed to the Holy Spirit.[155] It is only when the Son has descended into the world that He and the Holy Spirit are distinguished.

While there is no *gnosis* conferred on the psychic powers at this stage of the T*ripartite Tractate*, their predisposition and wonder towards the All, in accordance with their origin in repentance and conversion, has been confirmed and strengthened. Though convinced of Him, they remain unable to perceive the true nature of the Son and can recognise no more than the "mock form" of Him in the lightning flash.

The reaction of those of the imitation, the hylic order, is, on the other hand, far from one of recognition of any kind. They,

> were exceedingly afraid, for they had not been able to learn from the beginning that there existed such a sight. Because of this they fell down into the pit of ignorance, which they called the Outer Darkness and Chaos, Hades and the Abyss. (*Tripartite Tractate* 89.21-28)

Being entirely ignorant of the realm of light of which they have no part, the imitations are terrified of the lightning and are relegated to the Outer Darkness (τὸ σκότος τὸ ἐξώτερον).[156] The language is characteristic of the punishment meted out to the Saviour's enemies in Judeo-Christian apocalyptic. However, when employed within the emanationist cosmology of the Valentinian world it takes on a new meaning:

> l'obscurité, ici, est associée à la matière, aux ombres et au vide: le royaume du non-être, constitué uniquement par le néant qui entoure le Plérôme. L'identification implicite de l'Hadès et de la matière constitue une théorie moyen-platonicienne.[157]

Once again we find in this meeting of the Judeo-Christian and Hellenic worlds a rich and invigorating synthesis, which is not a conflation of one into the other, but the opening up of new possibilities for both. The dualistic language of the former is here informed by the philosophical nondualism of the latter, reinforcing the utter lack of existence of ignorance and deficiency and their products. The Father is the only ground of true being.

The Saviour then places psychics over the hylics and so they become the temporary administrators of the cosmos in order that they may too play their part in the οἰκονομία, though they remain ignorant of its nature.

153. Grobel, *The Gospel of Truth*, p.109.
154. See p.67 above.
155. See note 98 above.
156. Matthew 8:12, 22:13, 25:30. Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.370.
157. Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.370. Trans: "the darkness, here, is associated with matter, the shadows and the void: the realm of non-being, made up solely of the nothingness that surrounds the Pleroma. The implicit identification of Hades with matter represents a Middle Platonic theory".

> ... they were worthy of ruling over the unspeakable darkness as their own
> (domain) and is the lot which was assigned to them. He turned it over to
> them that they too should be of use in the economy which was to take place,
> of which they were ignorant (ⲈⲚⲦⲀⲨⲀⲂⲰⲞⲨ). (*Tripartite Tractate* 89.31-
> 90.1)[158]

As was noted above, the salvation economy is chiefly concerned with the psychics.[159]

The *Tripartite Tractate* now reiterates the great difference between the manifestation of
the Son to the *logos*, and that to the lower realms. Regarding the *logos*, the Son,

> ... manifested Himself within him, He was with him, shared his suffering,
> gave him rest little by little, made him grow, lifted him up, and in the end
> He gave Himself to him to be enjoyed in vision. But to those who are on
> the outside, He manifested Himself quickly and gave a stroke, He withdrew
> to Himself immediately without having let them see Him. (*Tripartite
> Tractate* 90.4-13)

This passage presents the process by which the Son manifests Himself to the *logos*, and
suffers with him, ending with the aeon's salvation, expressed here as his enjoying the Son
"in vision". This is also the process by which the Son redeems the entire cosmos. We
shall see in Chapter 4 how important to the Saviour's mission is His compassionate
suffering with those He is to redeem. This is one of the great paradoxes that the *Tripartite
Tractate* so beautifully expresses: that the Son's manifestation of the Father is, from the
very beginning, salvific. Existence is not a movement away from the Father followed by a
return to him, rather it is both simultaneously.

3.09 The Aion of the *Logos*

The "illumination" of the *logos* is the beginning[160] of his 'fullness' or 'Pleroma'
(ⲠⲖⲎⲢⲞⲨⲘⲀ / πλήρωμα) (*Tripartite Tractate* 90.14-15). He is freed from his
entanglement with the lower orders and strips himself of "his former presumptuous
thought" (*Tripartite Tractate* 90.19). Then, through the subjugation and submission of
"those who had formerly been disobedient to him", the psychics and the hylics, he

158. Following Thomassen, see Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.370, however Attridge and
Pagels, 'The Tripartite Tractate: I, 5:51.1-138.27', in *Nag Hammadi Codex I (The Jung Codex): Notes*,
p.353 accept Schenke's emendation of ⲈⲚⲦⲀϤⲀⲂⲰⲞⲨ to ⲈⲚⲦⲀϤⲀⲰⲞⲨ giving the reading: "to which
He had assigned them".

159. See Pagels's 'Conflicting Versions of Valentinian Eschatotogy': "Christ receives the Elect, the
pneumatic element (τὸ πνευματικόν) directly from 'the Mother' and the Called, the psychic element
(τὸ ψυχικόν) from 'the *oikonomia*'" (p.38); "For the purpose of the *oikonomia*, the Father provides for
the emission of the demiurge as his provisional 'image' to form and sustain the cosmic structure until
its dissolution, and to supervise the salvation of the psychics who remain as yet unable to perceive him
as 'Father of Truth' (AH I.5.1-6)" (p.52). See also Clement, *Excerpta ex Theodoto* 58. Though Pagels
has been criticised for the lack of patristic textual evidence for this view (see Desjardins, *Sin in
Valentinianism* p.122 n.11), the Nag Hammadi codices have provided that evidence. One of the
primary conclusions drawn by Desjardins, *Sin in Valentinianism*, p.120-126, is the importance of the
psychics in Valentinianism, though he may go too far in underplaying the Valentinians' tripartite
anthropology (p.124) in favour of a bipartite one, this is the result of his dualistic interpretation of the
tradition.

160. Following all translations of ⲣ̄ ϨⲎⲦⲤ̄ as 'began' (*Tripartite Tractate* 90.15) save Thomassen's
«progressa» ("advanced") see Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.372, «Dans notre
traduction, nous considérons le terme comme une expression du progrès vers la *gnose* et la perfection,
amené par le Sauveur». Trans: "In our translation, we consider the term as an expression of the
progress towards *gnosis* and perfection brought about by the Saviour".

"received the unification (ⲘⲠⲘⲞⲨⲬⲞ) of the rest (ⲘⲠⲓⲘⲦⲀⲚ / ἀνάπαυσις)" (*Tripartite Tractate* 90.20-23).

> «Repos» (peut-être < ἀνάπαυσις) est l'état qui correspond à la guérison, à l'absence de passion; la description de Sophia comme ἀπαθής, dans les *ExtTh*, 45:2, a le même sens. Comme la passion, représentée par les puissances hyliques, signifie la division, les luttes et la discorde ... l'absence de passion implique l'unité, qui est la caractéristique essentielle du Père et de la perfection plérômatique. Cette association entre ἀπάθεια et l'unicité se retrouve également chez Clément d'Alexandrie (particulièrement *Strom.*, IV, 152: 1; ...), et est probablement issue du néo-pythagorisme ....
> L'attitude soumise que prennent les puissances hyliques lorsque le *Logos* se libère d'elles implique que celui-ci devient alors leur chef, le maître des passions, et, en un sens, le roi du cosmos matériel; cette notion rappelle l'usage gnostique courant du motif de l'ἀνάπαυσις emprunté a la cosmogonie biblique (*EvTh,* log. 2; ...), de même que l'application stoïcienne du concept du philosophe-roi.[161]

Upon his reception of this first joy, the *logos* rejoices and gives thanks for his liberation from his passions:

> And <he> rejoiced in the visitation of his brothers who had come to see him. He gave glory and praise to those who had manifested themselves to help him, and he gave thanks that he had become free from those who rose against him while he admired and honoured the Greatness and those who had manifested themselves to him by a decree. (*Tripartite Tractate* 90.23-31)

Here the Saviour is referred to as many. This reflects His self-manifestation to the *logos* as the Pleroma. It brings to mind a sentence from the passage already quoted[162] from the *Treatise on the Resurrection* that states that, "the Pleroma fills up the deficiency" (49.4-5). The Son as Saviour compassionately manifests Himself as the Pleroma to the one who became deficient, and in so doing fills him up, returning him, eventually, to his original pleromatic nature. The glory and praise that the *logos* renders his brothers is, of course, generative. And in keeping with his new state and the object of his glorification he,

> brought forth visible images of the living forms. As fair beings of the good,

161. Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.372, trans: "The 'rest' (perhaps < ἀνάπαυσις) is the state which corresponds to the healing, to the absence of passion; the description of Sophia as ἀπαθής, in the *Excerpta ex Theodoto* 45.2, has the same meaning. Since passion, represented by the hylic powers, means division, struggles and discord ... the absence of passion implies unity, which is the essential characteristic of the Father and of pleromatic perfection. This association between ἀπάθεια and oneness can also be found in Clement of Alexandria (particularly *Stromateis* IV, 152:1 ...), and is probably of Neopythagorean origin ....
   "The submissive attitude of the hylic powers when the *logos* is liberated from them implies that he has now become their ruler, master of the passions and, in a sense, the king of the material cosmos; this notion recalls the common Gnostic usage of the ἀνάπαυσις motif borrowed from the Biblical cosmology (*Gospel of Thomas* log. 2; ...), and also the stoic application of the concept of the philosopher-king". Thomassen later (pp.422-423) comments that «la passion, dans le TracTri, est étroitement liée aux notions de multiplicité et de déficience, tout ce qui est inférieur à l'unicité qui constitue l'essence même du Père est un quelque sort passion» Trans: "passion in the *Tripartite Tractate* is closely bound up with the notions of multiplicity and deficiency, everything which is inferior to the oneness which constitutes the Father's own essence is as it were passion".

162. Above pp.62-63.

> because they are of those who exist, they do resemble these in beauty
> (*Tripartite Tractate* 90.31-35)[163]

These invisible images, "arose from the decision which was united and compassionate
(ⲉϥϣⲱⲡ ⲛ̄ⲕⲁϩ = suffering together)" (*Tripartite Tractate* 91.29-31), for their emission
by the *logos* was intentional, unlike that of the psychics and hylics whose emission was
unintentional. They are also different from those of the remembrance in that they are the
product of the direct contemplation of the Pleroma, rather than the imperfect memory of it.
These beings:

> ... received the glory and the praise by which he (the *logos*) glorified and
> paid homage, while he beheld those to whom he prayed so as to render
> perfect through them the images which he brought forth. (*Tripartite
> Tractate* 91.37-92.4)

They are the members of the pneumatic order who constitute the beautiful image of the
Pleroma:

> Pour les valentiniens, en manifestant le Plérôme, le Sauveur révèle
> l'Homme archétype, lui-même image du Père; et en recevant la
> manifestation, l'éon déchu produit l'homme spirituel, qui est une copie de
> celui qui a été révélé.[164]

Thomassen goes on to point out that the treatment of this Judeo-Christian symbolism is
also strongly influenced by Platonic cosmology, especially with its emphasis on the beauty
of the copy, and the portrayal of the *logos* as a craftsman who, "works with craft and skill,
completely united with *Logos*" (*Tripartite Tractate* 91.2-4). *Logos* here is, "the *Logos* of
the Son and His essence and His power and His shape" (*Tripartite Tractate* 93.34-36):

> ... ce λόγος qu'on pourrait traduire par «rationalité» ou «raison» est la
> puissance formatrice accordée à l'éon par la manifestation du Fils.
> Il ne faut pas vraiment concevoir l'éon et sa progéniture comme deux
> entités séparées. Dans un sens, la progéniture représente l'état dans lequel
> l'éon se forme lui-même, avec l'aide du Sauveur-Fils intérieurement
> manifesté. «S'unifiant avec le *logos*» fait donc référence au résultat de
> l'activité formatrice de l'éon, ainsi qu'à la condition néssaire à cette
> activité. En termes philosophiques, l'éon constitue à la fois l'âme
> irrationnelle en voie d'être formée, et le démiurge qui donne lui-même
> forme à l'informe.[165]

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163. See also Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* I 4.5 where Sophia conceives pneumatic offspring in response to
 the manifestation of the Saviour and his angels (for the Saviour's angelic retinue in the *Tripartite
 Tractate* see 87.22-26). See also Pagels, 'Conflicting Versions of Valentinian Eschatotogy', p.40:
 "Finally freed from the encumbrances of her passions, having undergone conversion, Sophia receives
 the vision of light. At this final stage of the process of restoration she conceives the 'seed'".
164. Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.373. Trans: "For the Valentinians, by manifesting the
 Pleroma, the Saviour reveals the archetypal Man, himself the image of the Father; and on receiving the
 manifestation, the fallen aeon produces the spiritual man, which is a copy of that which has been
 revealed".
165. Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartit* p.374. Trans: "This λόγος which one could translate
 'rationality' or 'reason' is the formative power granted to the aeon by the manifestation of the Son.
 One should not really think of the aeon and his offspring as two separate entities. In a sense, the
 offspring represent the state into which the aeon forms himself, with the aid of the internally manifested
 Saviour-Son. 'Uniting *logos* with himself' therefore refers to the result of the aeon's formative activity,
 just as to the necessary condition for this activity. In philosophical terms, the aeon constitutes at once
 the irrational soul being formed, and the demiurge who himself gives shape to the unformed".

This *Logos* of the Son, which is His essence, is, I would suggest, also the *Logos* of the Johannine prologue, which features in the *Gospel of Truth*.

The pneumatic copy of the Pleroma is not equal to it, "because they do not originate from a union between the one who brought them forth and the one who manifested Himself to him" (*Tripartite Tractate* 90.35-91.1). Though they are great (*Tripartite Tractate* 91.4-5), they are not the product of syzygy and so are only "after the image of the Pleroma"[166] (*Tripartite Tractate* 94.11-12). Furthermore, although this copy is "in itself perfect" it "was indeed smaller than that of which it was an image, but it has its indivisibility, for it is the face of the indivisible light" (*Tripartite Tractate* 94.28-31). It is the image of the, "single light, which exists, and which is the All" (94.26-28), which phrase reiterates the nonduality of the Son and the All in His theophany as light to the *logos*.

The images of the Pleroma emitted by the *logos* constitute a hyper-psychic sphere in which he resides; for that is his present state. His Pleroma, though begun, has not yet been achieved: "He [the Son] being manifest to him, but not yet united with him" (*Tripartite Tractate* 92.17-18), this is, "in order that those who had come into being should not perish by the vision of the light, for they cannot sustain His superior greatness" (*Tripartite Tractate* 92.18-22). It is from here that he supervises the οἰκονομία,[167] "for the stability (ⲡⲥⲙⲓⲛⲉ·) of those who had come into being because of him, and so that they might receive something good" (*Tripartite Tractate* 91.12-14).

> This passage emphasizes the "stabilizing" aspect of the salvation provided by the Saviour. Just as the Son provided confirmation (ⲧⲁϫⲣⲟ) to the aeons of the Pleroma (65.7), the Saviour confirms the perfect ones outside the Pleroma (87.5). The *logos* himself is enabled by the Saviour to return to stability (ⲥⲙⲓⲛⲉ) in his Thought (92.23) and he in turn now provides his offspring the stability which they had lacked (80.17). Later (128.19) baptism is called the "confirmation (ⲧⲁϫⲣⲟ) of the truth".[168]

In this way, "en reflétant la perfection de son modèle pléromatique, elle impose ordre et rationalité sur le cosmosé".[169]

The hierarchy within the pneumatic sphere also reflects that of which it is a copy. This is expressed in the symbolism of heavenly chariots:

> those whom he deliberately brought forth are in chariots, ... so that they may rise past all stations, these being inferior things, in order that each may be given the right region in accordance with what he is. (*Tripartite Tractate* 91.18-25)

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166. ⲕⲁⲧⲁ ⲧϩⲓⲕⲱⲛ ⲇⲉ· ⲙⲡⲗⲏⲣⲟⲙⲁ· / κατὰ εἰκὼν δὲ πλήρωμα.

167. "The *logos*, then, received in full all these things [from the Son], the pre-existent, those which are now and those which will be, as he had been entrusted with the economy of all existing things" (*Tripartite Tractate* 95.17-22).

168. Attridge and Pagels, 'The Tripartite Tractate: I, 5:51.1-138.27', in *Nag Hammadi Codex I (The Jung Codex): Notes*, p.359. Attridge and Pagels continue, "note the striking usage in the Valentinian initiation formula in Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* I 21.3: ἐστήριγμαι καὶ λελύτρωμαι. Williams demonstrates that this language ultimately derives from the Platonic tradition where the stability of the ideal world was contrasted with the mutability of the phenomenal world". The *Treatise on the Resurrection* (48.30-33), quoted above pp.62-63, also speaks of the stability of the resurrection.

169. Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.374. Trans: "by reflecting the perfection of its pleromatic model it [the pneumatic sphere] imposes order and rationality on the cosmos". For the slight difference between the *Tripartite Tractate* and the Valentinian systems of the Church Fathers over the function of the pneumatic sphere (while in the former it is both anthropogonical and cosmogonical, in the latter it is only anthropogonical) see Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, pp.374-375.

This symbolism is again inherited from both the Judeo-Christian and Graeco-Roman traditions.[170] Each chariot raises its pneumatic charioteer, one of those "deliberately brought forth",[171] to his proper position in the spiritual hierarchy above the cosmic realm of the psychics and hylics.

The stability afforded by the pneumatic realm is an, "overthrow (ογϣαρϣρ) for those who belong to the imitation" (*Tripartite Tractate* 91.25-26). This is because the hylics are by nature creatures of chaos. On the other hand it is, "an act of beneficence for those who belong to the remembrance" (*Tripartite Tractate* 91.26-27), for the psychics are by nature inclined towards the Good, and this stability helps them to achieve that for which they yearn. For the pneumatics it is of course a "manifestation" (*Tripartite Tractate* 91.27). However, for the moment they remain, "seeds (εϩ̄ncΠϵρΜλ / σπέρμα) which have not yet come into being to themselves" (*Tripartite Tractate* 91.31-32):

> La «semence» est un terme répandu pour désigner la progéniture spirituelle de Sophia ... Ce nom implique quelque chose qui n'est pas encore actualisé, et le TracTri contrairement à d'autres documents valentiniens, indique explicitement que cette progéniture n'a pas encore atteint à l'existence subjective. Manifestement, ceci implique qu'elle n'atteindra à l'existence pleine qu'en accomplissant sa fonction cosmique, qui est de s'instruire et progresser de façon à réaliser l'économie du salut. La même idée qu'en 91:32 se retrouve dans la description des éons embryonnaires en 60:26-61:7. La théorie de la génération du Plérôme préfigure de façon mythologique l'histoire (individuelle et collective) du salut.[172]

This manifestation of the pneumatics, even though only in seed form, manifests, "a face of the Father and the consent" (*Tripartite Tractate* 91.33-34) since they are the image of the Son.[173] This manifestation is directed towards the psychics as the "beneficence" spoken of above:

> It was a garment of every grace, and food, destined for those whom the *logos* brought forth when he prayed. (*Tripartite Tractate* 91.34-37)[174]

It further strengthens their characteristic "mutual co-operation and hope of the promise"

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170. Attridge and Pagels, 'The Tripartite Tractate: I, 5:51.1-138.27', in *Nag Hammadi Codex I (The Jung Codex): Notes*, p.360 considers the Platonic tradition rooted in the *Timaeus* 41E and the *Phaedrus* 247B to be more influential than that of Jewish Merkabah and the Christian 'fiery chariot' symbolism of the *Apocryphon of James*. See also Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.375.

171. See Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.375 on the meaning of προαίρεσις here.

172. Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.376. Trans: "The 'seed' is a widespread term for designating the spiritual offspring of Sophia .... This name implies something that is not yet actualised, and the *Tripartite Tractate* contrary to other Valentinian documents, explicitly indicates that these offspring have not yet attained subjective existence. Obviously, this implies that they will only reach full existence when they have accomplished their cosmic function, which is by being taught and progressing so as to realise the economy of salvation. The same idea as 91.32 is found in the description of the embryonic aeons in 60.26-61.7. The theory of the generation of the Pleroma mythologically prefigures the (individual and collective) salvation history".

173. "For in consent they resemble the consent in the assembly of those who manifested themselves" (*Tripartite Tractate* 94.21-23). Attridge and Pagels, 'The Tripartite Tractate: I, 5:51.1-138.27', in *Nag Hammadi Codex I (The Jung Codex): Introduction, Texts, Translations, Indices*, pp.258-259 translate ϯ Μϵτϵ as "harmony" rather than "consent".

174. Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.376 is justified in arguing that, against Attridge and Pagels, 'The Tripartite Tractate: I, 5:51.1-138.27', in *Nag Hammadi Codex I (The Jung Codex): Notes*, p.361, this passage is concerned with the psychics. It is they who are brought forth through the *logos*'s remembrance of and prayer to the Pleroma (*Tripartite Tractate* 82.10-83.35).

(*Tripartite Tractate* 92.6-7). Thomassen notes that the soteriological relationship between the pneumatics and the psychics corresponds to that between the Son and the *logos*:

> l'être inférieur, imparfait et désordonné, est ramené à l'ordre et éduqué par la puissance supérieure; les spirituels sont donc en un sens les sauveurs des psychiques. D'un autre point du vue, les spirituels sont uniquement les médiateurs, situés sur un niveau inférieur, de l'unique révélation formatrice du Sauveur-Fils et de ses satellites, dont ils sont les images.[175]

The pneumatic realm, perfect image of the Pleroma, is typically called the Ogdoad in Valentinianism. It is that "place" (ⲦⲞⲠⲞⲤ / τόπος) in the middle, below the Pleroma and above the cosmos. From another point of view, it may be said to enclose the cosmos but be enclosed by the Pleroma. However, such topological language must not be taken literally. The cosmos is outside the Pleroma only in so far as it is ignorant of it and is unable to perceive its immanence. It is worth briefly stepping into history to note that the Valentinian opponents of Irenaeus themselves pointed this out to him:

> If driven to despair in regard to these points, they confess that the Father of All contains all things, and that there is nothing whatever outside of the Fullness ... and that they speak of what is without and what within in reference to knowledge and ignorance, and not with respect to local distance; but that, in the Fullness, or in those things which are contained by the Father, the whole creation which we know to have been formed, having been made by the Demiurge, or by the angels, is contained by the unspeakable greatness as the center is in a circle or as a spot is in a garment.[176]

This nondual perspective underlies such teachings as "For who contains if not the Father alone?" in the *Gospel of Truth* (27.9-10) and as saying113 from the *Gospel of Thomas*, "His disciples said to him, 'When will the kingdom come?' (Jesus said,) 'It will not come by waiting for it. It will not be a matter of saying 'here it is' or 'there it is'. Rather, the kingdom of the Father is spread out upon the earth, and men do not see it'", and, of course Luke 17:20–21, "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, 'Lo here!' or, 'Lo there!' for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you (ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ ἐντὸς ὑμῶν ἐστιν.)".

The Ogdoad, one of the names of which is "kingdom" (ⲘⲚⲦⲢ̅Ⲣ̅Ⲟ = βασιλεία) (*Tripartite Tractate* 93.5), is, then, the intermediary between Reality and the world of appearances and is the conduit through which the former effects the οἰκονομία in the latter. Cosmologically, as a realm of immovability it creates and orders the ever changing cosmos. Soteriologically, it is the place of rest where gather all those who, by perceiving its true nature, are liberated from the cosmos, until the consummation.

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175. Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.376. Trans: "the inferior being, imperfect and disorderly, is brought back to order and educated by the superior power; the spirituals are thus in a sense the saviours of the psychics. From another point of view, the spirituals are only the mediators, situated on an inferior level, of the unique formative revelation of the Saviour-Son and his satellites, of whom they are the images". This is a good example of the soteriological relation of syzygy that is to be found at all levels of existence.

176. Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* II 4.2. See Schoedel, "'Topological' Theology and some Monistic Tendencies in Gnosticism'.

The rest of the spiritual (Ἡ μὲν οὖν τῶν πνευματικῶν ἀνάπαυσις) on the Lord's day — that is, in the Ogdoad (Ὀγδοάδι), which is called the Lord's day — is with the Mother, who keeps their souls, the garments (τὰ ἐνδύματα), until the consummation (ἄρχι συντελείας).[177]

As well as "kingdom" this sphere is given several other names in the *Tripartite Tractate*. Two of the most prominent are, "'Aeon' (αἰών) and 'Place' (τόπος)" (*Tripartite Tractate* 92.26).[178] 'Aeon' is an unusual designation, and occurs in no other Valentinian text, although it is, "en parfaite harmonie avec ses connotations religieuses et physiques sous l'Empire".[179] Topos, on the other hand, is a common and polyvalent term in Valentinian theology,[180] often used for 'the middle place' (ὁ μεσότητος τόπος),[181] "à l'instar du ὑπερουράνιος τόπος de la tradition platonicienne".[182]

it is also called "a synagogue of salvation" (ΟΥCΥΝΑΓΩΓΗ ΝΝΟΥΧΑΕΙΤΕ / συναγωγὴ σωτηρίας) because it healed him [the *logos*] from the dispersion (ΠΙΧΩΡΕ / διασπορά), which is the multiple thought, and made him turn towards the unique Thought. Thus it is also called "storehouse" (ΑΠΟΘΗΚΗ / ἀποθήκη) because of the rest (ΠΙΜΤΑΝ / ἀνάπαυσις) which he attained and gave himself. (*Tripartite Tractate* 92.28-36)

This language obviously draws on Judaic symbolism, especially, according to Thomassen,[183] that of the heavenly congregation in sectarian Judaism and rabbinism. As an image of the pleromatic ἐκκλησία, συναγωγή is an apt designation for the Aeon of the *logos*, it being a reminder of its origin and end. The Synagogue as a single or united Thought, is contrasted with the diaspora (διασπορά) of multiple thought; the myriad concerns of the psychic and hylic domains. This, "jeu de mots éthique et psychologique avec deux termes juifs bien connus"[184] symbolically highlights the difference in nature between the Ogdoad and the cosmos. In this context 'gathering together' or 'assembling' (συνάγω) is used in a sense that is primarily collective,[185] such as in the *Excerpta ex Theodoto* 26 where Jesus, "the door" (ἡ Θύρα)[186] gathers the seed who are the pneumatic

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177. Clement, *Excerpta ex Theodoto* 63.1 (Sagnard, pp.184-187). See Pagels, 'Conflicting Versions of Valentinian Eschatotogy', pp.44-46.

178. "For that in which the *logos* established himself, perfect in joy, was an aeon (ΝΕΥΟΥΑΙΩΝ)" (*Tripartite Tractate* 93.20-22).

179. Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, pp.377-378. Trans: "in perfect harmony with its religious and physical connotations under the Empire".

180. For which see Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, pp.378-379. For the use of τόπος in the New Testament see Blaz & Schneider, *The Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, III, pp.366-367.

181. Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* I 5.3-4 & 7.1.

182. Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.379. Trans: "Following the example of the ὑπερουράνιος τόπος (place beyond the heavens) of the Platonic tradition". Here Thomassen refers to the *Phaedrus* 247c2.

183. Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.379.

184. Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.379. Trans: "ethical and psychological pun on two well known Jewish terms".

185. Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.379 cites Heracleon in Origen's *Commentary on The Gospel of John* XIII 41, 44, 46, 49.

186. In Clement, *Excerpta ex Theodoto* 26.2 Jesus declares: "I am the door" (Ἐγώ εἰμι ἡ Θύρα), of whom "The invisible part is the Name, who is the Only-begotten Son" (τὸ δὲ ἀόρατον ‹τὸ› Ὄνομα, ὅπερ ἐστὶν ὁ Υἱὸς ὁ Μονογενής.) 26.1.

Church[187] who cross the *Horos* and enter the Pleroma through and with Him:

> When he himself enters, the seed shall enter with him into the Pleroma,
> "gathered together" and introduced by the "Door". (*Excerpta ex Theodoto*
> 26)[188]

Sagnard[189] considers that the gathering together of the seed here points to Matthew 3.12,
"and [He will] gather his wheat into the barn (καὶ συνάξει τὸν σῖτον αὐτοῦ εἰς τὴν
ἀποθήκην)".[190] The context here is John the Baptist's telling of the coming of the Christ
who will baptise with, "the Holy Spirit, and with fire" (Matthew 3.11; Luke 3.16). This is
entirely relevant to the meaning of our passage in the *Tripartite Tractate*. As we shall see
in the next chapter,[191] it is through Baptism with the Holy Spirit that the Son fills up the
deficiency (ὑστέρημα) of man, who then attains the rest (ἀνάπαυσις) of the pneumatic
topos and thence his fullness (πλήρωμα). Hence the statement, impenetrable at first
glance becomes clear: "thus it is also called 'storehouse' (ἀποθήκη) because of the rest
(ἀνάπαυσις) which he attained and gave himself" (*Tripartite Tractate* 92.33-36).[192]

As clearly as this passage on the realm of the *logos* draws on the Biblical tradition, it is
in equal accord with ancient Greek thinking. In his essay on Heraclitus's fragment B 50,
Heidegger investigates the essential meaning of λόγος. It is worth quoting his exploration
at some length, both because Heidegger is impossible to paraphrase and because of the
extraordinary resonances it has with, and light it sheds on, our subject.

> What λόγος is we gather from λέγειν. What does λέγειν mean?
> Everyone familiar with the language knows that λέγειν means talking and
> saying; λόγος means λέγειν as a saying aloud, and λεγόμενον as that
> which is said.
>
> Who would want to deny that in the language of the Greeks from early
> on λέγειν means to talk, say, or tell? However, just as early and even more
> originally — and therefore already in the previously cited meaning — it
> means what our similarly sounding *legen* means: to lay down and lay
> before. In *legen* a "bringing together" prevails, the Latin *legere* understood
> as *lesen*, in the sense of collecting and bringing together. Λέγειν properly
> means the laying-down and laying-before which gathers itself and others. ...
>
> All the same it remains incontestable that λέγειν means, predominately if
> not exclusively, saying and talking. Must we therefore, in deference to this
> preponderant and customary meaning of λέγειν, which assumes multiple
> forms, simply toss the genuine meaning of the word, λέγειν as laying, to the
> winds? Dare we ever do such a thing? Or is it not finally time to engage
> ourselves with a question which probably decides many things? The
> question asks: How does the proper sense of λέγειν, to lay, come to mean
> saying and talking?

187. Sagnard, p.113., «Ici est *explicitement* affirmé que ces semences sont aussi l'*Église* (de meme que 1.1
disaient qu'elles étaient *Pneuma*)». Trans: "Here it is explicitly affirmed that these seeds are also the
Church (just as 1.1 said that they were *Pneuma*)", as it is in the *Tripartite Tractate* 94.16-21, "They are
the forms of maleness, because they are not from the sickness which is femaleness, but they are from
the one who has already left the sickness behind, possessing the name of the Church".

188. Clement, *Excerpta ex Theodoto* 26.3: "Όταν δὲ καὶ αὐτὸς εἰσέρχηται, καὶ τὸ σπέρμα
συνεισέρχεται αὐτῷ εἰς τὸ Πλήρωμα, διὰ τῆς θύρας «συναχθὲν» καὶ εἰσαχθέν.

189. Sagnard, p113.

190. Also Luke 3.17 (συναγαγεῖν τὸν σῖτον εἰς τὴν ἀποθήκην αὐτοῦ). Sagnard also finds reference
here to John 4.36, "and gathereth fruit unto life eternal (καὶ συνάγει καρπὸν εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον)".

191. Section 4.10.

192. Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.380 draws our attention to Heracleon's statement that,
"the storehouse is the place where one obtains rest" in Origen's *Commentary on John* XIII 41 and 44.

In order to find the foothold for an answer, we need to reflect on what actually lies in λέγειν as laying. To lay means to bring to lie. Thus, to lay is at the same time to place one thing beside another, to lay them together. To lay is to gather [*lesen*]. The *lesen* better known to us, namely, the *reading* of something written, remains but one sort of gathering, in the sense of bringing-together-into-lying-before, although it is indeed the predominant sort. The gleaning at harvest time gathers fruit from the soil. The gathering of the vintage involves picking grapes from the vine. Picking and gleaning are followed by the bringing together of the fruit. So long as we persist in the usual appearances we are inclined to take this bringing together as the gathering itself or even its termination. But gathering is more than mere amassing. To gathering belongs a collecting which brings under shelter. Accommodation governs the sheltering; accommodation is in turn governed by safekeeping. That "something extra" which makes gathering more than a jumbling together that snatches things up is not something only added afterward. Even less is it the conclusion of the gathering, coming last. The safekeeping that brings something in has already determined the first steps of the gathering and arranged everything that follows. If we are blind to everything but the sequence of steps, then the collecting follows the picking and gleaning, the bringing under shelter follows the collecting, until finally everything is accommodated in bins and storage rooms. This gives rise to the illusion that preservation and safekeeping have nothing to do with gathering. Yet what would become of a vintage [*eine Lese*] which has not been gathered with an eye to the fundamental matter of its being sheltered? The sheltering [*Bergen*] comes first in the essential formation of the vintage. However, the sheltering does not secure just any thing that happens along: the gathering which properly begins with the sheltering, i.e. the vintage, is itself from the start a selection [*Auslese*] which requires sheltering. For its part, the selection is determined by whatever within the crop to be sorted shows itself as to-be-selected [*Erlesene*]. The most important aspect of the sheltering in the essential formation of the vintage is the sorting (in Alemanic [the southwestern German dialect]: the fore-gathering [*Vor-lese*]) which determines the selection, arranging everything involved in the bringing together, the bringing under shelter, and the accommodation of the vintage.[193]

My intention here is not to imply that the Valentinian world draws directly on that of Heraclitus, but only that it is heir to his legacy, through Platonism and Neo-pythagoreanism, as much as it is to that of the Gospels and Paul. It is equally of the Hellenistic and Biblical worlds, and, I would say, it works from the *perception* that these worlds of discourse are actually speaking, in their different ways, from and of the same Truth.[194]

What is extraordinary about this examination of the essence of λόγος in ancient Greek thinking, from our point of view, is that it brings together all of the salient features of the realm of the *logos* in the *Tripartite Tractate*. This realm, as we have seen, is a gathering and a sheltering of the seed; a "laying-down and laying-before which gathers" to use

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193. Heidegger, 'Logos (Heraclitus, Fragment B 50)', pp.60-62.
194. For a detailed argument, on the socio-historical level, that the historical Valentinians actively sought to reconcile these two traditions see Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism": An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category*, Chapter Five: 'Anticosmic World-Rejection? or Sociocultural Accomodation?', pp.96-115. Interestingly, although Williams's argument and my own seem compatible, they are actually working from opposing ontologies.

Heidegger's language. It may not be going too far to suggest that this 'laying-down' seems also to incorporate an element of rest. While it is highly significant that this 'safekeeping' is actually that which determines the selection (ἐκλογή) and gathering of the seed, who are later called the 'Elect' (ἐκλεκτός), for the Aeon of the *logos* is established as a συναγωγὴ σωτηρίας (synagogue of salvation) and ἀποθήκη (storehouse) prior to and in expectation of the union of the *logos* with the Saviour:

> the seeds which are to come into being he [the *logos*] has within himself, from the promise (ⲡⲱ̣ⲡ ⲱ̣ⲡ), which was that by which he conceived. (*Tripartite Tractate* 95.24-27)[195]

Thus the gathering of the seed in the Aeon of the *logos* is already looking forward to the ultimate gathering of the pneumatic Elect in the Saviour, which, as we shall see, is their ἀποκατάστασις (restoration) to the unity of the Pleroma.[196]

Another name for this place is,

> "bride" because of his joy when he attained it [the rest], in response to the hope of a fruit (καρπός) from the union which was manifested to him. (*Tripartite Tractate* 93.1-4)

'Bride' here introduces the mythologoumenon of the bride and the bridegroom which is part of the rite of the Bridal Chamber, which is discussed in Chapter 4.[197] Here it applies to the general theory of syzygies and also to the relationship between the Saviour and Sophia. The *logos*/Sophia is to be the bride of the Son-Saviour, the bridegroom, in the restoration to the pleromatic Bridal Chamber.

> And it is called "the joy of the Lord" because of the delight with [which] he clothed himself when the light was before him, giving him recompense for the good which was in him and the Thought of freedom. (*Tripartite Tractate* 93.1-13)

3.10 The Structuring of the Three Realms

One difference between the members of the Aeon of the *logos* and those of which they are images is that they are still subject to the sickness of passion (*Tripartite Tractate* 95.2-3), insofar as, "individually each of them has not cast off that which is peculiar to him" since, "they are not offspring from the union of the Pleroma" (*Tripartite Tractate* 95.1-5). That is to say, they are not the product of pleromatic syzygy. This passion is "la division, la séparation, l'individualisme"[198] relative to the unity of πλήρωμα, and should not be confused with the πάθος through which the hylic powers were engendered.

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195. ⲡⲱ̣ⲡ ⲱ̣ⲡ can also be translated as "expectation". For ⲱ̣ⲡ as "expect" see Crum, *A Coptic Dictionary*, p.535a. See also Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.511 for ⲡⲱ̣ⲡ ⲱ̣ⲡ as «attente» as well as «promesse». It is this promise of the future union of the *logos* and Saviour that engenders the hope (*Tripartite Tractate* 92.7) that characterises the pneumatic realm. As we shall see, the theological virtue of hope is of vital importance to the theology of the *Tripartite Tractate*, as are the other two theological virtues of faith and love.

196. This symbolism is further enhanced by the *Logos* Christology of the *Gospel of Truth* and also by the possible designation of the Holy Spirit as *Logos* later in the *Tripartite Tractate*, see p.150 below.

197. Sections 4.08-4.09 and 4.11-4.12 below.

198. Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.384. Trans: "division, separation, individualism". For the relation here of the Ogdoad to the Platonic World Soul see Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, pp.383-384.

However, far from being lamentable, this passion of the pneumatics is essential to the fulfilment of the οἰκονομία:

> It was a beneficial thing for the economy which was to be, because it had been granted (**ⲉⲁ ⲅⲛⲉⲅⲉ**/νεύειν) them that they should pass by the lower stations (**ⲛ̄ⲧⲟⲡⲟⲥ**), and the stations were not able to accept their sudden, hasty coming through them unless they came one by one, and their coming was necessary because everything was to be fulfilled by them. (*Tripartite Tractate* 95.8-16)

In order to enter the cosmos, which by nature is divided and deficient, and of which they are to be the salvation, the pneumatics must to some degree partake of its nature. As the *Gospel of Philip* states: "Truth did not come into the world naked, but it came in types and images. The world will not receive truth in any other way" (*Gospel of Philip* 67.9-12). Theodotus attests the same idea, where his Valentinian followers are said to designate their angelic syzygies as "male" and themselves, "the superior seed" (τὸ διαφέρον σπέρμα), as "female" (*Excerpta ex Theodoto* 21.1),[199] the excerpt then goes on to,

> describe how the female, that is to say the Valentinian Gnostics themselves, must become male and unite with the angels in order that she — or they — may enter into the fulness of the divine. "Therefore", the fragment summarizes in parallel fashion, "it is said that the woman is changed into a man and the church here below into angels" (21.3). A later excerpt of Theodotus amplifies this idea, and indicates that when a female seed (the spark of light here below) becomes male it is liberated, "for no longer is it weak and subjected to the cosmic (powers)" (79). In a word, it has become heavenly.[200]

Later in the *Excerpta*, Jesus is said to allow himself to be divided by baptism, in order that 'we', may become united with 'our' consorts, the angels:[201]

> But because we exist ourselves in the divided state, for this reason, Jesus was baptized, to divide the undivided, until we should unite with them in the Pleroma; that we, the many, becoming one, may be mingled in the one nature which was divided for our sake. (*Excerpta ex Theodoto* 36.2)[202]

The "seed of the promise", which comprises those through whom everything is to be fulfilled,

> ... is preserved for some time, in order that those who have been appointed shall be appointed for a mission by the advent of the Saviour and those who

199. Sagnard, pp.98-99. See also Clement, *Excerpta ex Theodoto* 26.2, 35.1 and 41.3 for the femaleness of the superior seed.
200. Meyer, 'Making Mary Male: The Categories 'Male' and 'Female' in the Gospel of Thomas', pp.566-567.
201. Sagnard, p139 «C'est la syzygie du Valentinien et de son Ange». Trans: "It is the syzygy of the Valentinian and his Angel".
202. In Clement, *Excerpta ex Theodoto* 22.3 "the 'angels' that is to say, the syzygies, are 'baptized for us' and 'we are baptized' to be 'raised up' and 'restored' (ἀποκατασταθέντες) into unity (ἕνωσιν) with them", Pagels, 'A Valentinian Interpretation of Baptism and Eucharist — and its Critique of "Orthodox" Sacramental Theology and Practice', p.161. See also Sagnard, pp.100-102 & 139 note 1, and Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, pp.384-385.

> are with Him, these are the first ones, for the knowledge and the glory of the Father. (*Tripartite Tractate* 95.32-38)

They are stored, in the "storehouse" (ἀποθήκη), in order to be incarnated with the Saviour and play their part in the economy of salvation.

The *Tripartite Tractate* now sets out in detail how the *logos* "set in order the economy of all that was on the outside, and gave each its appropriate region" (*Tripartite Tractate* 96.14-16). The Ogdoad is, apparently, set in at least four "spiritual stations" or "places" (ΝΙΤΟΠΟϹ ΜΠΝΕΥΜΑΤΙΚΟΝ) (*Tripartite Tractate* 97.16). The first, the "abode" (*Tripartite Tractate* 96.27) or "paradise" (*Tripartite Tractate* 96.29)[203] is the "image of all the good things which exist in Pleroma" (*Tripartite Tractate* 96.32-34).

The second station, the "Kingdom" (*Tripartite Tractate* 96.35) is "like a city (ΝΝΟΥΠΟΛΙϹ/πόλις) filled with every beautiful thing, brotherly love and great generosity" (*Tripartite Tractate* 96.36-39) and is "filled with the holy spirits and strong powers" (*Tripartite Tractate* 97.1-2). It is established with strength. The use of 'filled' here could be a drawing on the early, pre-Homeric, meaning of the Greek word πόλις which meant 'to fill',[204] though, of course, within the more immediate context of this Aeon being the reflection of the truly existent fullness (πλήρωμα). The meaning of this heavenly city is also firmly rooted in the Biblical tradition of the eschatological heavenly Jerusalem.[205]

The third station, the "Church", which has the "shape" of aeonic Church, and is characterised by glorification. This may be related to the heavenly place of the Church in John 14.2, "In my Father's house are many mansions: if [it were] not [so], I would have told you. I go to prepare a place (τόπον) for you".

The fourth is the station of "Faith" and "Obedience [which arises from] hope" (*Tripartite Tractate* 97.10-11), which is kindled by the Son's manifestation to the *logos* as light. Then follow "Prayer and Supplication" (*Tripartite Tractate* 97.13-14), which are the products of forgiveness and are later linked to prophecy (*Tripartite Tractate* 111.23). It is not clear whether the last two constitute a ΤΟΠΟϹ or not. Thomassen sees in them the expression of the hope and expectation of reunion of the Saviour and Pleroma of the fourth station, and distinguishes them from the psychic prayer of the fallen *logos* at *Tripartite Tractate* 81.26ff.[206]

The spiritual stations of the Aeon of the *logos* are set apart from the psychic realm by a "spiritual power" (*Tripartite Tractate* 97.19). This is the power given to the *logos* by the Son, allowing him to order the economy.[207]

The psychic realm has a hierarchy unknown in any other Valentinian system. The remembrance is the highest level, below which comes the conversion and then the "law of judgement, which is the condemnation and the wrath" (*Tripartite Tractate* 97.33-35).[208] This realm is also divided from that below it by a power that does not allow the hylics "to stretch upwards against those who belong to the remembrance" (*Tripartite Tractate* 98.1-2). This power is that of the manifestation of the Son as a lightning flash which ended their mutual entanglement and which instilled beneficence and stability in those of the remembrance and terror in those of the imitation plunging them into the "pit of ignorance" (*Tripartite Tractate* 89.25):

203. See Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.387 for the unusualness of the designation 'Paradise' for the sphere of Sophia in Valentinian theology.
204. Blaz & Schneider, *The Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, III, p.129.
205. See Blaz & Schneider, *The Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, III, p.129. See also Fawcett, *Hebrew Myth & Christian Gospel*, pp.178-180 and 245-250.
206. Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.388.
207. Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, pp.388-389.
208. See p.92 above.

> This is the fear (φόβος) and desperation (ἀπορία) and oblivion (λήθη) and
> ‹error› (πλάνη) and ignorance (ἄγνοια), and the things which came into
> being as an imitation from an illusion (φαντασία). (*Tripartite Tractate*
> 98.2-5)

The two lower realms are now given further names by the *logos*:

> For each of the two orders he named by a name: Those who belong to the
> remembrance (ΠΙΜΕΥΕ) and to the likeness (ΠΙΕΙΝΕ) are called "the right"
> (ΝΙΟΥΝΕΜ) and "psychic" (ΨΥΧΙΚΟΝ) and "the fires" (ΝΙϹΕΤΕ) and "the
> middles" (ΝΙΜΗΤΕ). But those who belong to the presumptuous thought
> and to the imitation are called "the left" (ΝΙϬΒΟΥΡ), "hylic" (ϨΥΛΙΚΟΝ),
> "darkness" (ΝΚΕΚΕ) and "the last"(ΝϨΑΕΟΥΕ). (*Tripartite Tractate* 98.12-
> 20)

These are the traditional Valentinian names of the two realms.[209] Among the names for
the psychic, 'the fires' is worth special comment, for as we shall see later,[210] it plays an
important part in the Valentinian theology of baptism. Fire (πῦρ) and flame (φλόξ) in
Valentinian cosmology occupy that place in the middle, between the light of the spirit and
the darkness of matter, partaking of both. It is luminous and yet material.[211]

The *logos* is now said to "reveal" to those of the remembrance "the [presumptuous]
thought of which he had stripped himself" (*Tripartite Tractate* 98.28-29), in order that
they might be drawn into "association with the material" (*Tripartite Tractate* 98.30),
"towards evil", and so "be exiled" (*Tripartite Tractate* 98.36). Thus it is the same misuse
of free will, which originally produced matter, that now, on a lower level, draws the
individual psychics into the body.

> Que le *Logos* «révèle» (98:27) cette «pensée» aux psychiques, la disposition
> à entrer dans la matière, signifie qu'après avoir été lui-même converti et
> purifié de cette pensée, celle-ci entre en action dans la région inférieure qui
> n'est pas encore entièrement convertie — où les effets de la transgression
> du *Logos* durent toujours.
> Le mot «révèle» suggère en outre que la «pensée présomptueuse» est placée
> devant les psychiques comme une forme de tentation qui les attire mais
> qu'ils peuvent néanmoins surmonter.[212]

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209. For 'Right' and 'Left', Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.390 references Irenaeus,
Adversus Haereses I 5.1-2, 6.1; Clement, *Excerpta ex Theodoto* 34.1, 37, 40, 43.1, 47.2.
210. Sections 4.08 and 4.10 below.
211. See Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.390. He notes that the traditional view that the
celestial bodies are fiery in nature is important here and that for the Valentinians the planetary
Hebdomad is psychic (Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* I 5.4). The *Apocryphon of John* also associates the
demiurge's realm with fire: Yaldabaoth, "created for himself an aeon (αἰών) that burns with a luminous
fire (ΟΥΚΩϨΤ)" (BG 39.1-3).
212. Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.391. Trans: "That the *Logos* 'reveals' (98.27) this
'thought' to the psychics, the disposition to enter into matter, signifies that after having been himself
converted and purified of this thought, it becomes effective in the inferior region which is not yet
entirely converted — where the effects of the transgression of the *Logos* still remain.
    The word 'reveals' suggests moreover that the 'presumptuous thought' is set before the psychics as a
kind of temptation which attracts them but which they may nevertheless overcome". Thomassen here
also comments on the kinship between the *Tripartite Tractate*'s and the Platonic understanding of the
descent of the soul into the body.

The psychics are drawn into this for the educational purpose of perceiving the true nature of the cosmos and so to be liberated from it: to "perceive the sickness which they suffered, so that they might acquire love and a continuous searching after the one who is able to heal them from the weakness" (*Tripartite Tractate* 98.37-99.4).

Over the material realm, whose power is the love of dominion, the pneumatic sphere is appointed to bring it form and the psychic sphere is appointed to rule it, to be subject to and to be kept in place "by the threat of the law" (*Tripartite Tractate* 99.15). Through this appointment, the ranks of psychic and hylic cosmic powers are established, each "having been given responsibility in the economy" (*Tripartite Tractate* 100.6-7). These are the archons whose hierarchical arrangement (*Tripartite Tractate* 99.23-100.5) reflects those of the pneumatic sphere and the Pleroma. They are described in strongly biblical language:

> And none is without a command, and none is without a king above him, from [the end]s of the heavens to the ends of the earth, even until the inhabited [earth] and the regions below the earth. (*Tripartite Tractate* 100.7-12)[213]

The functions of the Archons, like the nature of the fall itself, are described in more positive terms in the *Tripartite Tractate* than is common in Sethian texts from Nag Hammadi such as the *Apocryphon of John* and the *Hypostasis of the Archons*.[214] Thomassen considers this to be the result of Platonic influence on the author of the text.[215] It is important to steer clear of the intentional fallacy in this exegesis. From our hermeneutical perspective this cosmological optimism must surely have something to do with the function of the text, which is to offer a systematic nondual theology. Just as the Plotinian *Enneads*, speak of the beauty or evil of the world depending on the point that is being made from a particular perspective, so too are the Archons spoken of as necessary to the economy or detrimental to liberation depending on whether they are perceived correctly or not.

The Archons' duties cover a broad range: there are, "some to punish, others to give judgement, others to relieve and heal, others to instruct, others still to keep guard" (*Tripartite Tractate* 100.14-17).[216]

Over them all is placed the ruler (ⲀⲢⲬⲰⲚ / ἄρχων) (*Tripartite Tractate* 100.19) who is usually referred to as the demiurge (ὁ δημιουργός) in Valentinian texts.[217] The Archon is brought forth by the *logos*, "in accordance with the likeness (ⲠⲒⲚⲈ) of the Father of the All" (*Tripartite Tractate* 100.24)[218] and to that degree partakes of His attributes, "therefore he is adorned with every (name) so as to resemble Him, possessing all the virtues and all the glories" (*Tripartite Tractate* 100.25-27). These names are, "Father and God and Maker and King and Judge and Place and Abode and Law" (*Tripartite Tractate* 100.28-30).[219]

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213. See Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.393 who refers to Matthew 24:31, Deuteronomy 30:4 and Acts 1:8 and 13:47 of the Sahidic New Testament.
214. See especially, Gilhus, *The Nature of the Archons: A Study in the Soteriology of a Gnostic Treatise from Nag Hammadi (CG II, 4)*, but also Dahl, 'The Arrogant Archon and the Lewd Sophia: Jewish Traditions in Gnostic Revolt', and Pagels, '"The Demiurge and his Archons" — A Gnostic View of the Bishop and his Presbyters?'.
215. Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.394.
216. Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, pp.393-394.
217. Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.394 notes that the only other Valentinian usage of the term ἄρχων is to be found in Clement, *Excerpta ex Theodoto* 33.3, τὸν τῆς οἰκονομίας ... Ἄρχοντα "the ruler of the economy", (Sagnard, pp.132-133), though it is common in other «branches de la littérature gnostique» ("branches of Gnostic literature").
218. Clement, *Excerpta ex Theodoto* 47.2 calls him, "the image of God the Father" εἰκόνα τοῦ Πατρὸς Θεόν, Sagnard, p.159 translates: «un Dieu, Image du Père».
219. See Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, pp.394-395.

As is common in Valentinian sources, the Archon is portrayed here as the instrument of Sophia/*logos* in the creation of the world:[220]

> For the *logos* made use of (ⲁϥⲣ̄ ⲭⲣⲁⲥⲑⲁⲓ) him like a hand in order to shape and work on the things below, and he made use of (ⲛϥⲣ̄ ⲭⲣⲁⲥⲑⲁⲓ) him like a mouth in order to say the things which are prophesied. (*Tripartite Tractate* 100.30-35).

Thomassen points out that, while this passage draws on the Judeo-Christian symbolism of *logos* or Sophia being the hand of God used in creating the world, the use of the technical philosophical term (προσ)χρῆσθαι, which refers to the use of a lower power as an instrument by a higher, places it equally within the Platonic tradition.[221] The same is true of the conjunction of "made use of (ⲛϥⲣ̄ ⲭⲣⲁⲥⲑⲁⲓ) him" and "like a mouth", and the association of the Archon with prophecy is also made by other Valentinian writings, especially those of Heracleon, where prophecy is clearly of the psychic realm.[222]

Equally characteristically of Valentinian theology,[223] the demiurge, on seeing the beauty of creation that has been formed through him, pridefully credits himself as the sole cause of the cosmos, not recognising his status as an instrument of the *logos*:

> For after having seen that the things which he said and made were great and beautiful and marvellous he rejoiced and was happy as if it were he who from his thoughts had spoken them and made them, not knowing that the movement within him was from the Spirit which moved him in a pre-determined way towards that which it wanted. (*Tripartite Tractate* 100.36-101.5)

It is worth remarking again that the beauty of the cosmos is never called into question, only its status as that which is most real. It is not Reality in the same way that it is not Beauty. It is beautiful in as much as it reflects the beauty of the Pleroma.

The economy that the Archon utters into being (*Tripartite Tractate* 101.6) is the psychic "likeness of the pneumatic stations" (*Tripartite Tractate* 101.7-8) of the Aeon of the *logos*,

> He established a rest for those who obey him ... also a paradise and a kingdom and everything else which is in the Aeon which is before him (*Tripartite Tractate* 101.25-33)

The rest that he establishes can of course only be the relative freedom from the hylic passions and is not true, pneumatic rest. This being the psychic realm, he also establishes punishments for those who do not obey him (*Tripartite Tractate* 101.27-28). The stations of this sphere partake of, are "joined" (*Tripartite Tractate* 101.35) by, the presumptuous thought, "which is like a shadow or a veil, in such a way that he does not see how the

220. Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.396 cites Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* I 5:1.3.6; Clement, *Excerpta ex Theodoto* 47.2, 49.1, 53.4.

221. Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.395. See also Thomassen, 'The Platonic and the Gnostic 'Demiurge''.

222. For which see Pagels's *The Johannine Gospel in Gnostic Exegesis*, see also Heracleon Fragment 8 (Origen, *Commentary on The Gospel of John* 6.39), Clement, *Stromateis* 4.13.90 and Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* II 35.2, IV 36. Attridge and Pagels, 'The Tripartite Tractate: I, 5:51.1-138.27', in *Nag Hammadi Codex I (The Jung Codex): Notes*, p.393 quote *Adversus Haereses* I 7.3: "the Valentinians 'divide the prophecies, maintaining that the one portion was uttered by the mother, a second by her seed and a third by the Demiurge'".

223. Clement, *Excerpta ex Theodoto* 49.1, 53.4; Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* I 5.1.

things which exist exist" (*Tripartite Tractate* 101.35-102.3). He perceives neither the contingent, shadowy nature of the cosmos nor his subordinate role in its creation.

This structure is replicated on the hylic level when the "invisible spirit" (*Tripartite Tractate* 102.32), which as we have seen is most likely the Holy Spirit, stirs in the Archon the "desire to administer by means of a servant of his own, whom he too made use of like a hand and like a mouth" (*Tripartite Tractate* 103.1-5). This is the hylic ruler, who orders the material sphere into three levels: the "pneumatic" (*Tripartite Tractate* 103.18), the "middle" (psychic) (*Tripartite Tractate* 103.21) and the "last" (hylic) (*Tripartite Tractate* 103.30).[224] Though this ruler brings forth "order and threat and fear" (*Tripartite Tractate* 103.7-8) he works for the economy by keeping the material order in check and so is not considered evil.[225] The pneumatic-hylics are those whom the fallen *logos* first "brought forth as an illusion and a presumption" (*Tripartite Tractate* 103.16-17). The middles are those "brought forth in the love of dominion" (*Tripartite Tractate* 103.19-20), these control those below them with "compulsion and force" (*Tripartite Tractate* 103.25). The Last are those who "had come into being from envy and jealousy" (*Tripartite Tractate* 103.26-27) and these control the "whole (realm of) procreation" (*Tripartite Tractate* 103.31).

This brings us to the end of the first part of the *Tripartite Tractate*, which is in actual fact sixty percent of the entire text. The short second part deals with the creation of man while the third part is concerned with salvation, as we shall see in the next chapter.

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224. Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.400, «Les valentiniens désignent souvent une certaine classe deé puissances hyliques par le terme πνεύματα (Valentin, *ap.* Clément, *Strom.*, II, 14:3-4; Irénée, *AH*, I, 5:4; *ExtTh*, 48:2, 77:3, 83; *ExpVal*, 38:27)». Trans: "The Valentinians frequently refer to one class of hylic powers as πνεύματα (Valentinus in Clement, *Stromateis* II 14.3-4; Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* I 5.4; Clement, *Excerpta ex Theodoto* 48.2, 77.3, 83; *Valentinian Exposition* 38.27).

225. See Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, pp.398-399 on this figure in Valentinian theology, who is called διάβολος and κοσμοκράτωρ by Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* I 5.4.

Chapter Four
From the Many to the One

4.01 Man

> For the habitation of the Word is man,
> And His truth is love. (*Odes of Solomon* 12.12)

The second part of the *Tripartite Tractate* is concerned with the creation and nature of man. Although it is the shortest part of the tractate, only four pages of the codex (104-108), it is pivotal. For man is that being on which the entire οἰκονομία turns. Only through man can the creation be fulfilled. In this way his advent marks the end of creation: its farthest reaches, for nothing can move further from God than man, and its goal. Yet only through man can it be fulfilled, hence he also appears to be the beginning of the return of all things to the Father. One way of saying this is that the economy is entirely for the sake of man, another way of putting it is that it is only in and through man that the economy can be perfected. We must, however, keep in mind that the procession from and return to the Father occur concurrently, not in succession, although narrative does not allow this simultaneity to be presented as such. Thus the first part of the *Tripartite Tractate* details the procession of All from the One, the second part establishes the fulcrum, and the third part explores the journey of All back to the One.

Man reflects the three-fold nature of existence:

> For the first man is a mixed mould and a mixed creation, and a deposit of the left and the right and a spiritual *logos*. (*Tripartite Tractate* 106.18-22)

The three-fold economy was established for the sake of this three-fold man:

> For the whole establishment and design of the images, likenesses and imitations has come into being for the sake of those who need nourishment and education (ⲞⲨⲤⲂⲰ) and formation, in order that the smallness may gradually grow, as through the likeness of a mirror. (*Tripartite Tractate* 104.18-25)

Smallness is a technical term for the deficiency of the cosmos in Valentinian theology;[1] the *Treatise on the Resurrection* declares that "strong is the system of the Pleroma; small is that which broke loose and became the world (κόσμος)". The notion that the world, which the *Valentinian Exposition* (37.30) calls a "school", is a reflection of the divine from which one can learn of the reality upon which it is modelled, draws, as Thomassen notes, on both the Christian (1 Corinthians 13.12), and Platonic traditions, and is implicit in the word οἰκονομία.[2]

Each realm, the hylic, psychic and pneumatic contributes of itself to man's making:

> he became like an earthly shadow, so as to be like [those who] are cut off from the All, and [a] creation of them all, the right as well as the left, each

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1. Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.424.
2. Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.402, who also links this closely to the figure of the "trace" in *Tripartite Tractate* 66.3 (quoted p.71 above) and 73.5. 1 Corinthians 13:12 "For now we see in a mirror, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known". For mirror symbolism in the Platonic Tradition see Armstrong, *Platonic Mirrors*. Regarding the economy see Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.402, see also section 2.06 above.

> [of the or]ders forming [man in the way] in which it (itself) is. (*Tripartite Tractate* 105.3-10)

The *logos*, through the demiurge (*Tripartite Tractate* 105.18), and here the Archon is now called the demiurge (ⲡⲇⲏⲙⲓⲟⲩⲣⲅⲟⲥ), imparts the "first form" (*Tripartite Tractate* 105.17), the "Breath of Life" (ⲛⲓϥⲉ ⲛ̅ⲱⲛ̅ϩ̅ = πνοή ζωῆς) (*Tripartite Tractate* 105.23),[3] also called "the invisible" (*Tripartite Tractate* 105.24-25), to the body composed of the hylic and the psychic mixed together. That body, being "oblivion, ignorance, [...] and all other sicknesses" (*Tripartite Tractate* 105.14-16) is at first dead, "For ignorance is that which is dead" (*Tripartite Tractate* 105.28).[4] But this breath is the "living soul (ψυχὴ ζῶσα) which has given life to the <substance> which was dead at first" (*Tripartite Tractate* 105.25-27). This "spiritual substance is a name and a single image, and its sickness is that of the condition (of being) in many forms" (*Tripartite Tractate* 106.6-9).[5] This statement is worth dwelling on. Death, which is the sickness, ignorance and oblivion, suffered by the pneumatic element in man is the condition of being in many forms, for the spirit's nature is unitive. The implication here is that, no matter the multiplicity of humanity, the pneumatic element in each person is one. It is a single breath trapped in many forms. It is not even right to think of it as many pieces of reality trapped in the illusion of multiplicity, for reality is not divisible. Its sickness is that this unity is fooled into believing itself to be many. This is spoken of in terms of man's hylic substance, the product of the presumptuous thought, whose "impulses are manifold and of many shapes" (*Tripartite Tractate* 106.14-16), and of his psychic substance, which "is double, as it has understanding and confession of that which is superior, and <also> is inclined towards evil" (*Tripartite Tractate* 106.10-13).[6]

It is because of his tripartite nature that "a paradise was planted for him, so that he might eat of the fruit of three sorts of tree, (this) being a garden of the threefold order, this (garden) of delight" (*Tripartite Tractate* 106.27-30). That the garden is for joy implies that the reason for creation, even at the psychic level, is bliss, just as it is at the highest level, for what else is the superabundance and richness of the Father? Being psychic the archons attempt to keep man from the pneumatic bliss offered by the tree of life. And because the *logos* "did not strike them" (*Tripartite Tractate* 106.34-35), in the way that the Saviour did to subject the psychic and hylic realms to order (*Tripartite Tractate* 89.6-8 and 90.12), they are able to issue a "threatening command" (*Tripartite Tractate* 106.36) to man in paradise, namely, the injunction in Genesis 2.16 not to eat of the tree of knowledge.

> And great danger was brought over him, namely death. (*Tripartite Tractate* 106.37-107.1)

3.   Attridge and Pagels, 'The Tripartite Tractate: I, 5:51.1-138.27', in *Nag Hammadi Codex I (The Jung Codex): Notes*, p.409 translate this as "living spirit" though recognise the alternate translation "breath of life".

4.   Pagels, 'The Mystery of the Resurrection', p.278, suggests, on her reading of Heracleon and the *Treatise on the Resurrection* that 'death' and related terms "are to be interpreted not literally (as of biological death [*contra* Peel]) but symbolically in reference to the 'dead members' of the 'body of Christ' — i.e. the *psychics*".

5.   Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, pp.405-406 points out that while the 'Breath of Life', in the 'Gnostic' interpretation of Genesis 2.7, does refer to the transmission of spiritual essence to Man through the breath of the demiurge in the *Apocryphon of John* BG 51.14-20 and Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* I 5.5, it more usually refers to the transmission of the psychic essence from the demiurge himself, for example Clement, *Excerpta ex Theodoto* 50.2-3, *Apocalypse of Adam* NHC V, 66.21-23, *Hypostasis of the Archons* 88.3-5. Additionally the designation "first form" and the use of the word "soul" here imply that the breath is only potentially spiritual, though the fact that it is invisible to the psychic realm indicates that it is already beyond psychic perception.

6.   Accepting Thomassen's emmendation, see Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, pp.184-185 and 406-407.

Thus the Archon only allows Adam two of the pleasures, the psychic and hylic, of the three-fold garden.

However, the serpent, "more cunning than all the evil powers" (*Tripartite Tractate* 107.11-12) deceives man, "in order to make him transgress the commandment so that he should die" (*Tripartite Tractate* 107.15-16). In other related exegetical traditions the serpent is seen in a very positive light; conferring a level of *gnosis*.[7] But here it works on behalf of the hylic powers (*Tripartite Tractate* 107.13-14). Thus Adam is expelled from the hylic and psychic pleasures of Paradise (*Tripartite Tractate* 107.17-21). This is not, as it might initially seem, a victory for the evil powers, since Adam's expulsion and mortality is actually "a work of providence":

> in order that it should be realized that brief is the time that man may enjoy those goods compared to \<the eternities> in which the place of rest exists; that which the spirit has fixed, having planned that man should \<experience> the greatest evil, namely death, that is to say the complete ignorance of everything — and that he should also experience all those evils which would arise from that, and that after the greeds and the anxieties which result from these, he should partake of the greatest good, namely eternal life, that is to say the full knowledge of the All, and the participation in all good things. (*Tripartite Tractate* 107.23-108.4)[8]

This passage succinctly presents the intention behind the economy of salvation. The greatest evil, death, which is the total ignorance of all that is, and its results, are necessary to the salvation of man, for by perceiving the limited, impermanent nature of those things of the likeness and imitation of the real, man may finally come to know that which is eternal, unchanging and perfect, and, knowing it, will become it. This coming to know the All is the main concern of the third part of the *Tripartite Tractate*, to which we now turn.

4.02 Prophecy

The third part of the *Tripartite Tractate* begins by arguing against five current cosmological theories from the Stoic, astrological and Epicurean schools of thought.[9] Its intention is to demonstrate how the theories inspired from the hylic and psychic orders are false and contradictory.

We will not look closely at this section since it does not bear greatly on the main subject of the rest of the tractate which is the meaning of the mission of the Saviour and the redemption He brings. But before moving on it is worth quickly noting that each of the theories mentioned is a cosmological one: the cosmos is ruled by Providence (*Tripartite*

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7. In the *Hypostasis of the Archons* 89.31-90.10 the "female spiritual principle" enters the snake, "the instructor" and tells Adam and the sarkic (ⲚⲤⲀⲢⲔⲓⲔⲎ) woman, who are now without the pneumatic element, that "With death you shall not die; for it was out of jealousy that he has said this to you. Rather your eyes shall be open and you shall come to be like gods, recognising evil and good".

8. The *Apocryphon of John* II 22. 4-25, BG 57.8-58.59.1, III 28.6-29.7 is very close to the *Tripartite Tractate* here, where the Saviour (ⲘⲠⲤⲰⲢ/σωτήρ) in II, and Christ (ⲠⲉⲬⲤ/χριστός) in BG, explains that it was He who "brought about that they ate" though "The serpent taught them to eat from wickedness of begetting, lust, (and) destruction, that he (Adam) might be useful to him". When the Archon realises that Adam is now wiser than he, "due to the light of reflection (ⲚⲦⲉⲠⲓⲚⲟⲓⲀ/ἐπίνοια) which is in him", he brings a forgetfulness over Adam, "it was his perception (ⲚⲉϥⲀⲓⲤⲐⲤⲓⲤ/αἴσθησις) that he veiled with a veil. He made him heavy with a lack of perception (ⲦⲀⲚⲀⲓⲤⲐⲎⲤⲓⲀ/ ἀναισθησία)".

9. See Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, pp.411-412, who points out that the *Tripartite Tractate* is here related to *Eugnostos the Blessed* NHC III, 70.16-22 and the *Sophia of Jesus Christ* NHC III, 92.22-93.4.

Tractate 109.8-11); the cosmos directs itself (*Tripartite Tractate* 109.11-15); the cosmos is ruled by Fate (*Tripartite Tractate* 109.15-18) etc.. The *Tripartite Tractate*'s polemic against such arguments underlines its ontology which is grounded in the Father of the All, not the material cosmos. To the tractate the cosmos is "flowing matter" (†2ΥλΗ ετ2ετε = ῥευστοῦ τῆς ὕλης) (*Tripartite Tractate* 104.4), perpetual flux, for it is the one Father alone who is unchanging and unchangeable.[10]

Opposed to the "Greeks and Barbarians" (*Tripartite Tractate* 109.25) who "spoke by way of imitation and presumption and a thought of illusion" (*Tripartite Tractate* 109.32-24) and who, as a result attained only "error" (πλάνη) (*Tripartite Tractate* 110.1), are the "righteous and the prophets" (*Tripartite Tractate* 111.8-9) of the "Hebrew race" (*Tripartite Tractate* 111.7). These Hebrew prophets "have thought nothing (and) have said nothing from illusion or from imitation or from an obscure thought, but each one spoke faithfully by the power which operated in him and was attentive to what he saw and heard" (*Tripartite Tractate* 111.9-16). It is in these men that the spiritual *logos* sowed the "seed of salvation, and it is the remembrance" (*Tripartite Tractate* 111.29-31). This is the spiritual potential which caused them to "long for the hope and the hearing, because in them is sown the seed of prayer and seeking" (*Tripartite Tractate* 112.1-3). This seeking for confirmation (*Tripartite Tractate* 112.5),

> draws them to love that which is on high, to proclaim these things as about a single one. And it was a single one who operated in them when they spoke, yet their visions and words differed, because of the multiplicity of those who gave them the vision and the word. (*Tripartite Tractate* 112.6-14)

The prophets, then, are of the remembrance, the highest psychic level; that which reflects the pneumatic realm in its harmony: "they reproduced their unity and the mutual consent († μετε)... through the confession of that which is superior to themselves" (*Tripartite Tractate* 111.20-23). Their orientation being towards the pneumatic *topos* they are able to receive the inspiration of "a single one", namely the spiritual *logos*. However the vision and words differed between the various prophets because of the multiplicity of the pneumatic realm, for, as we have seen, while a unity the *topos* still suffers from "passion" in that each of its members has not yet cast off that which is peculiar to him (*Tripartite Tractate* 95.1-2). Thus each prophet prophesies about "the advent of the Saviour, which is the Advent (παρουσία)" (*Tripartite Tractate* 113.14) according to "the activity by which he was inspired to speak of Him, and the state which he happened to see" (*Tripartite Tractate* 113.22-25).

However, regarding the Saviour's παρουσία, they are only able to say

> that He would be begotten and would suffer. But as far as His pre-existent being is considered and that which He is eternally as unbegotten and impassible, which <is> not the *logos* which came to be in the flesh (2Ν cλρ2 / ἐν σαρκί), it did not enter their sight. (*Tripartite Tractate* 113.32-114.1)

This is because they receive their knowledge from the *logos* "from whom the Saviour received His flesh" (*Tripartite Tractate* 114.9-10) but certainly not his pre-existent being, and they are limited to that which he can provide. Thus, it is "about His flesh (σάρξ) which was to appear" (*Tripartite Tractate* 114.3-4) that the prophets are inspired to speak,

10. In this the tractate is the inheritor of Greek thinking stretching back to Heraclitus. For instance Heraclitus's fragment B29: "(For) there is one thing which the best prefer to all else: eternal glory rather than transient things, but the many stuff themselves like cattle" (αἱρεῦνται γὰρ ἓν ἀντὶ ἀπάντων οἱ ἄριστοι, κλέος ἀέναον θνητῶν, οἱ δὲ πολλοὶ κεκόρηνται ὅκωσπερ κτήνεα.) (Clement, *Stromaties* 5.59.4 = 22B29).

"and they said that it was a product from out of all of them" (*Tripartite Tractate* 114.4-5) that is to say, it is made up of the members of the pneumatic Church, the ἐκκλησία, of the Ogdoad, "but above all it derives from the spiritual *logos* who is the cause of the things which have come into being" (*Tripartite Tractate* 114.6-9).[11]

That the flesh of the Saviour is said to "appear" and that it is composed of the Church seems to imply a docetic view of the incarnation. That this is not the case is made clear by the following explication of the meaning of His incarnation. But even here the use of the anti-docetic phrase ἐν σαρκί precludes a docetic reading.[12]

4.03 The Meaning of the Incarnation

We have reached a fascinating point in the *Tripartite Tractate*: the initial articulation of the meaning of the Saviour's incarnation and His work therein, for at this point, we are taken right back to the beginning. That is to say, back to the beginning of the tractate and also back to the Father, immutable in His Silence. We are reminded of the undifferentiated, unmanifest ground of existence, the Root of the All, of which the Son is the perfect manifestation and who, as the Saviour, fills up the deficiency of the cosmos by becoming it.

> But the one whom the Father has appointed for the revelation of salvation through Him, He is the fulfilment of the promise, and He was endowed with all these organs by which He descended, for the entry into physical life (ⲘⲠⲂⲒⲞⲤ). And His Father is one, and He is the only Father who truly exists for Him, the one invisible, unknowable, unattainable in His nature, who is God in His unique Will and His Grace, and who gave Himself to be seen and known and attained. For this is what our Saviour became out of willing compassion (ⲚⳚⳒⲰⲠ ⲚⲔⲀϨ), which is that which those for whose sake He manifested had become by involuntary passion: they became flesh and soul and this is <the> aeon which rules them and they die in the corruptions. (*Tripartite Tractate* 114.16-39)

What makes this passage so powerful is that it actually does, structurally and symbolically, that which it pertains to, for, as the opening lines of the *Gospel of Truth* say,

> The gospel of truth is joy for those who have received from the Father of truth the grace of knowing Him, through the power of the Word that came forth from the Pleroma, the one who is in the Thought and the mind of the Father, that is, the one who is addressed as the Saviour (ⲠⲤⲰⲦⲎⲢ·), (that) being the name of the work He is to perform for the redemption (ⲀⲠⲤⲰⲦⲈ) of those who were ignorant of the Father (*Gospel of Truth* 16.31-17.1)[13]

The Saviour redeems man, calls him back to his Pleroma, by reminding him of his origin and end in perfect fullness. Thus the redeemed one knows where he comes from and where he is going, he has returned to himself and set right what are his own (*Gospel of Truth* 22.14-20).[14] In the *Apocryphon of John* the Saviour declares,

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11. See Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.421.
12. See Peel 'The Treatise on the Resurrection: I, 4:43.25-50.18', in *Nag Hammadi Codex I (The Jung Codex): Notes*, pp.146-147 who notes the common usage of ἐν σαρκί in anti-docetic contexts. See the discussion in the section 1.10 above, especially p.22 note 110.
13. See Attridge and Pagels, 'The Tripartite Tractate: I, 5:51.1-138.27', in *Nag Hammadi Codex I (The Jung Codex): Notes*, p.41 for the play on ⲤⲰⲦⲎⲢ and ⲤⲰⲦⲈ reflecting the play on σωτήρ and σωτηρία in the original.
14. See p.93 above.

> I, therefore, the perfect Providence (ΤΕΠΡΟΝΟΙΑ/πρόνοια) of the all,
> changed myself into my seed, for I existed first, going on every road. For I
> am the richness of the light; I am the remembrance of the Pleroma.
> (*Apocryphon of John* NHC II, 30.11-16)

Thus our passage is itself a remembrance of the Father and His Pleroma. This is the
fulfilment of the expectation, the hope, that was planted in the *logos* by the Saviour's
manifestation to him as light. The Saviour takes on the body and soul of man, "all the
organs", suffers with and for him the deficiency and multiplicity of matter "going on every
road"[15] as the *Apocryphon of John* puts it. This manifestation in the cosmos and that to
the *logos* beyond the cosmos are not actually separate events, as becomes clear when we
look back to the latter, in which the Saviour "manifested himself within him [the *logos*],
He was with him, shared his suffering with him, gave him rest little by little, made him
grow, lifted him up, and in the end He gave Himself to him" (*Tripartite Tractate* 90.4-9).
They are both parts of the process by which the *logos* gains his pleroma. It is the
manifestation of the unmanifest, the form of the formless, in order to make known the
unknowable Father, "the one who gave himself to be seen and known and attained", for to
see something properly is to know it and to know something is to become it.[16]

The *Apocryphon of John* rightly links this remembrance to richness, and is entirely
relevant to the world of our Valentinian text, for what is the Father's giving of Himself to
everything but the superabundance of His providence? And this giving of Himself
involves the Son's full incarnation, the taking on of those passions. Though we must
recognise the important distinction that is made between the Saviour's compassionate
willingness to put on the flesh and man's unknowing, involuntary passion. He knowingly
took on the passions and suffered them, but does not partake of them (*Tripartite Tractate*
116.26-27), that is to say, His nature is not the product of passion: His substance (οὐσία)
is only and ever pneumatic. Thus the συμπάθεια of the Saviour in descending into matter
is the continuation, in the economy, of the Son's pleromatic extension of himself as the
Father's luminous self-manifestation.

> Ainsi la compassion fait référence au fait que la divinité se soumet
> délibérément à la condition imparfaite de multiplicité, dans le but de
> dispenser l'être et la connaissance. La compassion dépend de la volonté du
> Père de générer et d'être connu, et il est significatif à cet égard que l'auteur
> reprenne ce thème en guise d'introduction à l'incarnation du Sauveur
> (114:26-30), et, également, que la compassion soit qualifiée ici de
> «volontaire».[17]

15. A phrase which calls to mind Heraclitus's fragment B45: "You would not discover the limits of the soul
    although you travelled every road: it has so deep a *logos*" (ψυχῆς πείρατα ἰὼν οὐκ ἂν ἐξεύροιο,
    πᾶσαν ἐπιπορευόμενος ὁδόν· οὕτω βαθὺν λόγον ἔχει.) (Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of the
    Philosophers* 9.7 = 22B45).
16. *The Gospel of Philip* 61.20-35: "It is not possible for anyone to see anything of the things that actually
    exist unless he becomes like them. This is not the way with man in the world: he sees the sun without
    being a sun; and he sees the heaven and the earth and all other things, but he is not these things. This is
    quite in keeping with the truth. But you saw something of that place, and you became those things.
    You saw the spirit, you became spirit. You saw Christ, you became Christ. You saw [the Father, you]
    shall become Father. So [in this place] you see everything and [do] not [see] yourself, but [in that
    place] you do see yourself — and what you see you shall [become]".
17. Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.423. Trans: "Thus compassion refers to the fact that
    that divinity deliberately subjects itself to the imperfect condition of multiplicity with the intention of
    bestowing being and knowledge. Compassion depends on the Will of the Father to generate and be
    known, and it is significant in this respect that the author returns to this theme by way of an introduction
    to the Saviour's incarnation (114.26-30), and also that the compassion here is qualified as 'willing'".

It would not be quite right to consider this compassion to be the necessary corrective of the unintended production of the inferior realm. Rather it is what reality does, that is to say, it is entirely in keeping with the richness and sweetness of the Father's superabundance; fullness naturally fills deficiency, the Saviour's compassion is not different from grace. According to the *Gospel of Truth,*

> It is a thing that falls, it is a thing that easily stands upright (again) in the discovery of Him who has come to him whom He shall bring back. For the bringing back is called repentance. For this reason incorruptibility breathed forth; it pursued the one who had sinned in order that he might rest. For forgiveness is what remains for the light in the deficiency, the word of the Pleroma. For the physician runs to the place where sickness is, because that is the will that is in him. He who has a deficiency, then, does not hide it, because one [the physician] has what the other lacks. So the Pleroma, which has no deficiency, but fills up the deficiency, is what He provided from Himself for filling up he who lacks, in order that therefore he might receive grace. For when he was deficient, he did not have grace. That is why there was diminution existing in the place where there is no grace. (*Gospel of Truth* 35.18-36.7)

Here, sinfulness, the realm of error, deficiency, sickness, lack and diminution, is contrasted with the Pleroma the realm of stability, rest, forgiveness, and grace. The most important word in this passage is *grace* (ϨΜΑΤ). Redemption is ultimately the result of the Saviour's initiative, not man's: incorruptibility breaths forth, the Pleroma fills up and heals. Man's work, like the sick patient, is to recognise his illness and to turn to the one who can help him.[18]

The *Treatise on the Resurrection* also speaks of this graceful filling of the deficiency by the Saviour as His "swallowing up" of death in the spiritual resurrection:

> The Saviour swallowed up death — of this you are not reckoned as being ignorant — for He put aside the world which is perishing. He transformed Himself into an imperishable Aeon (ΑΥΑΙωΝ Ν̄ΑΤΤΕΚΟ) and raised Himself up, having swallowed the visible by the invisible, and He gave us the way to our immortality. Then, indeed, as the Apostle said we suffered with Him, and we arose with Him, and we went to heaven with Him. Now if we are manifest in this world wearing Him, we are that one's beams, and we are embraced by Him until our setting, that is to say, our death in this life (ΠΕΕΙΒΙΟΣ). We are drawn to heaven by Him, like beams by the sun, not being restrained by anything. This is the spiritual resurrection which swallows up the psychic in the same way as the fleshly. (*Treatise on the Resurrection* 45.14-46.2)

This symbolism presents us with another facet of the incarnation, for it is not simply a metaphor for the destruction of death, as Peel would have it,[19] but much more. If we consider the nature of this 'swallowing' in the context of this passage, we find that something much more radical is being said here, for swallowing entails the drawing of

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18. Desjardins, *Sin in Valentinianism*, p.81, "The sick person's nature is to recognise the need for assistance and to allow the physician to intervene".

19. Peel, *The Epistle to Rheginos: A Valentinian Letter on the Resurrection: Introduction, translation, analysis and exposition*, pp.122 and 144.

something into one's body that leads to the transformation of that separate thing into the body itself. That which is swallowed becomes consubstantial with the body into which it has been taken. In this way death, passion, sickness and division of the psychic and the fleshly are filled, made whole, by being transformed into the life, without passion (ἀπαθῶς) or sickness, of the unified spirit. This perfection of the Elect in the unity of the body of the Saviour, while still in the cosmos, is further symbolised as their wearing of Him and as their being like the beams of the sun, and these things, as we shall soon see,[20] are themselves symbols of the redemption.

4.04 His Body

That the Saviour's body was physical is not denied by Valentinian theology. The *Treatise on the Resurrection* speaks of the Lord existing "in flesh (σάρξ)" (*Treatise on the Resurrection* 44.15), for, "He embraced them both, possessing the humanity and the divinity, so that on the one hand He might vanquish death through His being Son of God, and that on the other through the Son of Man the restoration to the Pleroma might occur" (*Treatise on the Resurrection* 44.24-33).[21] Indeed the *Tripartite Tractate* stresses that the Saviour was "begotten as a child with body and soul":

> For not only did He accept for them the death of those whom He had in mind to save, but He even accepted the smallness to which they had descended when they were <born> downwards into the body and the soul, for He let Himself be conceived and He let Himself be begotten as a child with body and soul. For into all those conditions which they shared with those who had fallen, although they possessed the light, He had come, being superior to them, because it was in sinlessness, unpollutedness and undefiledness that He let Himself be conceived. (*Tripartite Tractate* 115.3-17)[22]

What it denies was that His body was hylic, that is to say, that it was the product of the presumptuous thought. The *Tripartite Tractate* even goes so far as to say that it was not the product of anything psychic, but only pneumatic, "for it originated from the radiant vision and the stable thought of the *logos* who had converted himself after his movement for the sake of the economy" (*Tripartite Tractate* 115.25-29).[23] It is for this reason that He is said to have been conceived "in sinlessness, unpollutedness and undefiledness",[24] and why the *Tripartite Tractate* insists that the Saviour,

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20. Sections 4.05 and 4.11 below.
21. A passage which again expresses the vital part played by human incarnation in the Salvation, the fulfilment, of all that exists.
22. Compare the *Odes of Solomon* 7.3-11:
    "He made Himself known to me, without grudging, in His generosity;
    For in His kindness He made little His greatness.
    He became like me, in order that I might accept Him;
    In appearance he seemed like me, in order that I might put Him on. ...
    He became like my nature, in order that I might learn to know Him, ...
    Because He is incorruptible
    The fulfilment of the aeons and their Father".
23. Though see Attridge and Pagels, 'The Tripartite Tractate: I, 5:51.1-138.27', in *Nag Hammadi Codex I (The Jung Codex): Notes*, p.437 who hold that the *Tripartite Tractate* takes no explicit stand on this issue.
24. For the relation of sin and passion in the *Tripartite Tractate* see Desjardins, *Sin in Valentinianism*, pp.86-91.

did not partake of the passions. For, in the body, the Saviour Himself was an image of something which is one, namely the All. For that reason He preserved the pattern of undividedness by which impassibility (ⲦⲘⲚ̄ⲦⲀⲦⲠⲀⲐⲞⲤ / ἀπάθεια) exists. (*Tripartite Tractate* 116.26-33)

Though in the body, the Saviour remains the image of the All, pneumatic, undivided and impassible. This is a point fundamental to Valentinian soteriology and is an important aspect of the *gnosis* that the Saviour confers; the knowledge that the potential of human incarnation is that one can attain the ἀπάθεια and the ἀνάπαυσις (rest) of the Ogdoad while still in the body, for, as the Hymn to the Son says, the Son is, "the assembly [of] those whom He assembles to Him" (*Tripartite Tractate* 66.24-25). This recalls to mind the sayings in the *Gospel of Thomas* and the New Testament that relate to the kingdom, and which in Valentinian exegesis relate to the Aeon of the *logos*: that it is "spread out upon the earth" (*Gospel of Thomas* 113) and "within you" (Luke 17:20–21). Salvation in the Valentinian theology is not eschatological,[25] meaning that it was not a matter of having to wait until one was dead to partake of the unity and perfection of the All. The Saviour never leaves the kingdom though He be incarnated, since it is not some*where* else,[26] and the same is available to the redeemed or "perfect" man who, "has already received the truth in images" and to whom "the world has become the aeon" (*Gospel of Philip* 86.12-13). Furthermore the *Treatise on the Resurrection* speaks of the resurrection having already occurred.[27] The symbolism of "filling up the deficiency" also plays an important part here. This soteriological perspective, which has an affinity with the Vedantic teaching of *jīvanmukti* or "living liberation",[28] has been given the rather confusing name of "realised eschatology"[29] by modern scholars. Williams explains its vital importance in the *Gospel of Philip*:

> An important question — indeed, the important question — for the author of Philip is the present and future status of the individual in this world in relation to "the other aeon." It is at this point that the thought in Philip may be described in terms of a realized eschatology. For the "other aeon" is not only envisioned as the realm beyond time and space to which the "perfect" go after shuffling off their mortal coils, but paradoxically the aeon is also understood to be a kind of state, or relationship, or quality of existence which already begins for the believer "even though he dwell in the world" (134,11-12). One does not actually have to have changed places spatially in order to taste already the blessings of the aeon. Indeed, if the individual does not "realize" the aeon while he is still in the world, he will have no chance of appropriating the blessings after he leaves the world.[30]

25. The term 'eschatology' has long been problematic (for which see Carroll, 'Eschatology' in Coggins & Houlden, *A Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation*, pp.200-203). "The traditional and classical definition of eschatology, the study of the last things, relates to 'the four last things: death, judgement, heaven and hell'" Carroll, 'Eschatology', p.200. However it has been used increasingly to include all aspects of soteriology (a good example of this is its use by Peel in *The Epistle to Rheginos: A Valentinian Letter on the Resurrection: Introduction, translation, analysis and exposition*, especially pp.105-151). See also Guy, *The New Testament doctrine of the 'Last Things'*, pp.7-8.
26. See p.106 above.
27. *Treatise on the Resurrection* 49.9-30: "... already you have the resurrection" (15-16); "... why not consider yourself as risen and (already) brought to this?" (22-24); "If you have the resurrection ..." (25-26).
28. For which see Fort & Mumme, *Living Liberation in Hindu Thought*, especially pp.20-24.
29. For a brief history of this term see Williams, 'Realised Eschatology in the Gospel of Philip', p.1.
30. Williams, 'Realised Eschatology in the Gospel of Philip', p.9. Of course, within our hermeneutical method we would concentrate on the importance of this question within the mode of being that is projected before the Gospel of Philip; a world that the reader can enter.

4.05 The Incarnation of the Seed

Let us return to the incarnation, along with the Saviour come the pneumatics:

> In this way those who came with Him received body and soul, stability,
> firmness and judgment of things. They too were planned to come when the
> Saviour was planned, but they came (only) after He had known. And they
> too came as superior in the emission according to the flesh as superiors to
> those who were brought forth in deficiency. For in this way they too were
> emitted concorporeally with the Saviour, through their manifestation and
> their union with Him. These are those of the unique essence, and that is
> spiritual. (*Tripartite Tractate* 115.29-116.8)

These are the "seed of the promise", those "of the unique essence" who have been
gathered in the ἀποθήκη of the Ogdoad in anticipation of the advent of the Saviour and
His fulfilment of their hope. They are the pneumatic Church and compose His body. I
remarked briefly above that the *Treatise on the Resurrection* uses the solar symbolism of
the sun and its beams to express the consubstantiality of the Saviour and the Elect,[31] "now
if we are manifest in this world (ΠΙΚΟⲤΜΟⲤ) wearing Him, we are that one's beams
(ⲚⲀⲔⲦⲒⲚ), and we are embraced by him until our setting, that is to say, our death in this
life (ΠⲈⲈⲒⲂⲒⲞⲤ)" (*Treatise on the Resurrection* 45.28-35). This symbolism is closely
related to the dawning forth of the Son in His manifestation to the aeons (*Tripartite
Tractate* 66.6) in the Hymn to the Son.[32] It is also worth noting the return of the garment
symbolism, implied in the reference to the wearing of the Saviour by the Elect, in relation
to the shared essence of Christ and His Church.

As I mentioned in the introduction, the question of the composition of the Saviour's
physical body, as Pagels and Thomassen[33] have demonstrated, does not so much concern
the question of docetism, the physical nature or not of His body, as it does the question of
the nature of the Church. It is the question which divided the eastern and western schools
of Valentinianism.[34] The question revolves around the tenet that "whatever is assumed is
redeemed",[35] that is to say, only those natures of which the Saviour partakes can be saved.
Another way of putting the question is: 'is the body of Christ, the Church, entirely
pneumatic or is it pneumatic and psychic?'. The eastern school held the former view and
the western school the latter. The question is fundamentally soteriological, for it has been
assumed that if the psychics do not partake of the body of Christ then they cannot be
redeemed. Since the stated aim of the economy, at least of the western school, is the
redemption of the psychic element as it is in the *Tripartite Tractate*, Pagels and Attridge
argue that the *Tripartite Tractate* is of the western school. The trouble here is that the
Tripartite Tractate explicitly states that the Church is entirely pneumatic, placing it,
Thomassen argues, in the eastern school. However, he does offer a way out of the
taxonomic and soteriological impasse:

31. Though Peel 'The Treatise on the Resurrection: I, 4:43.25-50.18', in *Nag Hammadi Codex I (The Jung
     Codex): Notes*, p.163 denies this.
32. See p.71 above.
33. See sections 1.10 and 1.11 below; Pagels, 'Gnostic and Orthodox Views of Christ's Passion: Paradigms
     for the Christian's Response to Persecution?', p.277; and Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*,
     p.15.
34. On which see especially Pagels, 'Gnostic and Orthodox Views of Christ's Passion: Paradigms for the
     Christian's Response to Persecution?', pp.277-283.
35. Pagels, 'Gnostic and Orthodox Views of Christ's Passion: Paradigms for the Christian's Response to
     Persecution?', p.282

Pourtant, le fait que le valentinisme oriental ne compte pas les psychiques comme des membres du corps du Sauveur et de l'Église n'implique pas, comme le semblent présupposer A&P, que le «salut» leur soit refusé. En effet, les deux tendances valentiniennes semblent s'accorder sur les théories fondamentales de la tripartition anthropologique et de la double inclination du psychique, ce qui suppose que le salut est possible pour le psychique. La différence entre les deux semble consister en ce que, pour l'école orientale, le Sauveur est Sauveur uniquement des pneumatiques, et que les psychiques ne seront sauvés qu'indirectement, par le truchement des pneumatiques, tandis que pour l'école occidentale il est Sauveur des deux races, et, souligne-t-on, en particulier des psychiques. Autre est la question de savoir en quoi consiste le salut des psychiques. Il semble logique que rien de psychique ne puisse entrer dans le Plérôme; par conséquent, ou bien le salut des psychiques consistera-t-il en un salut de degré inférieur, à l'extérieur du Plérôme, dans l'Ogdoade, ou bien le psychique, pour recevoir le salut, devra être transformé en pneumatique. La première théorie était peut-être celle de l'école occidentale, la seconde celle de l'école orientale; cependant ces problèmes mértent une étude plus détaillée.[36]

Perhaps the problem is more to do with modern presuppositions than it is to do with our text, for whichever school of Valentinian theology this text may embody, it presents a theology greatly concerned with the salvation of the psychics which yet excludes them from the body of Christ. It certainly seems undeniable that everything that returns to the Pleroma must be of it, that is to say consubstantial with it. And so for the psychic to enter the Pleroma it must become pneumatic, which is, as we shall see, also what our text seems later to say.[37]

It is worth noting that the pneumatics receive "stability and firmness" along with the body. These are terms, as we have seen, connected with the perfection and immutability of the Pleroma, and the absence of passion. Here they indicate that although the seed have entered the world of passion and flux, also called the "plantation" (ϫⲱ) (*Tripartite Tractate* 116.38), this is a step closer to their pleroma as it will provide them with the necessary education to reach their full potential. They also receive "judgement of the works" for their role in the economy is the salvation of the psychics through syzygy with them:

> The pneumatic element was sent forth so that it might be united with the psychic in syzygy, so that the two elements might be educated together in the process. For the psychic needed forms of education through the senses; and for this reason, they say, the world was created, and the saviour came to the psychic element ... in order to save it. (*Adversus Haereses* I 6.1)

36. Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.17. Trans: "Yet, the fact that eastern Valentinianism does not include the psychics as members of the Saviour's body and of the Church, does not imply, as Attridge and Pagels seem to presuppose, that their salvation has been denied. In effect, the two Valentinian tendencies seem to be in accord on the fundamental theories of the anthropological tripartition and the double inclination of the psychic, which suppose that salvation is possible for the psychic. The difference between the two seems to consist in that, for the eastern school, the Saviour is Saviour solely for the pneumatics, and that the psychics can only be saved indirectly by the intervention of the pneumatics, while that for the western school He is the Saviour of the two races, and, in particular the psychics. The other question is to know of what the salvation of the psychics consists. It seems logical that nothing psychic be allowed to enter the Pleroma; consequentally, either the salvation of the psychics would consist of one of an inferior degree, outside the Pleroma, in the Ogdoad, or the psychic, to receive salvation, would have to be transformed into the pneumatic. The first theory is perhaps that of the western school, the second that of the eastern school; nevertheless these problems merit a more detailed study".

37. See especially sections 4.09 and 4.12 below.

We saw in Chapter 3,[38] that the seed, because not yet united in pleromatic syzygy are subject to a relative sickness and passion, and also that this division and individualism was a necessary condition of carrying out their mission in the economy. The *Tripartite Tractate* now naturally returns to this theme at their incarnation:

> The economy, however, is variable: this being one thing, that another. Some have proceeded from passion and division, and need healing. Others originate from a prayer that the sick may be healed, and have been appointed to treat the ones who have fallen, these are the apostles and the bringers of good tidings. But they are the disciples of the Saviour: these are teachers who themselves need education (N̄CBOY). (*Tripartite Tractate* 116.8-20)

Since the pneumatics have had to enter the cosmos "one by one" (*Tripartite Tractate* 95.13-14) in order to heal those who are by nature sick, passionate and divided, but who are capable of turning from that division towards unity in repentance (μετάνοια), they are at the same time, though to a much lesser degree, in need of healing themselves. Healing and teaching, as Thomassen notes,[39] are virtually synonymous. A passage from the *Gospel of Truth* (35.18-36.7), which we have already looked at,[40] portrays incorruptibility's breathing forth and the Pleroma's filling up of the deficiency as the physician's rushing to the place of sickness, "because that is the will that is in him" (*Gospel of Truth* 35.31-33), that is to say, because he is compassionate.[41] This is all still within the same field of thought, which is fundamental to the Christian theology of Christ's incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection, as the principle of "what is assumed is redeemed", in which it is necessary that the Saviour in some way experience the suffering of those whom He redeems.[42] From a trinitarian point of view, the gifts of healing and teaching given to the various members of the body of Christ are the gifts of the Holy Spirit, which are spoken of in Corinthians:

> ... no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Spirit. Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are varieties of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are varieties of operations, but it is the same God who worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the

38.   Section 3.10 below.
39.   Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.425.
40.   Quoted, p.123 above.
41.   There are close parallels here, in thought and symbolism, with the Christian *Odes of Solomon*:
      "I raised my arms on high
      To the compassion of the Lord,
      Because He cast away my bonds from me;
      And my helper raised me up according to His compassion and His salvation.
      And I put off darkness,
      And I put on light.
      And my soul acquired members
      In which there was no sickness,
      Nor affliction, nor suffering.
      And the Thought of the Lord was supremely helpful to me,
      And His incorruptible fellowship. And I was raised up in His light". (21.1-6)
      Further Valentinian affinities with this Ode are: *Treatise on the Resurrection* 47.38-48.3, "the visible members which are dead shall not be saved, for (only) the living [members] which exist within them would arise", and *Gospel of Truth* 20.30-32, "Having stripped Himself of the perishable rags, He put on imperishability (N̄TMN̄TAT·TEKO)".
42.   See Clement, *Excerpta ex Theodoto* 36.2 quoted p.111 above, and also p.22 above.

> Spirit is given to every man for profit of all. For to one is given by the
> Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same
> Spirit; To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by
> the same Spirit; To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy;
> to another discerning of spirits; to another [various] kinds of tongues; to
> another the interpretation of tongues: But all these worketh that one and the
> very same Spirit, dividing to every man individually as he will. For as the
> body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body,
> being many, are one body: so also [is] Christ. For by one Spirit were we all
> baptized into one body, whether Jews or Gentiles, whether bond or free; and
> have been all made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one
> member, but many. (1 Corinthians 12:3–14)

An obvious question then arises, and the *Tripartite Tractate* poses it:

> Why, then, did they too partake of those passions in which those who had
> been brought forth by passion took part, if in accordance with the economy
> they are produced in body together with <the> Saviour, who did not partake
> of the passions? (*Tripartite Tractate* 116.20-27)

The answer is that, while the Saviour is an image of the unitary All and preserves the
pattern of undividedness (*Tripartite Tractate* 116.26-33),[43] even while in the body,[44] the
pneumatics,

> are images of each individual who was manifested. Therefore they receive
> the division from the pattern (ⲘⲠⲤⲘⲀⲦ), having received form (ⲘⲞⲢⲫⲎ)
> for the plantation (ⲀⲠⲒⲬⲰ) which is in the inferior world, which also
> partakes of the evil which exists in the regions to which they have arrived.
> (*Tripartite Tractate* 116.34-117.2)

The word on which the difference between Saviour and seed turns is "pattern" (ⲤⲘⲀⲦ), for
while the Saviour is ever pleromatic, the seed, His body and Church, are not yet fully that.
The Son manifests the pattern of perfection from above, but the seed still receive their
pattern from below. Another way of considering this is as a much less subtle
manifestation of the Son's unity and multiplicity. This point of view agrees with the
observation that Thomassen makes during his explanation of the Hymn to the Son at
66.13-29.[45]

> On retrouve fréquemment, toutefois, la notion selon laquelle l'homme
> spirituel, introduit par Sophia dans la créature du Démiurge, est produit par
> elle sur le modèle de Jésus et ses serviteurs, qui manifestent le Plérôme (cf.
> Irénée, *AH*, I, 4:5, 5:6; *ExtTh*, 21:1). Jésus, par conséquent, occupe la
> fonction de l'Homme archétype: il se montre à Sophia; il est une personne
> unique, mais, en même temps, il est accompagné des archétypes de chaque
> homme spirituel (voir aussi *ExtTh*, 35:1), ou il les incorpore (*ExtTh*, 36, 41;

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43. Quoted p.125 above.
44. *Gospel of Truth* 31.4-12, "For He came by means of fleshly form, while nothing blocked His course
    because incorruptibility is irresistible, since He, again, spoke new things, still speaking about what is in
    the heart of the Father, having brought forth the flawless word".
45. Quoted in full p.71 above.

Irénée, *AH*, I, 3:4); il est le «fruit» de la glorification unifiée du Plérôme; il est la lumière (*ExtTh*, 41 ...). La figure de Jésus dans ces systèmes conserve donc plusieurs caractéristiques de la conception de l'Homme primordial que l'on retrouve en une forme apparemment plus primitive dans le TracTri.[46]

The pattern which the seed receive is the "form for the plantation"[47] below. The cosmos is the manure, if you like, needed for the heavenly seed to grow and reach its potential. That the seed must develop through necessary education in the cosmos suggests what may tentatively be called a dynamic ontology, which is expressed through the tension between the full and perfect being of the Father and the unfolding becoming of His self-manifestation. The line in the Hymn that calls the Son "the root of those who are planted" (*Tripartite Tractate* 66.18) holds within itself, just this tension. The *Treatise on the Resurrection* even goes so far as to declare that the Saviour "was originally from above a seed of the Truth, before this structure (of the cosmos) had come into being" (*Treatise on the Resurrection* 44.34-36), implying that even the Saviour only truly manifests His perfection through His soteriological mission in the οἰκονομία, which is the "restoration" (ϵΡϵΤΑΠΟΚΑΤΑϹΤΑϹΙϹ / ἀποκατάστασις) (*Treatise on the Resurrection* 44.31). The same text also speaks of the resurrection as a making manifest of the redeemed, "it is always the disclosure of those who have risen" (*Treatise on the Resurrection* 48.5-6) and resurrection can only happen if one has died. Thus the development of the seed in the economy is the extension of that of the All who move from the "hidden depths of the Father" to *gnosis*. Within the theological perspective of the *Tripartite Tractate*, 1 Corinthians 15:42-52, would be read in just this light.

> So also [is] the resurrection (ἀνάστασις) of the dead. It is sown in perishability (φθορᾷ); it is raised in imperishability (ἀφθαρσίᾳ): It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: It is sown a natural body (σῶμα ψυχικόν); it is raised a spiritual body (σῶμα πνευματικόν). There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. ... As [is] the earthy (χοϊκός), such [are] they also that are earthy (χοϊκοί): and as [is] the heavenly (ἐπουράνιος), such [are] they also that are heavenly (ἐπουράνιοι). And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth perishability (φθορὰ) inherit imperishability (ἀφθαρσίαν). Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed (ἀλλαγησόμεθα). In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed (ἀλλαγησόμεθα).
> (1 Corinthians 15:42-52)

46. Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.309, Trans: "One frequently finds, ... the notion according to which the spiritual man, introduced by Sophia into the creature of the Demiurge, is produced by her on the model of Jesus and his attendants, who manifest the Pleroma (compare Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* I 4.5, 5.6; Clement, *Excerpta ex Theodoto* 21.1). Jesus, as a consequence, performs the function of Archetypal Man: he shows himself to Sophia; he is a single person, while he is at the same time accompanied by the archetypes of each individual spiritual man (also compare Clement, *Excerpta ex Theodoto* 35.1), or incorporates them (Clement, *Excerpta ex Theodoto* 36, 41; Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* I 3.4); he is the "fruit" of the united glorification of the Pleroma; he is light (Clement, *Excerpta ex Theodoto* 41); thus the figure of Jesus in these systems retains many of the characteristics of the Primordial Man conception which is found in a seemingly more primitive form in the *Tripartite Tractate*.

47. See Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, pp.425-426 for references to the use of the motif of plantation in texts from Early Christian and Qumran communities.

The seed is sown in the perishability, dishonour and weakness of flesh and soul, and is resurrected in the imperishability, glory and power of the spirit. The sleep of ignorance is eliminated by the transformation into knowledge that is effected by the resurrection. Peel finds an echo of this Pauline passage in the *Treatise on the Resurrection* 48.31-36: "the resurrection ... is the truth which stands firm. It is the revelation of what is, and the transformation (ⲡϭⲩⲃⲉⲓⲉ) of things, and a transition into newness".

> Just as the Saviour was transformed into an "imperishable Aeon" prior to being "raised up" (*Treatise on the Resurrection* 45.17-19), so will all who experience resurrection with him. ... The similarity of resurrection experience between Saviour and Elect bespeaks a consubstantiality of essence between the two. ... we maintain this reference to "transformation" (ⲡϭⲩⲃⲉⲓⲉ) echoes a key Pauline term descriptive of the "change" of the resurrection body: 1 Corinthians 15:51-52 "...we shall be changed (ἀλλαγησόμεθα = Coptic NT: ⲡⲧⲛ̄ⲛⲁϭⲩⲓⲃⲉ)" ... (Note also, that in the Coptic NT the same verb is used of the "transformation" of Christ in the Transfiguration: Mark 9:2c, "He was transfigured [ⲁϥϭⲩⲃⲧϥ̄] before them").[48]

It is, then, through education in the economy that the Saviour's multiplicity, His seed, is able to attain the unity of His spiritual body, both in the physical body in living liberation, and ultimately in the Pleroma when all flesh has dropped away. This might also give a clue as to what might be meant by the collection of the entire Church in the body of Christ before its entry into the Pleroma if it is seen in terms of living liberation. Since there cannot actually be any waiting in what is atemporal, unless one were waiting there while still in the body.

The educative function of the pneumatics' passion is now elaborated from a different perspective, that of the Will of the Father:

> For the Will maintained the All under sin in order that by that Will He might show mercy on the All and they might be saved, because only one is appointed to give life (ⲱⲛⲏ = ζωή), whereas all the rest need salvation. (*Tripartite Tractate* 117.3-8)

Here the "all" does not refer to the Pleroma but to the seed,[49] yet it is another indication that the development of the seed is closely related to that of the Pleroma. This relationship is indicated elsewhere in the Nag Hammadi library. The *Treatise on the Resurrection* consistently refers to the pneumatics, the Elect, as the All.[50] And an important feature of the *Gospel of Truth* is its constant reference to different levels of existence

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48. Peel, 'The Treatise on the Resurrection: I, 4:43.25-50.18', in *Nag Hammadi Codex I (The Jung Codex): Notes*, p.198. In the *Odes of Solomon* 17.12-14 we find:
    "And I gave my knowledge generously,
    And my prayer was my love.
    And I sowed my fruits in hearts,
    And I transformed them in myself.
    And they received my blessing and lived,
    And were gathered to me and delivered".
49. Attridge and Pagels, 'The Tripartite Tractate: I, 5:51.1-138.27', *Nag Hammadi Codex I (The Jung Codex): Notes*, p.442.
50. Peel, *The Epistle to Rheginos: A Valentinian Letter on the Resurrection: Introduction, translation, analysis and exposition*, p.108.

simultaneously.[51] This characteristic of Valentinian texts points to their ultimate non-difference, that is to say their nonduality.

Peel[52] notes that the *Treatise on the Resurrection* invariably uses two words for life, ⲂⲒⲞⳭ (βίος) and ⲠⲰⲰⲚ̅Ϩ̅ (= ζωή):

> our author speaks of two types of life which are both possessed by the
> believer, but which are qualitatively different: (1) that life (ⲂⲒⲞⳭ) bound up
> with earthly existence which is especially qualified by the death that
> terminates it; (2) that life (ⲠⲰⲰⲚ̅Ϩ̅) associated with the redeemed, spiritual
> nature of the Elect which is especially qualified by the resurrection
> proceeding from it. This latter type shows some close affinities with the
> Johannine view of ζωή (e.g. John 5.40; 10.10; 11.25f; 20.31).[53]

This distinction is certainly relevant to our text's use of ⲠⲰⲰⲚ̅Ϩ̅ here where, "only one is appointed to give life (ⲰⲚϨ)" is clearly associated with the giving of salvation, and which harks back to the Hymn to the Son in which He is named "the life (ⲠⲰⲚ̅Ϩ̅) of those who live" (66.28).[54] Thus the seed must be kept under sin, the passion and sickness of the world, through the mercy of the Will for their own development and in order to play their part in the economy which is to teach and heal those of the remembrance.[55] The notion of the keeping of the seed under sin can be seen as a continuation of the early statement that the Father withheld for a time the perfection of the All (*Tripartite Tractate* 62.14-15). Again, we must be careful here, as I have said before,[56] not to impute any intention to the Father, and certainly no niggardliness to Him, which would not at all be in accord with the sweetness and wealth of His superabundance that has been stressed by the *Tripartite Tractate*. We might approach this apparent holding back of perfection by the Father more

51. Attridge and Pagels, 'The Tripartite Tractate: I, 5:51.1-138.27', *Nag Hammadi Codex I (The Jung Codex): Notes*, p.71, The *Gospel of Truth*, "operates at the same time on a number of different levels, using symbolic language which has a multiplicity of referents. This style of conceptuality is by no means unusual, especially in Gnostic works, but the conceptual program is carried on here in an even more complex way than is customary in Gnostic works. For contrast one might compare the last tractate in this codex, the *Tripartite Tractate*, which shares many common conceptual features with the *Gospel of Truth*. In the *Tripartite Tractate* we find an exposition of theology, cosmology and soteriology which attempts to demonstrate, among other things, the way in which various levels of being are analogously structured. In the process of the exposition various actors on one level of being may receive the names most properly predicated of an actor at a higher level of being, a principle which may be described as one of "analogous predication". Despite the complexities and possible confusions which such a principle introduces, the *Tripartite Tractate* sets forth its account of the various levels of reality in an orderly and systematic way. The same is not true of the *Gospel of Truth*, where constant reference is simultaneously made to cosmic, psychological and even historical spheres".

52. *The Epistle to Rheginos: A Valentinian Letter on the Resurrection: Introduction, translation, analysis and exposition*, pp.114-116.

53. Peel, *The Epistle to Rheginos: A Valentinian Letter on the Resurrection: Introduction, translation, analysis and exposition*, p.116. We must of course discount the intentional fallacy in this statement. This distinction is also made by the *Tripartite Tractate*. See, for example, the use of ⲂⲒⲞⳭ at 114.16-39, quoted p.121 above.

54. Which Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.310 tentatively retranslates as, "ἡ ζωὴ τῶν ζώντων". Furthermore, this implies that the "Breath of Life" (Ⲛⲓϥⲉ ⲚⲰⲚ̅Ϩ̅ = πνοὴ ζωῆς) (105.24-25) given to man by the *logos* is redemptive, and can also be tied to the Hymn where it names the Son as "the spirit of those who breathe" (τὸ πνεῦμα τῶν πνεόντων) (*Tripartite Tractate* 66.27). The spiritual potentiality of this breath is analogous to that of the aeons when they exist embryonically in the depths of the Father, and that is why it is called the "seed". And to that extent it can be seen as the precursor of the breathing forth of incorruptibility, the Holy Spirit, which is the manifestation of the Saviour.

55. Attridge and Pagels, 'The Tripartite Tractate: I, 5:51.1-138.27', *Nag Hammadi Codex I (The Jung Codex): Notes*, p.442: "The spiritual order must be incarnated because the material world is the locus of the final revelation of the Saviour which provides salvation, and it is the mission of the spiritual order to disseminate that revelation".

56. See pp.77-78 above.

fruitfully if we saw that it is only a necessary appearance. Every perspective but that of absolute ultimacy sees it as other than it truly is: the atemporal and temporal unfolding of the Father's complete giving of Himself to be known through the flowing forth of the Son and His manifestation as the Saviour; a giving that is, simultaneously, the return and fulfilment of everything in the perfection and unity of the Father. Furthermore, this language points to something else, which has to do with the gradualness of the redemptive process. And this amounts to the recognition of the importance of the temporal unfolding of the economy of salvation, which is made explicit in the *Tripartite Tractate*'s insistence on the necessity of the presumptuous glorification of the *logos* that happens according to the Will of the Father (*Tripartite Tractate* 76.16-77.11). The economy is then, as much a part of the divine Will as is the Pleroma. Thus, considered in terms of will, this withholding is a necessary aspect of the third glorification, that is to say, of the autonomy of each of the aeons, including the *logos*. From this perspective the holding back is actually their holding back from perfect conformity to the Will of the Father. This they too realise through their participation in the process of the economy which enables their true perception and reception of Grace: the Father's gift of Himself to the All.

> Therefore it was for reasons of this sort that <they> began to receive grace
> to bestow those gifts which were proclaimed by those whom <Jesus>
> judged fit to proclaim to the rest, since deposited (in them) was <the> seed
> of the promise of Jesus Christ, whose manifestation and unification we have
> served. (*Tripartite Tractate* 117.9-16)

Thomassen considers that the reception of grace here probably refers to the incarnation of the spiritual Church, and thus the depositing of the seed of the promise, into physical bodies.[57] The gifts of the Holy Spirit, which this grace enables them to bestow are those spoken about above in terms of teaching and healing.[58]

The manifestation and unification of the seed of the promise of Jesus Christ must be, not only the fulfilment of the Church through their own education, which allows them to return to their true existence in the faithful and unified glorification of the Father, but also that of the psychics which "we", the Valentinian community encompassed by the world of the text, have served. The name Jesus Christ is used here for the first time since the Saviour, Christ, is now incarnated in the man, Jesus.

4.06 The Redemption

> This promise provided their instruction and their return to that which they
> were from the beginning — that of which they possess a drop so that they
> may return to it — that which is called redemption (ἀπολύτρωσις). And it
> is the liberation from captivity and the acquisition of freedom, the captivity
> of those who were slaves of ignorance, which rules in its places. The
> freedom, on the contrary, is knowledge of the truth which existed before
> ignorance came into being, ruling eternally without beginning and without
> end, being a benefit and a salvation of things and a liberation from the
> slave-nature in which those suffered who had been brought forth by an
> inferior thought of vanity, which is to say that which leads to evil through
> this thought, which [dra]ws them downwards to the lust for dominion.
> (*Tripartite Tractate* 117.17-118.2)

57. Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.426.
58. Above pp.128-129.

The first lines of this passage are puzzling. Who are "they" whose redemption, the instruction and return to that which they were from the beginning, is provided by the promise? Are they "the rest" spoken of in the previous passage, that is to say the psychics, to whom the seed proclaim the gifts of grace, or are they, as Thomassen understands it, the potentially pneumatic, "en qui elle [la semence] a été déposée"[59] who then minister to the rest?

Thomassen's reading is the stronger since the psychics, the product of the presumptuous thought, *were not* "from the beginning", in that they were never pleromatic. In this case the potentially pneumatic would be those who received the "first form" (*Tripartite Tractate* 105.17) of the spiritual substance, the invisible "Breath of Life" (*Tripartite Tractate* 105.23), which is the "seed of salvation, and it is the remembrance" (*Tripartite Tractate* 111.29-31) from the *logos*; not to be confused with the seed of the promise of Jesus Christ that is His body and Church. They are the prophets who had partial knowledge of the Pleroma as perceived by the individual members of the Ogdoad who did not know its unitary nature.

> la manifestation des spirituels, survenue au moment de l'avènement, ne signifie vraisemblablement pas uniquement que l'avènement a fait connaître les spirituels présents et jusque-là anonymes, mais surtout que leur caractère *potentiellement* spirituel, leur «semence», est transformée en nature spirituelle en acte par la descent de l'Église spirituelle, et que ceci constitue la différence existant entre les prophètes de l'Ancien Testament et les gnostiques valentiniens.[60]

This passage also contains the first mention of the redemption (ἀπολύτρωσις) in the *Tripartite Tractate*, the guiding principle both structurally, of this part of the tractate, and theologically of Valentinian Christianity as a whole. Redemption, the overcoming of the ontological difference between being and becoming, is the ultimate concern of Valentinian theology.

᾿Απολύτρωσις is initially characterised as liberation, "the liberation from captivity and the acquisition of freedom". The captivity from which one escapes is ignorance of Truth. It is because people do not know that which truly is that they are slaves. Slaves know neither themselves nor the Father. And salvation is "a liberation from the slave-nature", which is the freedom of knowing the unchanging, permanent truth "of which they possess a drop so that they may return to it". The liberating knowledge, then, of oneself and the Pleroma are not two different things, but the same. One's return to the Pleroma is a return to the reality of which one is an inseparable part.

The illusion is that one is separated, for redemption is not an escape from something that is equally real but evil. Nothing that is real can be other than the Father, or, said the other way around, there is nothing other than the Father that is real. The evil, sin, passion and matter of the cosmos, is death, lack and deficiency, having no substance of its own. To repeat the *Gospel of Truth* "error is empty, having nothing inside" (*Gospel of Truth* 26.26-27). In the light of the knowledge of the Father, ignorance vanishes.[61]

59. Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.426. Trans: "into whom it [the seed] has been deposited".
60. Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.429. Trans: "the manifestation of the spirituals, which took place at the moment of the Advent, probably does not simply mean that the Advent made known the until then anonymously present spirituals, but rather that their *potentially* spiritual character, their 'seed', is transformed into an actual spiritual nature by the descent of the spiritual Church, and also that this constitutes the difference which exists between the prophets of the Old Testament and the Valentinian gnostics".
61. See *Gospel of Truth* 24.25-25.26 quoted p.89 above.

In terms of the different realms the passage also indicates that ἀπολύτρωσις includes both the pneumatics, the drop from the spring (πηγή) of the Father,[62] and the psychics, those brought forth "by an inferior thought of vanity" and who are drawn "downwards to the lust for dominion". For the former the redemption is a return, for the latter a release from their slave nature. The psychics, then, "acquired the possession (ⲘⲠⲒⲔⲦⲎⲘⲀ / κτῆμα) which is freedom" which is the gift of "the abundant grace which looked favourably upon the children" (*Tripartite Tractate* 118.2-5). The "children" (ⲚϢⲎⲢⲈ = τὰ τέκνα), used only here in the *Tripartite Tractate* is a Valentinian name for the pneumatics.[63] Thus this grace comes to the psychics through the gifts bestowed on them by the seed/Church (*Tripartite Tractate* 117.10-15), rather than from the Saviour directly, though ultimately they are not different.

The acquisition that is freedom for the psychics,

> is an overthrow (ⲈⲨⲞⲨϢⲞⲢϢⲠ) of the passion and annihilation of those whom the *logos*, who had caused them to come into being, had previously turned away from himself when he separated them from himself. (*Tripartite Tractate* 118.5-10)

These lines directly link the advent of the Saviour with the manifestation of the Son to the *logos* and his offspring. The latter was the "first joy" that allowed the *logos* to, "separate (from) and turn away from those who were disobedient to him" (*Tripartite Tractate* 88.24-25), namely the hylics, and which implanted in the psychics, "the wonder about that which is superior which will be manifested" (*Tripartite Tractate* 89.14-15).

The redemption is an "overthrow" (ϢⲞⲢϢⲠ) of passion in the sense that the psychics are finally freed of its influence under which they have suffered since their initial entanglement. This is clearly the cosmic aspect of the lightning-flash theophany of the Son to the psychic and hylic spheres.

More particularly, the "overthrow" is the same effect that the stability of the seed, which is produced in response to the Son's manifestation to the *logos*, has on those of the

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62. In the Hymn to the Son, he is characterised as "the spring which flowed forth from Him" (ἡ πηγὴ ῥυεῖσα ἐξ αὐτοῦ). This symbolism captures the nonduality of the Father as immutable, superabundant πηγή (*Tripartite Tractate* 60.11-15 see p.65 above, and *Valentinian Exposition* 23.18-19 which identifies "the Root of the All" as "a gushing spring") and Son as the flowing forth of that spring into manifestation.

63. Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.427: «voir ... *Exth*. 41:2, 68; *EvVer* 19:28-30, 27:13-14, 33:39, 43:22; *Irénée, AH*, I, 13:7 τὰ τέκνα τῆς γνώσεως. Le nom fait référence au fait qu'ils possèdent et sont essentiellement la semence spirituelle de la promesse émise par le *Logos* à l'apparition du Sauveur». Trans: "see ... Clement, *Excerpta ex Theodoto* 41.2, 68; *Gospel of Truth* 19.28-30, 27.13-14, 33.39, 43.22; Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, I 13.7 τὰ τέκνα τῆς γνώσεως. The name refers to the fact that they possess and are essentially the spiritual seed of the promise emitted by the *Logos* at the appearance of the Saviour". The *Gospel of Truth* 19.28-20.3 speaks of, "the children, those to whom the knowledge of the Father belongs. Having been strengthened, they learned about the impressions of the Father. They knew, they were known; they were glorified, they glorified. There was manifested in their heart the living book of the living — the one written in the Thought and the mind [of the] Father, which from before the foundation of the totality was within his incomprehensibility". The "Living Book" which is manifest in the heart of the children is the seed/Church/body which descends with the Saviour. The *Odes of Solomon* are also in this tradition:

> "All His children will praise the Lord,
> They will receive the truth of His faith;
> And His sons will be known to Him:
> Therefore let us sing His love.
> We live in the Lord by His grace,
> And we receive life through His Christ.
> For a great day has shone upon us,
> And marvellous is He who gave us His praises.
> Let us all, therefore, join together in the name of the Lord". (41.1-5)

imitation (*Tripartite Tractate* 91.25-26). That the seed's stability was also a manifestation of beneficence to those of the remembrance (*Tripartite Tractate* 91.26-27), further implies that the freedom acquired by the psychics in the redemption comes through the seed/ Church. Thus the redemption, while being the cosmic counterpart of the manifestation and illumination of the first joy is also its continuation, since it now fulfils the potential for salvation that was then only conferred.

Freedom is, furthermore, the annihilation of the hylics, those men whose nature is entirely passionate and chaotic. For, as has been said, once all that partakes of reality sees its true nature, its ignorance dissolves. Yet in the next line we are reminded that even the hylics have a part to play in the economy, and for this reason the *logos* "withheld their destruction until the end of the economy, allowing them to exist because they too were useful for the things which were ordained" (*Tripartite Tractate* 118.11-14).

4.07 Anthropology

The *Tripartite Tractate* now moves into a detailed consideration of the expression of the three levels of existence in mankind. As we have seen, Man, composed of each of the realms, is the only being that participates in all levels of existence. However, in particular individuals one of the levels predominates, and consequently mankind is divided into three races:

> For mankind came to be as three kinds after (their) essence: spiritual, psychic and hylic, reproducing the pattern of the triple disposition of the *logos*, by which the hylics, the psychics and the spirituals were brought forth. (*Tripartite Tractate* 118.14-21)

This raises the question of the degree to which people can be entirely of one essence, when Adam is of all three. A distinction is made here between the essences and the reproductions of their patterns in each of the races, which may give us a clue. There seem to be two distinct anthropological levels working here. The first level concerns what Thomassen calls, "les constituantes génétiques des individus",[64] in that all men partake of the three realms of created being on the model of Adam (*Tripartite Tractate* 105.10- 106.25). The second level concerns the religious qualities, the ethical, intellectual and emotional orientations, of people. These are the essences which reproduce their patterns in mankind according to their natures: the hylic with its selfish lust for dominion, the psychic with its attention to moral action in the world, and the pneumatic with its dedication to the light through faith and knowledge. How then are the races distinguished?

> And each of the essences of the three races is known by its fruit (ⲡⲉⲥⲕⲁⲣⲡⲟⲥ), and they were not known at first, but through the advent of the Saviour, who shed light upon the saints and made manifest what each was. (*Tripartite Tractate* 118.21-28)

The statement, that each of the essences is known by its fruits, is a direct reference to Matthew 7.16-20:

> Ye shall know them by their fruits (καρπῶν). Do men gather grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth bad fruit. A good tree cannot bring

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64.   Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.428. Trans: "the genetic constituents of individuals".

> forth bad fruit, neither [can] a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Therefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

This is the opposite of the common, and what Valentinian theology would call psychic,[65] view, ancient and modern, that it is by performing certain deeds that one will gain salvation.[66] It is instead the case that what one does indicates his nature, for the fruits are just that: the manifestation of the nature of the plant. The expectation that one's works bring about the change in state that is his liberation, is equivalent to the impossible view that the fruit somehow changes the tree's nature. Actions are the expression of one's moral, emotional and, ultimately, ontological ground, they indicate from which of the three natures one works; they, quite literally, embody that nature. This view is fundamental to the ontological orientation of the *Tripartite Tractate*.

Remembering that earlier in the Tripartite Tractate we came across the depiction of the superabundant sweetness of the Father as His fragrance,[67] we find in the *Gospel of Truth* a substantial meditation, in terms of the "fragrance" of the Father, on the statement that "by the fruits does one take knowledge of the things that are yours", which is also an allusion to our logion from Matthew. It is worth quoting it in full for it brings together many of the themes that we have encountered in this part of the *Tripartite Tractate*:

> So you do the Will of the Father for you are from Him. For the Father is sweet and in His Will is what is good. He has taken knowledge of the things that are yours that you might find rest in them. For by the fruits does one take knowledge of the things that are yours because the children of the Father are His fragrance, for they are from the grace of His face. For this reason the Father loves His fragrance and manifests it in every place, and if it mixes with matter He gives His fragrance to the light and in His repose He causes it to surpass every form (and) every sound. For it is not the ears that smell the fragrance, but (it is) the breath that has the sense of smell and attracts the fragrance to itself and is submerged in the fragrance of the Father, so that He thus shelters it and takes it to the place where it came from, from the first fragrance which is grown cold. It is something in a psychic form, being like cold water which has frozen, which is on earth that is not solid, of which those who see it think it is earth; afterwards it dissolves again. If a breath draws it, it gets hot. The fragrances, therefore, that are cold are from the division. For this reason faith came; it dissolved the division, and it brought the warm Pleroma of love in order that the cold should not come again but there should be the unity of perfect Thought. This <is> the word of the gospel of the discovery of the Pleroma, for those who await the salvation which is coming from on high. While their hope, for which they are waiting, is in waiting — they whose image is light with no shadow in it — then, at that time, the Pleroma is proceeding to come. (*Gospel of Truth* 33.30-35.8)

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65. It is noteworthy that Matthew consigns to the psychic judgement of fire, "every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit".

66. This view is what the great Medieval theologian Meister Eckhart calls, "merchandising", for it would bargain with the Lord and exchange one thing for another. This is ignorance because it does not recognise Grace and the fact that without Christ one can do nothing (John 15.5). Walshe, *Meister Eckhart: Sermons and Treatises Volume I*, Sermon 6, p.56.

67. *Tripartite Tractate* 71.36-72.17, quoted p.76 above.

Fruits (**NIOγΤⲱⲱ�·**),[68] children (**Ñⲱ̄ϨⲢⲈ** / τὰ τέκνα) of the Father and fragrance (**ⲠⲤⲦⲀⲈⲒ**) are very closely associated here. It might be said the Father's fruits, His children, are His fragrance. This meditation on the Father's fragrance, which declares itself to be "the word of the gospel of the discovery of the Pleroma", encapsulates the entire movement into becoming of all that is, away from and back to the Father, in a highly symbolic form. Some of the more general themes that this passage shares with the *Tripartite Tractate* and which are worth noting are: that freedom from division lies in faithfully aligning one's own will with that of one's root, the Father, "you do the Will of the Father for you are from Him"; the association of manifestation and love, "the Father loves His fragrance and manifests it in every place"; the hopeful expectancy of the promise of "they whose image is light with no shadow"; the redeeming nature of light and rest, "He gives His fragrance to the light and in His repose He causes it to surpass every form (and) every sound"; the collecting and sheltering of the pneumatics, in the Ogdoad, before their return to the Father, "the breath ... attracts the fragrance to itself and is submerged in the fragrance of the Father, so that He thus shelters it and takes it to the place where it came from".[69]

The perspective from which the *Gospel of Truth* here speaks is entirely nondualistic, that is to say, the relation of the Father and His fragrance is presented from the unitive perspective of the Father. Any dualism is only apparent. There is no real difference between the Father and His fragrance, they are not two separate things, and even the difference between the pneumatic fragrance and the psychic fragrance is only one of warmth. If the fragrance moves too far away from the Father it will grow cold and solidify into "a psychic form" (**ΟγⲠⲖⲀⲤⲘⲀ ÑⲯγⲭⲒⲔⲞⲚ**).[70] This is also spoken of as being a mixing with matter, matter here being the absence of the warmth of the Father. However, the cold fragrance only appears to be from the division of the psychic form, just as frozen water appears to be solid earth, which dissolves into unity again in the warmth of the breath of the Father. It is faith that brings the "warm Pleroma of love" (**ⲘⲠⲒⲠⲖⲎⲢⲱⲘⲀ ⲈⲦϨⲎⲘ· Ñ̄ⲦⲈ †ⲀⲄⲀⲠⲎ**)[71], dissolves the division and restores the "unity of perfect Thought". Mark also that, from this perspective, the initiative is entirely on the part of the Father: He gives the fragrance to the light and causes it to surpass every form and sound; He shelters it and returns it to Himself; He breathes forth and dissolves the division. The *Tripartite Tractate* makes it clear that it is only in the light shed by the Advent of the Saviour that the fruits of the essences can be seen for what they are. The incarnation of the Saviour and the redemption He brings change man's perception of the world. We are repeatedly seeing that it is not really man but the divine that brings about anything at all. Thus salvation comes to man, who for his part must respond to it. He must, of course, act properly in the world and heed the call, but that is only a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for his salvation, which, finally, is a matter of Grace.[72] For Paul this truth is fundamental to Christianity:

> Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His

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68. The only use of the coptic **OγⲦⲀϨ** in the *Tripartite Tractate* occurs very early on at 51.15-19. "But the single one, who alone is the Father, is like a root with trunk, branches and fruit (**ϨⲈⲚОγⲦⲀϨ**)", everywhere else the greek **ⲔⲀⲢⲠⲞⲤ** / καρπός is used.
69. *The Odes of Solomon* 11.15 uses similar imagery:
    "And my breath took pleasure
    In the fragrance of the kindness of the Lord".
70. See p.63 above for the illusory nature of **ⲠⲖⲀⲤⲘⲀ**.
71. **ⲘⲠⲒⲠⲖⲎⲢⲱⲘⲀ ⲈⲦϨⲎⲘ· Ñ̄ⲦⲈ †ⲀⲄⲀⲠⲎ**, indicates both that love is warm and full, and that it is of the Pleroma.
72. The corollary of this view is the Valentinian understanding of sin, which Desjardins has brought to light, that the sins of mankind "do not alienate them from the Father; rather, they seem to reflect this alienation" Desjardins, *Sin in Valentinianism*, p.82.

> mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the
> Holy Spirit; whom He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our
> Saviour; that being justified by His grace, we should be made heirs
> according to the hope of eternal life. This is a faithful saying, and these
> things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they who have believed in God
> may be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and
> profitable to men. (Titus 3:5–8)

4.08 The Three Races

We now turn to the nature of each of the races. Firstly the pneumatics:

> For the spiritual race is like light from light and like spirit from spirit. After
> its head had appeared it hastened to Him immediately. It immediately
> became a body of its head. It received knowledge forthwith by the
> revelation. (*Tripartite Tractate* 118.28-36)

The pneumatics are light from light. This symbolism is related to that of the sun and its
beams of the *Treatise on the Resurrection* (45.28-35), expressing the consubstantiality of
the seed and the Saviour, and can be seen as an extension of the dawning forth of the Son
to the pleromatic Church.

Drawing on Paul, the symbolism of the seed as the body of the Saviour is also extended.
The Saviour is the head to which the body immediately rushes and joins at its advent.[73] In
Ephesians 1:22–23 Paul tells us that the Father gave Christ as,

> the head (κεφαλὴν) over all things to the church (ἐκκλησία), which is His
> body (σῶμα), the fullness (πλήρωμα) of Him that filleth all in all (τὰ
> πάντα ἐν πᾶσιν πληρουμένου).

The unity of Christ and the Church could not be made any more explicit. The body is the
Pleroma of the Saviour who fills all in all. There is, however, another teaching in
Ephesians concerning the relationship between head and body, Christ and Church, that is
equally, if not more, important to our understanding of this symbolism in the *Tripartite
Tractate*:

> For the husband (ἀνήρ) is the head of the wife (γυναικὸς), even as Christ
> is the head of the church: and He is the saviour of the body. Therefore as
> the church is subject to Christ, so let wives be to their own husbands in
> every thing. Husbands, love (ἀγαπᾶτε) your wives, even as Christ also
> loved the church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and
> cleanse it with the washing (λουτρῷ) of water by the word, that He might
> present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any

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73. We find similar views in Clement, *Excerpta ex Theodoto* 42.2 and 43.2 where Jesus is reported to be
    called "the shoulders" of the seed, on which they are introduced into the Pleroma, and Christ "the head"
    (κεφαλὴ), Sagnard, pp.150-153, and in the *Odes of Solomon* 17.14-16:
    > "And they received my blessing and lived,
    > And were gathered to me and delivered,
    > Because they became my members,
    > And I am their head.
    > Glory be to thee, our head, O Lord Christ.
    > Hallelujah".

> such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: For we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined to his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery (τὸ μυστήριον τοῦτο μέγα ἐστίν·): but I speak concerning Christ and the church (ἐγὼ δὲ λέγω εἰς Χριστὸν καὶ εἰς τὴν ἐκκλησίαν). (Ephesians 5:23–32)[74]

Several of the soteriological symbols most important to Valentinian theology are brought together by Paul here, for, in exploring the mystery of Christ and the Church, he sets up equivalences between the relationships Christ:Church, Head:Body, and Husband:Wife, and he even allows their mixing, such as where Christ is said to be "the saviour of the body". In the same way the Saviour can be said to be the husband or bridegroom of the Church, and the Church the wife or bride of Christ.[75]

Also tied to this symbolism is that of baptism, for Christ gives Himself to the Church (note again where the initiative lies) in love, "that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing (λουτρῷ) of water by the word". This presents baptism as, "the purificatory bath of a bride, who is then presented to her husband".[76] It is the, "washing of regeneration" (λουτροῦ παλιγγενεσίας) referred to in Titus 3.5.[77]

Thus in this imagery, in the *Tripartite Tractate*, of the pneumatics as the body of its head the Saviour, seen in its Pauline context, we find the symbolism of bride and bridegroom in conjunction with that of the redemption in baptism.

The pneumatic race, after rushing to the Saviour, their head, and becoming His body at His advent, receive, "knowledge forthwith by the revelation". This revelation is referred to earlier in this part of the tractate:

> Those, however, who had come into being in an invisible manner [as] (an) invisible man he also instructed about himself in an invisible manner. (*Tripartite Tractate* 114.39-115.2)

The spiritual *gnosis* imparted by Christ to His body is invisible to the psychic and hylic realms. It is instruction about Himself, from His promise (*Tripartite Tractate* 117.17), which is at the same time about their own true nature, redemption being "their return to that which they were from the beginning".

Now, secondly, let us turn to the nature of the psychics and their response to the Advent:

> The psychic race, however, is light from fire, and delayed to receive knowledge of the one who had appeared to it, (and) particularly to hasten to Him in faith. Rather, it was instructed by means of voice, and they were

74. Other Pauline references to the κεφαλή symbolism are Ephesians 4.15 and Colossians 1.18. We have here the positive side of femaleness as a symbol of the relation of man, Church and cosmos to the Divine.

75. The *Tripartite Tractate* also adds the pair, *logos*:Son, see p.110 above.

76. Blaz & Schneider, *The Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, II, p.361.

77. Quoted p.103 above. In this regard and in the context of Clement, *Excerpta ex Theodoto* 36.2 and Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* I 6.1 quoted pp.111 and p.127 above respectively, see Pagles, *The Gnostic Paul: Gnostic Exegesis of the Pauline Letters*, pp.126-127 for the Valentinian exegesis of Ephesians 5.22-32 in terms of the redemptive syzygy of the pneumatics and the psychics.

content this way because it was not far from the hope in accordance with expectation, because it had received, so to speak, in the form of a pledge, the assurance of the things which were to be. (*Tripartite Tractate* 118.37-119.8)

We saw earlier how the psychics were called "the fires" (*Tripartite Tractate* 98.12-17). This is a beautiful use of symbolism that captures the double inclination of the psychics: their participation in the realm of the pneumatic light and in the material realm of the elements. The Valentinian association of the psychic realm of judgement with fire draws on both the Judeo-Christian[78] and Hellenistic[79] traditions.

Since the psychics are unable to perceive the invisible pneumatic teachings of Christ, they must be taught through the senses, the highest of which is hearing. Thus they slowly come to the Saviour through voice.[80] This distinction between the invisible pneumatic instruction and the vocal psychic instruction given by the Saviour is closely related to Heracleon's theology, which understands the higher levels of baptism in terms of *logos* and *voice*, to which Pagels has given the greatest consideration. In his exegesis of the Gospel of John, some of which is preserved by Origen in his *Commentary on The Gospel of John*, Heracleon "applies the metaphysical principle of three ontological levels of being hermeneutically"[81] to the story of John the Baptist and his baptism of Jesus:

> Heracleon intends, through his exegesis of the baptist, to characterize three modes of apprehending Christ. The level of sound is purely sensual. Voice is that which conveys meaning through sense-perceptible means. *Logos*, finally, is that level at which the sense-perceptible is itself perceived as symbolic of "spiritual realities" (CJ 13. 19). Those who stand at the first level consider Christ solely in terms of his outward appearance and circumstances. They consider him as the actual man Jesus who is the

78. See especially Matthew 3.10-12 / Luke 3.9-17; Matthew 7.19, 13.40-42; John 15.6; 2 Thesslolnians 1.7. In Mark 9.43 and Matthew 18.8 judgement by fire is opposed to ζωή (life), and in Mark 9.47 and Matthew 13.41-43, 50 to entry into the βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ (kingdom of God). In the Old Testament fire is often a divine attribute, for example Deuteronomy 4.24; 9.3 and Isaiah 33.14, which within the Valentinian perspective would only confirm the equation of the God of the Old Testament with the psychic demiurge. See Blaz & Schneider, *The Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, III, pp.197-200 for a full survey of the occurrence and uses of 'fire' in the New Testament. Finally, *The Habakkuk Pesher* (1QpHab, x.3-13) from Qumran speaks of "many" led astray by the "Spouter of Lying" whose "suffering works will be of emptiness. And they will be brought to the Judgements of Fire, who blasphemed and vilified the Elect of God" (trans. by Eisenman).

79. In Greek thinking the relation of fire and judgement goes back to Heraclitus, for example, fragment 66 "For fire will advance and judge and convict all things" (πάντα γὰρ τὸ πῦρ ἐπελθὸν κρινεῖ καὶ καταλήψεται.) (Hippolytus, *Refutation* 9.10.6 = 22B66). The Greeks had, as later did the Christians, the notion of punishment by fire in Hell. In the *Phaedo* 113-114 the river Pyriphlegethon "whose fiery stream belches forth jets of lava" is the destiny of some of those judged. Albertus Magnus in *On The Heavens* ascribes to the Pythagoreans the understanding of Hell as a place of fire where those condemned by Zeus are punished (quoted in Kingsley, *Ancient Philosophy, Mystery and Magic: Empedocles and Pythagorean Tradition*, p.205).

80. The *Gospel of Truth* 30.32-31.1 speaks of the gradual turning of those to whom the Saviour appears. "He had appeared instructing them about the Father, the incomprehensible one, when He had breathed into them what is in the Thought, doing His Will, when many had received the light, they turned to Him". The breathing into them is the breathing forth of incorruptibility in the Advent, which fills the deficiency and which orients the individual will to that of the Father.

81. Pagels, *The Johannine Gospel in Gnostic Exegesis*, p.52, "Visible, historical events perceived through the senses occur at the hylic level; the ethical interpretation of these events is perceived as the psychic level; and the true insight (gnosis) into them is perceived only at the pneumatic level. Whoever understands the text pneumatically, then, transcends the mere historical level, and transcends as well its ethical meaning. He comes to interpret the whole symbolically".

expected messiah of Israel. Those at the second level perceive him as the revelation of God, and yet can perceive him only as he is revealed in space and time. Those who are at the third level comprehend that the events described of Christ are actually themselves symbols of spiritual truth.

Analogously, to perceive baptism as a physical act is to remain at the hylic level of mere sense-perception. To interpret that act ethically as a sign of "forgiveness of sins" is to experience the transformation from "sound" into "voice," from the hylic to the psychic standpoint. This level of apprehension characterizes, according to Heracleon, the great majority of Christians. They remain at the psychic level, worshipping the psychic Christ as the son of the demiurge. These two levels of perception characterize the "baptism of John," that is, of the demiurge. Only those who transcend this — who receive from Christ himself the higher level of apprehension — receive the "pneumatic baptism", which is initiation into gnosis. Apparently Heracleon has in mind the sacrament of *apolytrosis* as it was practised in Valentinian communities.[82]

Lastly, let us consider the nature of the hylic race:

> But the hylic race is alien (OYϢⲘⲘO) in every respect: Being darkness it turns away from the radiation of the light, for its appearance dissolves it because it has not accepted its superior <manifestation(?)>, and it is hateful towards the Lord because He had revealed it. (*Tripartite Tractate* 119.8-119.16)

Once again the unreality of everything hylic is expressed.[83] The hylic race shuns the light of reality, which dissolves its appearance, for that is all it is: "ⲉ2ⲚⲈⲓⲗⲱⲗⲟⲚ (likenesses) and 2Ⲛ2ⲗⲉⲓⲂⲈⲤ (shadows) and 2ⲚⲫⲗⲚⲦⲗⲤⲓⲗ (illusions)" with no reality of its own. The Lord reveals its illusory nature as He reveals the nature of everything.

The destiny of the pneumatic and hylic races, then, are fairly straightforward: "For the spiritual race receives complete salvation in every respect. But the hylic receives destruction in every respect, as someone who resists Him" (*Tripartite Tractate* 119.16-20). That of those in the middle, however, needs further elucidation:

> The psychic race, however, since it is in the middle by its production, and its constitution, moreover, is double by its disposition towards both good and evil, receives the effluence as being deposited for a while, as also the complete advancement to the things which are good. Those of the *logos'* remembrance whom he brought forth in accordance with the pre-existent

82. Pagels, *The Johannine Gospel in Gnostic Exegesis*, pp.64-65. She suggests that rather than a static and deterministic theory of natures Heracleon offers "a theory of the dynamic transformation of human insight" (p.57). This notion of dynamic perception accords well with the soteriological status of the psychics that is becoming apparent in the *Tripartite Tractate*, and other works from Nag Hammadi: the psychics can become pleromatic, but this involves their transformation from psychic to pneumatic, from 'females' to 'males', from 'slaves' to 'free men'.

83. *Gospel of Truth* 31.1-4, "For the material ones were strangers (ⲚϢⲘⲘO) and did not see His likeness (ⲗⲦⲧⲉϥⲉⲓⲚⲈ) and had not known Him". Attridge and Pagels, 'The Tripartite Tractate: I, 5:51.1-138.27', *Nag Hammadi Codex I (The Jung Codex): Notes*, p.88 suggests that the use of ⲉⲓⲚⲈ here may be equivalent to its use in the *Tripartite Tractate* 98.12-26 (see pp.95 and 113 above) as a technical term for the psychic. If so the *Gospel of Truth* would be saying that the hylic race is unable to perceive even the psychic reality of the Saviour. This reading is entirely consistent with Valentinian theology. See also Clement, *Excerpta ex Theodoto* 33.3.

> when he remembered that which is superior and prayed for salvation, <they> have the salvation without sickness. They will be saved completely because of this Thought of salvation. As it is with that which was brought forth from him, so it is also with the things which these brought forth from themselves, whether angels or men. By the confession that there will come one who is superior to themselves, and by the prayer and searching after Him, they too will attain salvation of those who brought them forth, because they are of the disposition which is good. They were appointed to serve the proclamation of the advent of the Saviour who was to come, and His manifestation which had occurred. Whether angel or man: having been sent for the service of these thing, they actually received the substance of their being. (*Tripartite Tractate* 119.20-120.14)

The intention here is quite clear. The nature of the psychics is rehearsed in order to confirm the complete salvation of the psychic powers of the remembrance, the highest level of the psychic, and all that they brought forth "whether angels or men", for they will receive the substance of their being. Since they are the product of the *logos*'s remembrance of the pre-existent Pleroma and his prayer for salvation, that is what they will finally receive. It is their confession of and prayer and searching after the Saviour which orients them towards the redeeming effluence and superabundance of the divine. That, "they were appointed to serve the proclamation of the advent of the Saviour who was to come" indicates that the role of this highest level of the psychic in the cosmic economy is as the Old Testament prophets spoken of at *Tripartite Tractate* 111-114.[84]

The next level of the psychic consists of those, "who derive from the thought of lust for dominion" (*Tripartite Tractate* 120.15-17), they are the "mixed" (*Tripartite Tractate* 120.21) products of the mutual confusion and entanglement of the psychic and hylic powers (*Tripartite Tractate* 85.10-12), whose conflict is finally ended by the manifestation of the Saviour. They are those who fight passion with passion, producing further suffering, rather than turning away from or repenting their passions and rising above them. All is not yet lost for these mixed ones, however, for although they must "stay behind as for a while" (*Tripartite Tractate* 120.21-22) they may still be saved:

> Those who have been brought forth with a lust for dominion which is given them as for a time and certain periods, and who (subsequently) give glory to the Lord of glory and abandon their wrath, will be recompensed for their humility by enduring forever. (*Tripartite Tractate* 120.22-29)

If they turn their wills to the Father, by giving Him glory, and reject the passion to which they are subject, by abandoning their wrath, they will find life. The end of those who cling to the illusion of the fleeting power and glory of this world is quite different:

> But those who perversely pride themselves because of the desire of love of glory, and who love temporary glory and are unaware that it is only for a time and certain periods which they have that the power has been entrusted to them, and who for that reason have not confessed that the Son of God is the Lord of the All and the Saviour, and who have not been brought out of their wrathfulness and their imitation of those who are evil — these will be judged for their ignorance and their senselessness — which is the suffering — along with those who have gone astray, all such as turn away among them. And, even worse, in such a way as to take part in working those

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84.   Above p.120.

> indignities against the Lord which the powers on the left worked against Him, even as far as His death, they persevered, (thinking): "We shall become rulers Of the All if the one who has been proclaimed king of the All is killed," as they strove to work these things, namely those men and angels who are not of the good disposition of those on the right, but of the mixture. And they have already deliberately chosen for themselves the temporary honour and the desire. (*Tripartite Tractate* 120.29-121.25)

Those who persist in their imitation of evil, by identifying themselves with and perpetuating the suffering that is ignorance and senselessness, condemn themselves through their own choice of the impermanent goods of the world. Such are the actions of the dead, those of whom Christ speaks when He says to one of His disciples, "Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead" (Matthew 8:22; Luke 9:60), for passionate ignorance is death. The clinging of those of mixed nature to the unreal demonstrates their utter failure to perceive the illusory nature of the world and the incorruptibility of the Pleroma, to the extent that they believe that by killing the physical body of the Saviour they will gain rulership of the All. Such delusion is "the road of those who derive from the order of the left" which "leads to perdition" (*Tripartite Tractate* 122.2-4). Whereas,

> The road of eternal rest leads through humility to salvation for those among the right who will be saved: after having confessed the Lord, and having recognized what is pleasant to the Church, and (having sung) together with it the song of those who are humble for everything which they are able to do which is pleasant to it, so that they share its afflictions and its sufferings, in the manner of such (people) as are faithful to that which is good for the Church, then they will share in [the] hope. (*Tripartite Tractate* 121.25-38)

Humility, then, being the total opposite of the presumptuous thought overcomes it and reorients one, away from the division of selfishness and towards the blissful and harmonious rest of the Pleroma where the All silently sing hymns in, to and for the glory, unity and love of the Father according to His Will the Son.

Thomassen[85] points out that the symbolism of the two roads, for the destiny of souls, is a traditionally Greek one, ascribed to the pythagoreans. The road to the right, through humility leads to salvation, the road to the left, that of the hylics, to destruction:

> the road of those who derive from the left leads to perdition: not only because they have denied the Lord and plotted evil against Him, but their hatred, envy and jealousy is directed against the Church as well. And this is the reason for the condemnation of those who were agitated and stirred themselves to (cause) <trials> for the Church. (*Tripartite Tractate* 122.2-12)

The condemnation (κατάγνωσις) that the hylics suffer, while being that of the *logos* at the moment of his conversion and repentance, is also a self-condemnation, since it is the product of their choice. They get what they seek which is dominion over the material realm, what they do not realise however is its transient nature.

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85. Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.433.

4.09 The Elect and the Called

We have now reached, in these its final sections, the *Tripartite Tractate*'s treatment and thought upon that to which the entire movement of existence is directed: salvation. The soteriological paths of the pneumatics and the psychics are not identical. The difference is reflected in the traditional Valentinian designations of the pneumatics as the Elect (ἐκλεκτός) and the psychics as the Called (κλητός):[86]

> For the Election (ἐκλογή) is concorporeal and consubstantial (ϢBHP NNOYϹΙΔ = ὁμοούσιος) with the Saviour, being like a bridal chamber, because of its oneness and union with Him. For more than anything else it was for her sake that Christ came. The Calling (κλῆσις), however, possesses the place of those who rejoice over the Bridal Chamber and who are glad and happy because of the union of the bridegroom and the bride. The station, then, which the Calling will have, is the aeon of the images in the place where the *logos* has not yet been united with the Pleroma. And this is what the Man of the Church rejoices in and is glad over and hopes for. He was composed of spirit, soul and body through the economy of the one who planned (this). (*Tripartite Tractate* 122.12-32)

The members of the Election are already pleromatic, being consubstantial with the Saviour, that is to say, they are of the same pneumatic οὐσία (substance).[87] This continues the theme of the unity of the Saviour as the head of His body, the Church. The marriage symbolism that we detected in the symbolism of head and body is now made explicit. The Saviour, in total union with the Elect, the Church, is the Bridal Chamber which the psychic Calling must remain without, since they are not of His body, though they will become so. The phrase "not yet been united with the Pleroma" (*Tripartite Tractate* 122.27) holds within it the assurance that they will attain their perfection, but first they must gather in the Ogdoad before being united with the Pleroma along with the *logos*.[88] Though even this gathering must already be more than psychic since the Ogdoad is the beautiful image of the Pleroma and not merely its likeness. The Calling, as prophets like John the baptist, are the friends of the bridegroom who rejoice at the union, which for them is, "the fullness of joy and of rest" (τὸ Πλήρωμα τῆς χαρᾶς καὶ τῆς ἀναπαύσεως) (*Excerpta ex Theodoto* 65.2):

> He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, who standeth and heareth Him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled. (John 3:29)

The reference to the fulfilment of joy by the *voice* of the bridegroom would, in Valentinian theology, indicate the proper soteriological relationship of the psychics to the Bridal Chamber, since they are as yet unable to receive their fullness invisibly, or, as Heracleon would say, via *logos*.

The Man of the Church is the incarnated Saviour,[89] being the man who embodies the

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86. Terminology which developed from the Pauline use of these terms, for which see, Blaz & Schneider, *The Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, I, pp.417-419 (ἐκλεκτός), and II, pp.241-244 (κλητός).
87. See Clement, *Excerpta ex Theodoto* 42.3, "the body of Jesus, which is consubstantial with the Church" (τὸ σῶμα τοῦ Ἰησοῦ, ὅπερ ὁμοούσιον ἦν τῇ Ἐκκλησίᾳ.).
88. Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* I 7.4; Clement, *Excerpta ex Theodoto* 34.2.
89. Attridge and Pagels, 'The Tripartite Tractate: I, 5:51.1-138.27', *Nag Hammadi Codex I (The Jung Codex): Notes*, pp.460-461, deny this and would, unconvincingly, introduce new, distinct figures (the "Man of the Church" and a little later the "perfect man") at this late stage in the text.

entire Church, who is incarnated with "body, soul and spirit"⁹⁰ through His compassion. He who is without passion (ἀπαθῶς) takes on the passion (πάθος) and division of the cosmos in order to perfect and redeem it. He is the cosmic extension and manifestation of the Son, who is called "First Man of the Father" at the beginning of the Hymn to the Son (*Tripartite Tractate* 66.11-12). From a more human view, the Man of the Church, as Thomassen notes,⁹¹ is also each individual, pneumatic man who, as a member of the fullness of the body of Christ, is both fully himself and the entire Church at once. The living liberation given by the redemption effects just this transformation; one is, as the *Gospel of Philip* says, "no longer a Christian but a Christ" (*The Gospel of Philip* 67.26-27).

> For the man who was in him was unique, He who is the All and who is them all, and who has the effluence from the Father[.....] which the stations will receive, and He has the members which we have mentioned above. (*Tripartite Tractate* 122.32-123.3)

The phrase, "the man who was in" the Man of the Church, again holds the double reference to the individual member of the Church and to the Saviour. However, in this context the latter is pre-eminent, for here is the explicit statement of the identity of the cosmic Saviour, the "Man of the Church" and the pleromatic Son, "He who is the All and who is them all". This last phrase is worth dwelling on since it tells us that the Son, whose cosmic embodiment is the Saviour, is the All (ⲡⲧⲏⲣϥ) and He is also "them all" (ⲧⲏⲣⲟⲩ). That is to say, He is the entire Pleroma and He is the members of the Saviour's body, the Elect, individually and collectively, for the true nature of each of them is nothing other than that of the Son. They are only "outside" of the All to the extent that they do not know that they have always been "in" it, since *gnosis* is the knowledge that one is the All, for the effluence that He has, and is, is the superabundance of the Father.

> After the redemption had been proclaimed, the perfect man immediately received knowledge, so that He quickly returned to his unity, to the place from which He issued, so that He returned once more in joy to the place from which He originated, to the place from which He had flowed forth. His members, however, needed a school, which exists in those stations which were fashioned so as to make it receive by means of them the likeness of the archetypal images, in the form of a mirror, until all the members of the body of the Church would be in a single place and receive restoration together, after they have been manifested as the sound body <...> the restoration to the Pleroma. (*Tripartite Tractate* 123.3-22)

We are now presented with an intriguing distinction between the perfect man who is in the Man of the Church, namely, the Son, and His members, the Elect. After the proclamation of the redemption, the Son, as perfect man, "received knowledge, so that He quickly returned to his unity, to the place from which He issued, ... to the place from which He originated". This "place" from which "He had flowed forth" can only be the Father, the Root of the All, since it is actually He who, as Son, flows forth from Himself in His superabundance. It is paradoxical that the Son Himself, whose self-manifestation gives *gnosis* and fills the deficiency, would need knowledge in order to return to Himself, for from whom could He receive knowledge but from himself? One way of looking at this question is in terms of death, which the Saviour has come to swallow up. In this context,

90. *Tripartite Tractate* 115.3-17, quoted p.124 above.
91. Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, pp.435-436.

the Saviour's need for knowledge is the result of His putting on of the ignorance of death in order to eliminate it. This is the division of baptism that Christ underwent in order that we may be unified (*Excerpta ex Theodoto* 36.2).[92] Thus it is the radical consequence of the incarnation. Another tentative answer to this might be that some knowledge might be conferred by the very process of His fulfilment of the economy of salvation. Though, to be sure, this process should not be considered to be different from the Son, who is, "the God who has gone forth" (*Valentinian Exposition* 22.30-31) and who "extended himself and spread himself out" (*Tripartite Tractate* 65.4-6), for He is the very Love and superabundant extension of the Father. Likewise, the seed are fulfilled through their education in the "plantation". The two, I would venture, can be seen as different perspectives on the same process. But while the perfect man immediately returns to His unity, which is not the same as going to a different place, His members must remain in their stations in the cosmos, which is characterised as a school.[93] It is within this school that the Elect learn of reality by "the likeness of the archetypal images" being reflected in the structures of the cosmos, "in the form of a mirror".[94] It also provides a gathering place in which they can manifest as the "sound body" of the Saviour, which manifestation is itself the reception of the restoration (ἀποκατάστασις) to the Pleroma. What does it mean that the Saviour quickly returns to the Father while His body continues to become manifest in the economy. The quick return of the perfect man must, as Thomassen suggests,[95] refer to the resurrection and ascent of Christ. Yet, here again, we are in danger of being caught in this potentially misleading topological language. If we try to distinctly separate the Saviour from His body we miss the mystery that is being expressed here: that the eternally perfect Son has put on imperfection in order to perfect it, that He suffered the passions of division in the cosmos while being Himself ever a unity beyond passion. This presents us with the mystery that He is always being manifest in the world, while also (from our temporal perspective) being eternally with the Father, for the resurrection is far more than an historical event. It is the continuous movement towards the perfection of the entire cosmos; the transformation of the perishable into the sound body of the Saviour. As the last paragraph of the *Gospel of Philip* says, when one attains living liberation and becomes a son, then the world is seen as it truly is:

> "[Every] plant [which] my Father who is in heaven [has not] planted [will be] plucked out" (Matthew 15:13). Those who are separated will unite [...] and will be filled. Every one who [enters] the Bridal Chamber will kindle the [light], ... But the mysteries of that marriage are perfected rather in the day and the light. Neither that day nor its light ever sets. If anyone becomes a son of the Bridal Chamber, he will receive that light. If anyone does not receive it while he is here, he will not be able to receive it in the other place. He who has received that light will not be seen, nor can he be detained. And none shall be able to torment one of this kind even while he dwells in the world. And again when he leaves the world he has already received the truth in the images. The world has become the aeon (eternal

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92. Quoted, p.111 above.
93. As in the *Gospel of Truth* 19.19-20: "In schools he appeared (and) he spoke the word as a teacher".
94. This is an entirely Platonic attitude: regarding the "making of image as we see in water or in mirrors or in a shadow; in these cases the original is the cause of the image which, at once, springs from it and cannot exist apart from it. Now, it is in this sense that we are to understand the weaker powers to be images of the Priors" (Plotinus, *Ennead* VI 4. 10), this passage is employed in the distinction that Plotinus makes between the true image (of this quote) and the imitation such as that of a portrait which is not so directly linked to its archetype. This is just the distinction made between the 'images', the pneumatics, and the 'imitations', the psychics in the *Tripartite Tractate*. See Armstrong. *Platonic Mirrors*.
95. Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.437.

realm), for the aeon is for him a Pleroma. And it is in this way: it is revealed to him alone, not hidden in the darkness and the night, but hidden in a perfect day and a holy light. (*Gospel of Philip* 85.29-86.18)

When one enters the Bridal Chamber, is baptised with the Holy Spirit, and becomes its son the world has become the aeon, that is to say, the cosmos is correctly perceived as what it is, which is not different from the Pleroma.[96] Though one be in the world, if one has received the light of the perfect day and is liberated while living, all that he sees from that moment will be what truly exists, which is the truth which informs the cosmos. A more radical way of saying this is that, on liberation one sees that the cosmos has already been fulfilled. This is nondual perception.[97]

4.10 The Restoration

Let us return to the restoration, we find that as the process of the economy of salvation nears its completion, the All and the Elect become almost indistinguishable in their self-manifestation in the Son-Saviour. One might say that "He who is the redemption" (*Tripartite Tractate* 123.30) is the locus of salvation for all of existence: for the pleromatic Church of the aeons, which, remember, is also called "the Church of many men" (*Tripartite Tractate* 58.29-30); for the cosmic Church of the pneumatic Elect; and, ultimately, for the friends of the bridegroom, the psychic Calling. As the various references to the Hymn to the Son from the different levels of existence indicate, there is finally only one Church, as there is only one *logos*, though its coming to perfection, its restoration, be effected on these different levels.

Thus having detailed the manifestation of the Elect as the sound body of the Saviour the *Tripartite Tractate* moves on to the manifestation of the All in the Son:

> It has a previous consent (ΝΟΥϯ ΜΕΤΕ = εὐδοκία) and mutual union, which is the consent which exists for the Father, so that the All acquired a face (Ν̄ϩΟ) in accordance with him. The final restoration (ϯΑΠΟΚΑΤΑCΤΑCΙC / ἀποκατάστασις), however, is after the All has been manifested in the one who is the Son, He who is the redemption (ΠCⲰΤΕ = ἀπολύτρωσις), which is the road towards the incomprehensible Father, He who is the return to the pre-existent, and after the All manifest themselves authentically in the one who is [the in]conceivable and the ineffable and the invisible and the ungraspable, so that it (the All) receives the redemption. (*Tripartite Tractate* 123.23-124.3)

We saw earlier[98] how, moved by compassion for the plight of the lower *logos*, the All, in entreating the Father for His help in the redemption of the *logos*, united in a "symphony of consent" (ϩΝ̄CΥΜФⲰΝΙΑ Μ̄Πϯ ΜΕΤΕ) (*Tripartite Tractate* 86.12-14), which manifests the face of the Father, the Son-Saviour. This was an important stage in their fulfilment. Now at the final restoration (ἀποκατάστασις) they are able to "manifest themselves authentically" in the Father and in doing so receive the redemption. Thomassen comments that this passage,

96. In *Tripartite Tractate* 74.1-18 the Pleroma is called the "true aeon", quoted in full p.77 above. Note also that we have returned to the symbolism of becoming a son which I discussed at the beginning of the exegesis, pp.63-64 above.
97. See Loy, *Nonduality*, pp.38-95.
98. Above p.96.

fait une distinction entre l'unité qui existait déjà dans le Plérôme avant la mission du Sauveur-Fils, et l'unification qui a lieu dans l'*apocatastase*. La première unité prenait la forme de l'εὐδοκία du Tout, dans laquelle les éons s'accordaient les uns avec les autres, tout en louant le Père et en produisant le Fruit, le Sauveur-Fils, en tant que représentation du Père (cf. en particulier 86:11-88:8). L'unification finale et dernière dans l'*apocatastase*, ou la rédemption (probablement *λύτρωσις ou *ἀπολύτρωσις), consiste en la manifestation authentique du Père dans le Fils, par le Plérôme. La distinction entre les deux unifications et manifestations est mise en évidence par le contraste entre les termes «représentation» (123:26-27) et «authentiquement» (123:35): la première unification n'était qu'une reproduction de la nature unifiée du Père, alors que la seconde implique une participation à son essence même.[99]

It is now apparent that it is only through the Son-Saviour's total self-manifestation in the economy that the Father is perfectly manifested. And His manifestation, to reiterate the absolute nonduality of this statement, is also that of the Church: the All and the Elect. This insight confirms my earlier, tentative suggestion that the Son-Saviour is also fulfilled through His fulfilment of the world. It is this notion that is now expressed in the rather startling assertion that, as with everything that is below Him (that is everything save the Father), the Son Himself needs redemption:

> For not only earthly men need the redemption, but the angels also need the redemption and the image, and also the Pleromas of the aeons and those marvellous luminous powers (need it). And so that we shall not be in doubt as to what concerns the others, even the Son, who is appointed as a place (ⲚⲦ[Ⲟ]ⲠⲞⲤ)[100] of redemption for the All [neede]d the redemption as well, He who is the one who became man, as He submitted Himself to everything which is needed by us in the flesh who are his Church. (*Tripartite Tractate* 124.25-125.5)

The Son's need for redemption, then, arises from His compassion, through which He submitted Himself to the deficiency and became man in order to perfect him, even to the point of submitting to man's need for redemption. This is a radical and disturbing statement, for this is not a teaching that has survived within the Church. Here I would warn against the temptation to retreat into the judgement of heresy. This is an expression of ultimate Christian concern that does not flinch from exploring the full meaning of the incarnation: if the Saviour has taken on death, ignorance, then he must have taken on the need to be redeemed. How, then, is the redeemer redeemed?

99. Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.437. Trans: "makes a distinction between the unity which already existed in the Pleroma before the mission of the Saviour-Son, and the unification which takes place in the *apokatastasis*. The first unity took the form of the εὐδοκία (consent) of the All, in which the aeons agreed with one another, while praising the Father and bringing forth the Fruit, the Saviour-Son, as the countenance of the Father (esp. 86:11-88:8). The final and ultimate unification in the *apokatastasis*, or the redemption (probably λύτρωσις or ἀπολύτρωσις), consists in the authentic manifestation of the Father in the Son by the Pleroma. The distinction between the two unifications and manifestations is made evident in the contrast between the terms 'countenance' (123:26-27) and 'authentically' (123:35): the first unification was a reproduction of the Father's unified nature, the second implies a participation in his very essence".

100. Following Attridge and Pagels, 'The Tripartite Tractate: I, 5:51.1-138.27', *Nag Hammadi Codex I (The Jung Codex): Introductions, Texts, Translations, Indices*, p.316.

> After He, then, had received the redemption first, through the *logos* which came down upon Him, then all the rest who had received Him received redemption through Him. For those who received the one who had received also received that which existed in Him. (*Tripartite Tractate* 125.5-11)

This passage clearly refers to the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan and the descent of the Holy Spirit upon Him. Yet it is puzzling that it is the *logos* that is said to come down upon Him and effect His redemption. I agree with Thomassen that this cannot be the fallen and converted aeon *logos/Sophia*, since the latter receives its pleroma through the Son. But neither am I satisfied with his explanation that the term *Logos* is used here simply "dans un sens plus général, pour décrire la formation et l'acquisition de la *gnose*".[101] Had that been the intention, it could easily have been expressed as such without the clear emphasis that there is here on the reception (ϪІ) of redemption from this *Logos* by the Son, from whom "all the rest" then receive it, and which is reaffirmed a little later when we are reminded that, "He was given the grace before anyone else" (*Tripartite Tractate* 125.23-24). This is certainly a more difficult reading, but one worth grappling with. The answer, I think, lies in the very last lines of the tractate:

> ... the praise, the power [and] the [glory] through Jesu[s, the] Christ, the Lord, the [Sa]viour, the redeemer of all those belonging to the one filled with love through [His] Holy Spirit (*Tripartite Tractate* 138.20-24)

These lines tell us that the Saviour is the one who is filled (ⲡⲓⲘⲉϨ)[102] with love through His Holy Spirit and who is the redeemer of all those who belong to Him. Thus the *Logos* that descends upon the Son at His baptism is the Holy Spirit, for what could descend upon the Son and what could He receive but the gift of Himself in the third person of the Trinity,[103] which, as I suggested earlier, may be "the spirit which breaths in the All" (*Tripartite Tractate* 72.2)? This is supported by the *Excerpta ex Theodoto* in which that which descends upon Jesus is said to be, the "Spirit" (Πνεύματος) in 61.6, and the "Spirit of the Thought of the Father" (τὸ Πνεῦμα τῆς Ἐνθυμήσεως τοῦ Πατρός) in *Excerpta ex Theodoto* 16.[104] This accords with Romans 8.11, which speaks of the Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead. This *Logos* is also the one referred to in the Hymn to the Son as, "the Word of the unutterable". In this way the *Tripartite Tractate* shows itself to be utterly trinitarian in its soteriology while sustaining the ontological tension between the absolute being of the Father and His becoming in the Son, which is mediated by the Holy Spirit. Anything less than the location of this tension within the Godhead itself would deny the stated necessity of the cosmos. Thus this tension finds its origin in the superabundant and loving self-manifestation of the Father as the Son through the Holy Spirit. There is nothing more profoundly nondual in Christianity than the Trinity, except the incarnation itself:

> For among the men who are in the flesh [He] went forth to give redemption, the Father's first-born and His Love, the Son who became incarnate, the angels in heaven having been deemed worthy of sojourning, forming a community through Him upon earth. Therefore He is called the Father's

101. Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.440. Trans: "in a more general sense, to describe the formation and acquisition of *gnosis*".
102. Following Attridge and Pagels, 'The Tripartite Tractate: I, 5:51.1-138.27', *Nag Hammadi Codex I (The Jung Codex): Introductions, Texts, Translations, Indices*, p.336.
103. 1 Cor 12:3–6: "... no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Spirit".
104. See Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, pp.439-440, for a brief survey of the identification of the spirit that descends upon the Saviour in 'Gnostic' sources.

> angelic redemption, which has consoled those who had suffered for the All
> for the sake of His knowledge, for He was given the grace before anyone
> else. (*Tripartite Tractate* 125.11-24)

The angels here are the pneumatic Church who are incarnated with the Saviour as His body. *Excerpta ex Theodoto* 22.5-6 also names the Saviour the "angelic redemption" (λύτρωσιν ἀγγελικήν), for the "angels", the Elect, are baptised in the "the redemption of the Name" (λύτρώσει τοῦ Ὀνόματος).[105]

The *Tripartite Tractate* now reiterates the movement of the Thought of the Father as the unknowable and unknown Βάθος, which is the Son and in which the Church is originally hidden, to His full manifestation and conferral of *gnosis*, in His incarnation, but this time from the perspective of the necessary educative value of the All's experience of the deficiency.

> For the Father knew Him in advance, since He was in His Thought before
> anything had yet come into being, and He also had those for whom He
> manifested Him. He placed the deficiency upon that which lasts for a
> certain period of time, for the glory of his Pleroma. Since the fact that they
> were ignorant of Him causes the bringing forth of consent [so that they may
> receive knowledge] of Him (*Tripartite Tractate* 125.24-126.1)

We have already seen the importance placed on the education gained by those in the economy, and here the general movement of the tractate is continued in including the All in that process. The All's ignorance of the Father leads to their consent, which brings about and is the manifestation of the face of the Father, in order that, "the reception of knowledge about Him becomes a manifestation of His generosity and the manifestation of His superabundant sweetness, which is the second glorification" (*Tripartite Tractate* 126.1-5).

> For by hidden and inscrutable wisdom He guarded the knowledge until the
> end, so that the All suffered while they searched for God the Father (whom
> no one has found by his own wisdom and power, because He gives Himself
> so that by that which is above thought they may receive knowledge of the
> great glory of His which he granted, and (its) cause which He supplied,
> which is the ceaseless thanksgiving to Him), that (knowledge) which He
> manifests for eternity out of His immovable counsel, to those who have
> become worthy of the Father who is unknowable in His nature — so that
> they should receive the knowledge of Him through his Will. (*Tripartite
> Tractate* 126.9-25)

Thus it is not through thought that the Father, who is beyond all thought, can be known, rather it is only through their unified glorification that the All can know their root:

> Comme il est inaccessible pour les facultés humaines de connaissance (cf.
> 54: 2-35), le Père ne peut être connu des hommes qu'en leur donnant une
> partie de sa propre essence suprarationnelle, identifiée à sa gloire, laquelle
> devient alors l'objet de la connaissance et sa condition préalable subjective.
> En d'autres termes, par l'intermédiaire de la glorification, des louanges et

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105. *Excerpta ex Theodoto* 22.6-7, Sagnard, pp.102-103.

de l'action de grâce communes, l'Église spirituelle devient consubstantielle
à la gloire jusque-là inconnue du Père (cf. 63:5-64:27, 69:10-24).[106]

The suffering of the All in their search for the Father is also to be found at the beginning
of the *Gospel of Truth*, "When the All went about searching for the one from whom they
had come forth ... the totality was inside of Him, the incomprehensible, inconceivable one
who is superior to every thought" (*Gospel of Truth* 17.4-9). One of the most important
lessons to be learned, it seems, is that redemption is a matter of grace. It is the gift of the
Father in and of the Son that restores man to himself, to the First Man of the Hymn to the
Son, it is not the product of his own wisdom and power.

This is not, however, determinism, for oblivion, and for that matter redemption, is a
choice, made possible by the third glorification:

> And they have the distinction from and the persistent repudiation by and the
> accusations of those who oppose them, as an ornament and a marvel of the
> things on high, in order for it to become evident that the ignorance of those
> who do not know the Father was of their own making, (whereas) that which
> gave them the knowledge of Him was a power of His to be attained to. For
> this knowledge is rightly called the knowledge of everything which may be
> thought of, and the treasury, and furthermore, to be more accurate, it is the
> manifestation of those who were known in advance, and the road towards
> the consent and towards the pre-existent. This is the growth of those who
> have renounced their own greatness in the economy of the Will, in order
> that the end may be like the beginning was. (*Tripartite Tractate* 127.1-25)

Choice lies in one's orientation. If one has turned from the deficiency towards his own
root, he is prepared to receive the redemption that is ever there and participate in the
manifestation of what (he) truly is.[107] This orientation relies on the renunciation of the
self-serving will in favour of the true Will of the Father, which leads to the return and
restoration to what is real. In this act of faith lies the essence of the redeeming
transformation that education brings. Heidegger, in his meditation on Plato's "Allegory of
the Cave", closely links "education" (παιδεία) with such a turning about towards Truth.
Again the extract is as long as it is illuminating: the

> process whereby the human essence is reoriented and accustomed to the
> region assigned to it at each point is the essence of what Plato calls
> παιδεία. The word does not lend itself to being translated. As Plato
> defines its essence, παιδεία means the περιαγωγὴ ὅλης τῆς ψυχῆς ("the
> complete turning around of the soul"),[108] leading the whole human being in
> the turning around of his or her essence. Hence παιδεία is essentially a
> movement of passage, namely, from ἀπαιδευσία into παιδεία. ...

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106. Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.441. Trans: "Since he is inaccessible by human
    faculties of cognition (compare 54.2-35), the Father can only be known by men by giving them a part of
    his own supra-rational essence, identified with his glory, which thus becomes the object of knowledge
    and its subjective precondition. In other words, by the intermediary of glorification, of praise and of the
    action of communal grace, the Church becomes consubstantial with the previously unknown glory of
    the Father (compare 63.5-64.27, 69.10-24).

107. Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p. 442, «Ce qui est manifesté est, en un sens, les élus
    eux-mêmes en tant que l'Église spirituelle; d'un autre point de vue néanmoins, les élus sont les
    destinataires de cette manifestation (cf. 125.28-29)». Trans: "That which is manifested is, in one sense,
    the Elect themselves as the spiritual Church; nevertheless from another point of view, the Elect are the
    receivers of the manifestation (compare 125.28-29)".

108. My translation.

The "allegory of the cave" concentrates its explanatory power on making us able to see and know the essence of παιδεία by means of the concrete images recounted in the story. At the same time Plato seeks to avoid false interpretations; he wants to show that the essence of παιδεία does not consist in merely pouring knowledge into the unprepared soul as if it were some container held out empty and waiting. On the contrary real education lays hold of the soul itself and transforms it in its entirety by first of all leading us to the place of our essential being and accustoming us to it. That the "allegory of the cave," is meant to illustrate the essence of παιδεία is stated clearly enough in the very sentence with which Plato introduces the story at the beginning of Book Seven: Μετὰ ταῦτα δή, εἶπον, ἀπείκασον τοιούτῳ πάθει τὴν ἡμετέραν φύσιν παιδείας τε πέρι καὶ ἀπαιδευσίας. "And after that, try to conjure up for yourself from the kind of experience (to be presented in the following story) a view (of the essence) both of 'education' and of the lack of education, both of which (as belonging together) concern the very foundation of our being as humans."

Plato's assertion is clear: The "allegory of the cave" illustrates the essence of "education." ... According to our interpretation ... the "allegory" not only illustrates the essence of education but at the same time opens our eyes to a transformation in the essence of "truth." If the "allegory" can show both, must it not be the case that an essential relation holds between "education" and "truth"? This relation does, in fact, obtain. And it consists in the fact that the essence of truth and the sort of transformation it undergoes here first make possible "education" in its basic structures.

But what is it that links "education" and "truth" together into an original and essential unity?

Παιδεία means turning around the whole human being. It means removing human beings from the region where they first encounter things and transferring and accustoming them to another realm where beings appear.[109]

Although it is tempting to associate this περιαγωγὴ ὅλης τῆς ψυχῆς (complete turning around of the soul) with psychic repentance, the μετάνοια of the Christian tradition and the ἐπιστροφή of the Platonic one, this transformation is clearly pneumatic. Considered in terms of the Valentinian theology of baptism, the difference is that between the baptism given by Christ, "with the Holy Spirit and with fire"[110] and that given by John the Baptist, "with water to repentance" (Matthew 3:11; Luke 3:16),[111] in order to "fulfil all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15) as Irenaeus records:

> For the baptism instituted by the visible *Jesus* is for the *remission of sins*, but the *redemption* brought in by that *Christ* who descends upon Him, is for *perfection*. The first is psychic, the second pneumatic. For the *baptism of John* was proclaimed for the sake of repentance, but the *redemption* of the *Christ* who is in Jesus is ordained for the sake of *perfection*. (*Adversus Haereses* I 21.2-4)[112]

109. Heidegger, 'Plato's Doctrine of Truth', pp.166-168.
110. From the Valentinian point of view the baptism "with fire" given by Christ is the highest level of psychic education, beyond that of John the Baptist, in accordance with the psychics designation as the 'fires'.
111. Mark 1:4, "John was baptizing in the wilderness, and preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins". Mark 1:8, "I indeed have baptized you with water: but he shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit".
112. See Pagels, 'A Valentinian Interpretation of Baptism and Eucharist — and its Critique of "Orthodox" Sacramental Theology and Practice', pp.155-158.

4.11 Baptism and Redemption

As many of the references throughout the tractate indicate, baptism as understood in Valentinian Christianity is far more than a simple initiation rite. Its symbolism encompasses the entire redemption process. Referring to the *Gospel of Philip* 67.27-30, "The Lord [did] everything in a mystery, a baptism and a chrism and a eucharist and a redemption and a Bridal Chamber", Williams explains that,

> The determination of the meaning of the terms found in 115,27-30 [= 67.27-30][113] is important, but here one danger should be underscored: In attempting to distinguish between *names*, one must be careful to avoid the presupposition that *functions* are also thus distinct. It is regrettable that, however legitimate and valuable as independent investigations, the attempts of various scholars at isolating and identifying different sacraments in Philip have contributed to the obscuration of the very functions of these sacraments. For example, if baptism and chrism and bride chamber are to be understood as three completely distinct sacraments, then we are faced with tremendous difficulty in trying to make sense of several passages. In 118,8-9 [=70.8-9] we read that "one will put on the light in mystery in the union,"[114] and in 122,20-22 [=74.20-22] again we are told that the light is given "in the bridal chamber." Yet in 117,13-14 [= 69.13-14] we find that "the light is the chrism." In 117,25-26 [= 69.25-26] we find "Baptism has the resurrection," and 112,22-26 [= 64.22-26] states that a person should also receive the Holy Spirit in baptism. But 115,19-25 [= 67.19-25] assigns the reception of the Holy Spirit to the chrism, and in 121,15-19 [= 73.15-19] resurrection is also associated with chrism: "But the tree of life is in the midst of the garden and the olive tree from which the chrism is made by him for the resurrection." Finally, the important passage in 122,12-22 [= 74.12-22] associates resurrection and the Holy Spirit not only with the chrism but with the bride chamber:
> "The chrism is superior to baptism, for from the chrism we are called Christians, not because of the baptism; and Christ is (so) called because of the chrism. For the Father anointed the Son, and the Son anointed the apostles, and the apostles anointed us. He who is anointed possesses the All. He possesses the resurrection, the light, the Cross, the Holy Spirit. The Father gave Him this in the Bridal Chamber, He received."
> In which sacrament, then, are the resurrection, the light, and the Holy Spirit given — in the baptism, the chrism, or the bride chamber? The impossibility here of making clear functional distinctions among three separate sacraments is obvious. Indeed it would seem from 122,12-22 [= 74.12-22] that the bride chamber is intended somehow to include the chrism and possibly baptism as well. At any rate, it is apparent that Philip employs sacramental imagery with a great deal of freedom, as though the author were viewing the initiation process as a continuous whole, rather than insisting upon analytically isolating the precise contribution of each sacrament.[115]

113. Following Layton's critical edition in Layton, *Nag Hammadi Codex II, 2-7 together with XIII, 2*, Brit. Lib. Or.4926 (1), and P. Oxy. 1, 654, 655*, pp.129-217.
114. Isenberg in Layton, *Nag Hammadi Codex II, 2-7 together with XIII, 2*, Brit. Lib. Or.4926 (1), and P. Oxy. 1, 654, 655*, translates: "One will clothe himself in ...".
115. Williams, 'Realised Eschatology in the Gospel of Philip', pp.12-13.

This functional interrelationship of the different sacraments is equally a feature of the *Tripartite Tractate*. Here, as in the *Gospel of Philip*, baptism, the redemption, the Bridal Chamber and the restoration are not distinct or sequential levels of the return of the spirit to itself. This is particularly well illustrated by the body symbolism which unites baptism and marriage. However, this does not mean that each rite may not have its different stages, as for instance does the redemption which, "is also an ascent" through "the degrees which exist in the Pleroma, and all those to whom names have been given, and who conceive them in accordance with the power of each aeon" (*Tripartite Tractate* 124.13-18), and as we have seen with the levels of water, fire and the Holy Spirit in baptism.

The *Tripartite Tractate* now turns to a more detailed consideration of baptism:

> As for the authentically existing baptism, the one into which the All will descend and in which they will be, there is no other baptism apart from this one only: the redemption to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, after the confession which has arisen from faith in these names, which are a unique name of the Good News, when they believed in the things which were told them — that they exist and that those who have believed that they exist obtain their salvation out of this. This is the attainment, in an invisible way, to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. And because they have borne witness to them with an unfaltering faith, they also grasp them in a firm hope, so that it may come about that the perfection of those who have believed in them will be the return to them [the Trinity], and (that) the Father will be one with them [the All] — the Father, God, whom they have confessed in faith and who has given their union with Himself in knowledge. (*Tripartite Tractate* 127.25-128.19)

Here baptism is equated with the redemption, "into which the All will descend". This last phrase is curious. While one initially reads it as a reemphasis of the full manifestation of the All in the Saviour, the recent context of the tractate brings to mind the question as to whether this might also be a reference to the descent of the *logos* upon the Saviour and hence the "the spirit which breathes in the All" (*Tripartite Tractate* 72.2), that is to say the Holy Spirit. While we have been able to detect the trinitarian structure of the tractate in many places, it is in this passage that we have the first naming of the Trinity: the true baptism is, "the redemption to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, ... these names, which are a unique name", which is very close to the baptism in the λύτρώσει τοῦ Ὀνόματος (redemption of the Name) of the angels in *Excerpta ex Theodoto* 22.6.

The other remarkable aspect of this passage is its emphasis on what have since come to be known as the theological virtues of faith and hope, first spoken of by Paul in 1 Corinthians 13:12-13:

> For now we see in a mirror, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. And now abideth faith (πίστις), hope (ἐλπίς), love (ἀγάπη), these three; but the greatest of these [is] love.

Each of these virtues is, in its own way, to do with one's correct relation to the Father. Faith concerns the orientation of one's will, that is to say, the use of one's autonomy. Hope concerns the orientation of one's expectations. Love, the greatest of the three, concerns the orientation of one's entire being; one's orientation to and with compassion.

Faith in Valentinian theology, and early Christian theology in general, is very closely associated with the correct use of one's will. This is a view which even today remains an

important part of the Christian understanding of faith, as Macquarrie demonstrates:

> Faith in Jesus Christ has ... been paradoxically described in terms of both grace and decision, and this is the familiar paradox of the divine and human action meeting together in the personal dimensions of the Christian life. This life is on the one hand obedience, which is an essential constituent of faith. It conforms the believer to Christ's own obedience. His own will is offered to God, so that the divine grace may work in and through him. Yet on the other hand this very obedience is freedom. It is freedom from the tyranny of things, if these have been idolized, and it is freedom likewise from the frustration and meaninglessness of a life impotent in the face of guilt. The strange paradox is that the man who asserts his freedom and autonomy loses it through his self-idolatry; while the man who lives in obedience and dependence toward God is set free from the very things that are most oppressive and distorting, and becomes most responsibly his true self. God's service is found to be perfect freedom. "Whoever would save his life shall lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it." (Mark 8:35).[116]

We have seen that hope is the fundamental attitude of the pneumatics, for it is in the hope of the fulfilment of the promise of the future union of the *logos* and the Son that the *logos* conceives the seed (*Tripartite Tractate* 95.24-27).[117] And that is why they are the "seed of the promise of Jesus Christ" (*Tripartite Tractate* 117.14-15). While in the Ogdoad one of the pneumatic stations is called "Faith" and "Obedience [which arises from] hope" (*Tripartite Tractate* 97.10-11), which leads to the attitude of "prayer and supplication" (*Tripartite Tractate* 97.13-14). Now hope is characterised as the All's attainment to their return to the Trinity and their unity with Father, who has *already* "given their union with Himself in knowledge". Again we see the merging of the All and the Elect in the true baptism that is the restoration to the Trinity, the locus of which is the Son-Saviour, the Bridal Chamber. Within the Valentinian *Dasein* then, the correct orientation that is hope would be towards one's total fulfilment as promised by and in Christ, rather than towards the ephemeral attainment of one's desires and passions in the cosmos.

Let us consider the remaining theological virtue of love. If, as I maintain, this passage on the "authentically existing baptism" is about the theological virtues, why is love, the greatest of the three, not mentioned? My answer is that this is so precisely because of its greatness. In looking for love we may overlook the fact that the entire redemption is about the full manifestation of the Father's Love, the Son (*Tripartite Tractate* 125.14-15), from the perspective of the deity, and simultaneously, that it is about man's full self-manifestation in that love, as a Christ, from the perspective of the individual Christian. Love is the harmony and consent which orients and prepares one for consubstantiality with the Saviour, and it is more than this. It is the partaking of Christ's compassion. The injunction to do so is contained in the very first words uttered by Jesus in the New Testament, in His demand to John the Baptist to, Ἄφες ἄρτι, "Suffer (it to be so) now" (Matthew 3.15). While this instruction in the first instance refers to the necessity of John's baptising Jesus, which the Baptist resists knowing himself not worthy (Matthew 3.11, 14), it can also be seen to encapsulate the demand of His entire ministry. As Christ does, so is he who would become a Christ enjoined to lovingly accept and transform the passions in oneself and the world. It is Macquarrie, again, who has recently articulated this letting-be that is love,

116. Macquarrie, *Principles of Christian Theology*, p.346.
117. Quoted p.110 above.

Greatest among the theological "virtues" is love. This is most excellent of the Spirit's gifts and the culminating quality of the Christian life. It is indeed the culminating quality of human existence, for we have seen in our consideration of the person of Jesus Christ that it was his manifestation of absolute love that constitutes his God-manhood; for one in whom love has become absolute is carried to the very uppermost limits of the unfolding of human potentialities, so that he becomes one with God and the miracle of incarnation takes place.

This is so because love, in its ontological sense, is letting-be. Love usually gets defined in terms of union, or the drive toward union, but such a definition is too egocentric. Love does indeed lead to community, but to aim primarily at uniting the other person to oneself, or oneself to him, is not the secret of love and may even be destructive of genuine community. Love is letting-be, not of course in the sense of standing off from someone or something, but in the positive and active sense of enabling-to be. When we talk of "letting-be," we are to understand both parts of this hyphenated expression in a strong sense — "letting" as "empowering," and "be" as enjoying the maximal range of being that is open to the particular being concerned. Most typically, "letting-be" means helping a person into the full realization of his potentialities for being; and the greatest love will be costly, since it will be accomplished by the spending of one's own being.

Love is letting-be even where this may demand the loosening of the bonds that bind the beloved person to oneself; this might well be the most costly of demands, and it is in the light of this kind of love that a drive toward union may seem egocentric. The parent, for instance, really loves the child by letting the child come into his potentialities for independent being, not by keeping him close. It may well be that the more adult relationship establishes a deeper community of being between the two, but it is not impossible to visualize a case where really to love a person might mean that one has to renounce the treasured contact and association with that person, if only so that person can realize what there is in him to be.

The Christian religion affirms that "God is love" (1 John 4:8) and this is so because love is letting-be, and we have seen that the very essence of God as Being is to let-be, to confer, sustain, and perfect the being of the creatures. Christ is the God-man because he is the human existent who manifests an absolute love and so is the one in whom creaturely being converges with Being that creates. The Christian, so far as his life is being conformed to Christ, manifests the letting-be of love, and so is adopted into sonship and brought into a closer relation to God.[118]

The *Gospel of Philip* Speaks about this letting-be of love as wine, fragrance and ointment. Those not anointed with the ointment that is love, "remain in their bad odour":

> he who is really free through knowledge is a slave because of love for those who have not yet been able to attain to the freedom of knowledge. Knowledge makes them capable of becoming free. Love [never calls] something its own, [...] it [never] possesses [...]. It never [says "This is yours"] or "This is mine," [but "All these] are yours." Spiritual love is wine and fragrance. All those who anoint themselves with it take pleasure in it. While those who are anointed are present, those nearby also profit (from the

118. Macquarrie, *Principles of Christian Theology*, pp.348-349.

> fragrance). If those anointed with ointment withdraw from them and leave, then those not anointed, who merely stand nearby, still remain in their bad odour. The Samaritan gave nothing but wine and oil to the wounded man. It is nothing other than the ointment. It healed the wounds, for "love covers a multitude of sins" (1 Peter 4:8). (*Gospel of Philip* 77.26-78.11)

It is not accidental that this ointment and wine of love are said to heal the wounds of sin, for as we have seen the compassionate taking on and healing of sickness is the Saviour's gift and the mission of the Elect in the economy.

Macquarrie continues with reflections that are pertinent to our earlier consideration of *eros* as the superabundant flowing forth of the Son:[119]

> We have been talking of an agapastic love rather than of the kind which is called *eros*. This ἀγάπη which we designate "letting-be" and which consists in a self-spending is, above all, the love of God toward his creation, and so the love of Christ and derivatively the love of Christians though again let it be understood that no exclusive claim is being made here. This agapastic love is usually contrasted with ἔρως, and in so far as ἔρως retains any self-centredness, the contrast is justified. But according to the account that has been given in this book, we can assert that these two apparently contrasted forms of love are not ultimately opposed, for the one passes into the other, and again we have an instance of the so-called "natural" becoming perfected, or perhaps transformed, by grace. For "erotic" love (the adjective has, in modern use, been all too arbitrarily narrowed to the sexual passion) manifests itself at its highest in the quest of the creature for God. We have seen, in studying the doctrine of creation, that all created beings have a tendency to be like God, and that as we ascend the scale of beings, we come to those which, in a certain degree, are like God in being creative and in their power to let-be. So the longing to be like God (ἔρως) contains in itself the seed of ἀγάπη, for in so far as the longing is fulfilled (not indeed by our effort, but by divine grace) the love that longs is transformed into the love that lets-be. As this happens, we understand that it is the same love on both sides — the love of God toward us that lets us be, and the love of God operating in us by the Holy Spirit and directing us to God, who in turn empowers us to share in his own letting-be. As this divine love works in men, every natural affection and relationship is worked upon and transformed by it.[120]

The kinship between the tractate's Pauline theology of the virtues and these passages from Macquarrie indicates that Valentinian theology, while expressed in now unfamiliar ways, is much closer to that of proto-orthodox Christianity, and even to modern theology, than many would have us believe.[121] The penultimate passage in the *Tripartite Tractate* on the true baptism brings together the now familiar symbolisms of clothing, marriage and perfect light:

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119. Section 2.06 above.
120. Macquarrie, *Principles of Christian Theology*, pp.349-350.
121. One of the few exceptions to this is Edwards. See for example his, "Valentinianism: New Discoveries and Platonic Exegesis". There are also some extraordinary affinities between the theology of Meister Eckhart and Valentinian theology, though to explore them here is beyond the scope of this exegesis.

> For the baptism of which we have spoken is called "garment of those who do not take it off". For those who put it on and who have been redeemed wear it. And it is called the "unfailing confirmation of truth". Without wavering and without being moved it holds those who have received the restoration, while they hold it. It is called "Silence" because of its quiet and tranquillity. It is also called "Bridal Chamber" because of the consent and the inseparability of those who (have) known, because they have known Him. And it is also c[alle]d ... "the unsinking and fireless light"; for it does not illuminate, but those who have worn it are turned into light, namely those whom it has worn also. And it is also called the eternal life, that is, immortality. (*Tripartite Tractate* 128.19-129.8)[122]

We have already seen the constellation of these symbols around that of the Christ as head/ bridegroom and the Church as His body/bride. The mutual wearing of the Elect and the Saviour, in and as the perfect day, the Bridal Chamber, beautifully symbolises the mystical union, the ultimate marriage of the Christian in Christ. The utter transcendence of this unity is then reaffirmed:

> And it [baptism] is called by all which is in it simply, with beautiful legitimacy, indivisibly, irreducibly, comprehensively and unchangeably, including any such (appellations) as have been left out (here). For what else is there by which to call it, apart from the appellation that it is the All. That is, even if it is called by innumerable names, they have been spoken in order to express it in this way, while it transcends every word and it transcends every voice and it transcends every mind and it transcends everything and it transcends every silence. This is how it is with the things which are in that which it is. This is what it in fact is, with an ineffable and inconceivable character for the coming into being in those who know by means of that which they have attained, which is that to which they have given glory. (*Tripartite Tractate* 129.8-34)

The language of the tractate here, like the goal to which it points, is a return to that of the beginning.

4.12 The Salvation of the Calling

The very last section of the tractate returns to the psychics and their salvation, for though there are many more things that could be added on "the subject of the Election" (*Tripartite Tractate* 129.34) it is

> necessary that we speak on the subject of the Calling — for this is what those on the right are called — and it is not profitable for us to forget them. (*Tripartite Tractate* 130.4-9)

The tractate now rehearses who of the Calling receive their salvation and why. We are reminded who "have become worthy" of the redemption:

122. This passage echos Isaiah 61:10: "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh [himself] with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth [herself] with her jewels". The "fireless light" of the perfect day is entirely pneumatic, in which the psychic fire plays no part.

> Well I said that all those who have originated from the *logos*, either from
> the condemnation of those who are evil, or from the wrath which fought
> against them, and the turning away from them — and this is the turning
> towards the superior things — and the prayer and the remembrance of the
> pre-existent things, and hope and faith of receiving the salvation of that
> which is good, (all these) have become worthy, since they originate from
> these good dispositions, possessing the cause of their begetting. (*Tripartite
> Tractate* 130.13-28)

For their turning towards the superior things is repentance in which they turn from their
passions and towards "their begetting", their root. And in showing themselves "[obedient]
to that (thought) which became cause of their existence" (*Tripartite Tractate* 130.35-
131.2) they "did not exalt themselves because <they> were healed" (*Tripartite Tractate*
131.2-3):

> But they acknowledge that they possess an origin of their being, and they
> desire to know it, which is what exists before them. (*Tripartite Tractate*
> 131.4-8)

Thus they "greeted the appearance of the light in the form of lightning, and ... they bore
witness that it had appeared for their salvation" (*Tripartite Tractate* 131.11-13).[123]   And
"it was not only about those who have come forth from the *logos* that we said this"
(*Tripartite Tractate* 131.14-15) but also "those whom these begot" (*Tripartite Tractate*
131.18), will "partake of the rest, as a result of the superabundance of grace" (*Tripartite
Tractate* 131.20-22).

Everything said so far is simply the recapitulation of what has already been said about
the salvation of the psychics. But now, something quite new and startling in its
implications is inconspicuously added to this list of those who will be saved. We are told
that even,

> the ones who were brought forth from the aforementioned desire of lust for
> dominion, and have within them the seed which is the lust for dominion will
> receive the reward of the good. That is to say those who have done work
> and are disposed towards the good, provided they are of an agreeable
> sentiment and are willing to abandon their vain love of temporary glory and
> do the command of the Lord of glory instead of the small momentary
> honour, will inherit the eternal kingdom. (*Tripartite Tractate* 131.22-132.3)

This passage is nothing short of extraordinary, for the lust for dominion is entirely
hylic.[124]   This, to my knowledge, is the only Valentinian text that allows for the potential
salvation of those men called hylics (ϩⲩⲗⲓⲕⲟⲓ / ὑλικόι). Yet it is entirely in keeping with
the thoroughgoing nonduality of the *Tripartite Tractate*.[125]   Once again the distinction that
is implied here is that between one's true selfhood and the orientation, or nature from
which one acts; the difference, as the passage above puts it, between the seed that is within
one and oneself. We must be clear, however, that nothing hylic, or psychic for that matter,
can enter the Pleroma, since they are not real. What redemption gives is the
transformation of one's orientation. On abandoning the lust for dominion with which one

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123. See pp.99 above.
124. See *Tripartite Tractate* 79.16-28, p.91 above.
125. Which it shares with the other Valentinian texts of Nag Hammadi.

identified, that one is no longer hylic. He inherits the eternal kingdom when he realises it as his true ground.

Earlier, the Kingdom was given as a name of the Ogdoad. Now it is clearly a name for the fully restored Pleroma. With the fulfilment of the promise of salvation, the *logos* has been united with the Son as 'bride' to the bridegroom. Gathered in the Aeon of the images with the *logos* are the repentant psychics (*Tripartite Tractate* 122.19-27), who are now united with the Son along with the fallen aeon.

Having been told who will be saved, it is now necessary to "justify the grace shown towards them" with "argument" (*Tripartite Tractate* 132.5-6). This 'justification' is actually a confession of Christ's ultimacy. There is, after all, no reason to justify a gift. Grace is not reasonable. Nevertheless,

> In order to establish this in an exposition it is appropriate that we confess the kingdom which is in Christ for the dissolution of all diversity and inequality and difference. For the end will receive a unitary existence, just as also the beginning was one, the place where there is no male and female, nor slave and free man, nor circumcised and uncircumcised, nor angel nor man, but Christ is all in all. (*Tripartite Tractate* 132.15-28)

The "kingdom which is in Christ", the goal of all that is, is the "dissolution of all diversity and inequality and difference", since it is beyond all qualities.[126] The redemption is the return of everything that is to the "unitary existence" like that of the beginning, with the difference that now "Christ is all in all", that is to say, the fullness and superabundance of the Father is completely and perfectly manifested in the Son, for, the *Tripartite Tractate* asks,

> How is it that the one who was not initially can be found to be, unless <...> the nature of the one who is not a slave, as he will take a place together with a free man. (*Tripartite Tractate* 132.-133.1)

The salvation of the Calling is not, finally, different from that of the All and the Elect, there is only one true baptism:

> For they will even receive the vision by nature and not only as a little word by which they believe only by means of a voice. For this is how it is for the restoration back to that which was, is a oneness. (*Tripartite Tractate* 133.1-8)

Vision, as we saw in *Tripartite Tractate* 90.4-13,[127] is of the highest level, far surpassing the psychic level of voice. The teaching, in the *Tripartite Tractate*, of the total redemption of the Calling and even of those hylics who repent, entirely vindicates Pagels early and unconventional understanding of Valentinian soteriology:

> For the duration of the cosmos, there seem to be three distinct types of human being and human destiny — the hylics, elected to reprobation, who are to be "destroyed along with the cosmos"; the pneumatic elect, elected to reunion with the Father; and the psychics, not pre-elected, who stand "in the middle" for the duration of the cosmos, compelled to choose between the hylic and pneumatic elements. Yet the Valentinians consider this situation

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126. Compare *Gospel of Thomas* 37.24-35 quoted p.90 above.
127. Quoted p.101 above.

to be only phenomenal and provisional. The consummation will disclose finally only two alternative destinies — destruction with the material elements, or transformation and reunification with the Father. The Valentinian view of the psychics represents a modification of a strict election theology. This may represent a specifically Valentinian theological development, which allows for the situation of those who receive the "separated seed" of Sophia, and who must themselves decide whether to identify themselves with materiality (the devil) or with the Savior who will then "raise them up" and "blend" them with the pneumatics and himself.[128]

The last coherent passages in the *Tripartite Tractate* speak of the redemption of the Calling in terms of their compassionate syzygy with the Elect/All, which reflects that of the Elect and Christ: "They were entrusted with the services which benefit the Elect" (*Tripartite Tractate* 135.4-5), they "minister" to them "and make [themselves] partners in their suf[fering]s and persecutions and [tribu]lations, which have been brought upon the saints more than anybody" (*Tripartite Tractate* 135.12-18). And for this fellowship, "the Church will remember them as good companions and faithful servants once it has received the redemption" (*Tripartite Tractate* 135.26-29) and the "Pleroma will draw them upwards, through the great generosity and sweetness of the pre-existent aeon" (*Tripartite Tractate* 136.21-24).

The last two pages (*Tripartite Tractate* 137-138) of the tractate are badly damaged. The last intact passage, apart form the last lines which I have already quoted speaks of the,

> trumpet so[und] which will proclaim the great, perfect <reconciliation> in the resplendent East, in [the] Bridal [Chamber], which is the Love of God, the F[ather]. (*Tripartite Tractate* 138.6-11)

The reconciliation in the resplendent East, I read as a reference to the dawning forth of the Son in His manifestation and fulfilment and incorporation of the cosmos into the Bridal Chamber.

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128. Pagels, 'Conflicting Versions of Valentinian Eschatology', p.52.

Chapter Five
Reflections

In the summing up of this inquiry and of the insights to which it has led, I am hesitant to call this final chapter the "Conclusion", since the interpretive endeavour can never be complete, especially regarding those texts whose subjects are of ultimate concern. The heading "Reflections" here seems more appropriate to the open-ended nature of engagement with the world of an ancient text, which this study is. The intention of this chapter is not to offer any final answers, but rather to further open up the ground for inquiry into the world of meaning that was the union of the Judaic and Hellenic cultures, upon which our own civilisation is based.

There are three subjects that call for reflection: the nature of this study; the reason for my choice of the term nonduality; and the use of language in Valentinian texts and especially the *Tripartite Tractate*.

5.01 The Value Of The Hermeneutical Method

This study has been an exercise in obedience to the text, that is to say that it has aspired to what Ricoeur calls the relinquishment in appropriation. My concern has been to let the text speak, not as some historical artifact whose meaning is limited to its original context and community of readers, but one whose world remains of direct relevance to our own. As Gadamer and Ricoeur say, such an engagement changes the reader by enlarging the horizon of being within which he dwells. While this may be true of all texts, it is especially true of those whose end is of ultimate concern. It is this recognition and commitment that most sets philosophical and theological exegesis apart from the modern explanatory commentary.

How successful, then, has this hermeneutical method been and what has it achieved that linguistic and historical explanation on their own could not?

The method started with the awareness of the traps into which the interpretation of texts can fall, and the recognition that hermeneutics is concerned with the mode of being presented in front of the text during the reading event, as opposed to the intentional fallacy or the fallacy of the absolute text. We also saw, thanks to Gadamer, that the reader is implicated in the meaning of the text and can never be neutral, no matter how hard he may try. Consequently, before beginning the exegesis proper we started by examining the ontological preunderstanding, or prejudice, that grounds the modern study of religion. We did this both generally in terms of its inverse ontology, inverse that is from the religious perspective, and specifically in terms of the pejorative and anachronistic treatment, overt and tacit, of Valentinian theology as heretical. This first move, entirely hermeneutical in nature could not have been more important to the exegesis that followed. It allowed a way into the tractate on its own ontological and theological terms. This was vital, for as in any conversation, one must first understand what the other is saying before the agreement can be reached, which is the goal of conversation.

The discovery of the ontological orientation of the world of the tractate quickly opened up the nonduality of its theology. We found that the scope of its vision, as it unfolds in the text is enormous. It started with the radical negative theology of the Father, root of the All, who is beyond every attribute. It then moved to His loving, self manifestation as the Son and the not-twoness of Father and Son who is Father to Himself. And the progression continued, the Son is the All, the Church, and then even with the providential downward movement of the aeon *logos*, we discovered that the All ultimately includes the entire creation. This is again stressed by the incarnation in which the Son puts on the deficiency

of the entire cosmos in order to fill it, that is in order to return it to pleroma.

We have see the importance of constantly questioning one's preunderstanding while engaged in hermeneutics, the following is an example of how it works in practice. As we shall see in section 5.03 of this chapter, where it will be given greater attention, the question of the use of mythological and philosophical language has been present throughout the exegesis. For much of the time that I was writing the thesis I saw the question in terms of the conscious attempt to reconcile the Biblical and Hellenistic worlds, in a way not dissimilar to that of Williams though from a more theological position. Yet there remained something not quite right about the way I had formulated it and I kept returning to it until I saw that the question was caught in the modern inverse ontology. Everything in the *Tripartite Tractate* works from the top down: from unity to multiplicity. This is fundamental to its mode of being. To argue that it is attempting to reconcile two different discourses is to attempt to build the picture from the bottom up: from multiplicity to unity. This is antithetical to its mode of being. Thus the answer had to lie in the fact that the tractate works from the perception of the ultimate union of these discourses. The world of the tractate is heir to two modes of discourse which, though different in function and effect, it uses from the perspective that they are of and refer to the same, and only, Reality.

This brings us to another important aspect of the hermeneutical method as applied in this study, that is the necessity of dialectical use of explanation and understanding. We have seen that appropriation is the bringing of the text into living communication, here and now, but that with any text certain explanatory methods are needed in the absence of the ability to question understandings by questioning and being answered. This is all the more apparent with a text of this age and provenance, where a host of explanatory techniques – linguistic (in this case of Coptic and Greek) and historical (in this case of Late Antiquity) – are required in addition to those structural and semiotic methods one might apply to any modern text. To this end I have drawn on Thomassen's outstanding translation and historical and linguistic commentary as well as that of Attridge and Pagel's, not to mention the work of many others. Because of the extensive use that I have made of Thomassen's work it will be useful to further clarify the differences between it and my own work.

While there is no denying the importance of Thomassen's translation and his explanation of many aspects of the text linguistically and historically, especially regarding its Greek philosophical background, his commentary still objectifies the text and is still caught in the intentional fallacy. Thomassen approaches the text as an object of study, as a document in the history of religions. This, as we have seen in the introduction, denies the text's claim to truth, and, as the *Tripartite Tractate* is a religious text, it denies its ultimate concern. It also denies the reader's involvement with the text, and thus that the text is addressing the reader's own ultimate concern. This is the essential and fundamental difference between historical explanation and religious and philosophical hermeneutics.

It should now be clear why Williams's suggestion of the category 'biblical demiurgical' is theologically and hermeneutically a misnomer. It is one's orientation toward a text that allows true engagement with it. The category 'biblical demiurgical' is steeped in the alienating distanciation of the modern human sciences. It is an objectification and an abstraction, which takes no account of the ontological orientation of the texts upon which it is imposed, and which denies the texts' truth reference. This designation also has the effect of privileging a certain feature of the cosmology of the text, and with that comes the very real danger of imposing the modern ontology.

The *Tripartite Tractate* can be as relevant to the religious life of the reader as, say, the writings of Origen or Meister Eckhart. That is not to say that it must be so, but if one wishes to understand the text one must open oneself to the proposed mode of being that is offered by the text, and this necessarily involves recognising its ultimate concern. We can

see an implicit refusal of this recognition in the historical tendency, of Thomassen and others, to view the points of contention upon which the text takes a stand as being of only local historical interest. But to do this is not to hear them for what they are, which is as the products of contemplation upon Truth or Reality, that is to say the unchanging ground of all that is. The tractate is not an elaborate intellectual exercise designed to overcome certain abstract problems. It is the embodiment of and an invitation to take on a specific orientation, a specific being in and towards the world. The hermeneutical method recognises that, if one wishes to understand a text he cannot stand back from the matter of the text. To do so renders it meaningless.

What new insights, then, have emerged from the dialectic of explanation and understanding as applied to the *Tripartite Tractate*? One of the most important new insights, on both the structural/explanatory and hermeneutical levels, to have emerged is the centrality of the Hymn to the Son. In light of the nonduality of the Father and Son, the Hymn's structural significance within the tractate became clear, and we were able to see how it was consciously echoed throughout the text. This then allowed a greater hermeneutical understanding of the meaning of the Son in the theology of the world of the text: His central role as that through whom (Son as Door), and by the knowledge of whom (Son as knowledge of the Father: the form of the formless), creation comes to know the Father and itself (Son as Knowledge of the All), and the deficiency is filled. This also allowed the insight into the movement of grace: all the initiative is on the side of Divinity, it is man's duty to respond to that initiative, but he does not initiate it. Thus we see the back and forth movement from explanation to understanding to further explanation to further understanding, this is the hermeneutical circle.

Several other new insights have emerged through this method. Drawing on Thomassen's linking of the downward movement of the *logos* with the movement of the Son Himself, we have been able to extend our understanding of the importance of love in the world of the tractate, which is reflected in manifestation as glorification between the All, the Son and the Father, and also in the symbolism of the kiss, which further emphasise the nonduality of this theology.

This new understanding of the importance of love in the theology of the *Tripartite Tractate* has important christological ramifications. The extension of the Son to the All, which is the conferral of knowledge, is, as we have seen, the action of grace and love. This spreading out is continued in the cosmos by the self-revelation of the Son as Saviour, which fills the deficiency and swallows up death. The perfection of the cosmos is also spoken of in terms of the Saviour's compassion, for He willingly takes on the passion and the death in order to vanquish it. Here we have a thorough going nondual Christology, one that does not shy away from the full consequence of the incarnation of God as Man, even to the point where He must redeem Himself in the person of the Holy Spirit. This is not, as Pagels holds, a separationist christology, the unity of God and man is in no way compromised. And it is the attainment of this unity, while alive that each Christian who holds to this theology yearns for.

Love also has important ramifications in regard to the spiritual path as proposed by this theology. From the perspective of the individual Christian, love is the orientation of being and the path followed which prepares one for unity with and as Christ. This is the greatest of the theological virtues and it, along with faith and hope lies at the very heart of the orientation of the world of the tractate. Faith is the orientation of one's will: its alignment with the Will of the Father; this is freedom. And hope is the orientation of one's expectation towards one's fulfilment in Christ. This study is the first to recognise the importance of the theological virtues in any Valentinian text, and this is entirely due to the method used. By being open to the possible mode of being offered by the tractate the virtues became apparent within the text. I would argue that this is no coincidence, rather it is to do with both the nature of virtue and the nature of ontological hermeneutics. Thomas

Aquinas understood virtue to be the *ultimum potentiae* (*Quaestiones disputatae de virtutibus* 3), that is to say, the most a man can be:

> It is the realization of man's potentiality for being. Virtue is the perfecting of man for an activity by which he achieves his beatitude. Virtue means the steadfastness of man's orientation toward the realization of his nature.[1]

This potentiality for being, "is grounded in a real, grace-filled participation in the divine nature, which comes to man through Christ (2 Pet 1:4)".[2] This language is strikingly similar to Heidegger's formulation of the orientation of *Dasein* being the concern for complete being-in-the-world, or the fulfilment of one's ownmost possibilities. As we saw in the introduction, Ricoeur drew from this insight the hermeneutical principle that in interpretation one must open oneself to the fulfilment of one's ownmost possibilities within the being-in-the-world projected by the text. Thus Ricoeur characterises textual interpretation is self-understanding before the world of the text: one's horizon has grown and one is able to see better that which was one's horizon previously. Here we have the fusion of horizons, at least to the extent that my orientation as exegete and the orientation of the tractate coincided enough to bring out the tractate's grounding in the theological virtues.

The recognition of the role of love and compassion in the tractate's theology, also lead to an understanding of what I have called the tractate's dynamic ontology. This is highlighted by the intimate involvement of the Saviour with the creation and with the emphasis throughout the text on the educative value of the cosmos. The creation is clearly necessary, the All/Church/body of Christ gains something by its sojourn in the world. What is learned here can only be learned here, thus the end is in some way richer than the beginning. Of course such language only works in temporal terms. One way of putting it in non-temporal and nondual terms would be to say that creation is completely of the Pleroma, and its fullness lies in the fact that any division is only apparent; division is an illusion. In this way the cosmos is understood not only to be necessary, but to be sacred.

The hermeneutical method also allowed a greater understanding of the trinitarian structure in the theology of the tractate, which was brought out in the threefold nature of glorification, and in the realisation that the Spirit breathing in the All is the Holy Spirit. There is certainly more scope for work to be done on this subject.

While the fundamental and original insight of this exegesis remains the perception and explication of the *Tripartite Tractate*'s nonduality, this thesis has also been able to show the unity of the theology of the Nag Hammadi texts that have been designated as Valentinian. While differing in emphasis and detail according to their various functions, they share the same nondual theology and ontology, that is to say they share the same world.

This exegesis, then, has been concerned primarily with engaging in discourse with the world of the tractate here and now. This has of course involved a great deal of historical explanation and thus it has involved what Ricoeur calls the dialectic of distanciation and appropriation in order to bring the text into the present.

This is, to a degree, an attempt to rehabilitate a certain region of early Christian theology: to give it its own voice once again, in order that we may engage with it and so broaden our own horizons. But there are several other broader concerns to which this study attempts to contribute. Firstly, the general ontological horizon that this study has explicated, that is to say the principle that, "all that is real is true"[3] and God is most real, is

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1. Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love*, p.99.
2. Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love*, p.99.
3. See Pieper's excellent books, *The Truth of All Things* and *Reality and the Good*, which are now collected in *Living the Truth*.

fundamental to the appropriation of any Christian text up to the end of the Middle Ages. Secondly, and even more broadly, this study of one school of western nonduality may allow the reader a way of better appreciating and appropriating some of the great nondual scriptures of the East. One of the challenges of our time, especially to the student of religion is the encounter with the myriad manifestations of ultimate concern as expressed throughout history and around the world, not all of which are obviously compatible, not to mention the conflict of interpretations within each religious tradition. The challenge, if one wishes to accept it, is to enlarge one's horizon to include these different discourses, to fulfil one's ownmost possibilities within the different worlds of these traditions. This does not in any way imply the perennialist view that all religions are the same, this again would be to deny each discourse its own voice. The difficulty is to be able to move imaginatively between these worlds of discourse without conflating them and appreciating what each has to say of its ultimate concern. Such is the task, as I see it, of theology and religious studies. One does not need to become a Vedantin, a Buddhist or a Daoist in order to fruitfully engage with the worlds of each of these traditions. Such engagement can enhance one's understanding of one's own ultimate concern, whichever tradition one may be a part of, and as I said in the introduction, no one is without a tradition.

5.02 Dualism, Monism and Nondualism

It is important that I explain my designation of Valentinian theology as nondualistic, since it is new to this field of study. Historians have often spoken of the Valentinians as cosmic dualists or modified dualists of some sort. This is a very unhelpful designation, for as we have seen, the cosmos in Valentinian theology is itself the realm of duality, of division, strife, sickness and deficiency. But as such it is unreal. Its instability and perishability is consistently opposed to the stability and imperishability of the reality of the Father and His pleromatic Son. It is philosophically unsound to label the difference between reality and unreality a duality. They are not two things in opposition. The cosmos is only real in so far as it partakes of the Pleroma, it has no separate existence. The Father is the Root of the All, He is the ontological ground of everything that is, and He is One.

Scholars have begun gradually to recognise the insufficiency of the dualistic reading. The term 'monism' was in use as early as the Messina conference in 1966 at which a definition of 'Gnosticism' was proposed in which the idea of emanation in "Gnosticism" was characterised as, "a dualistic conception on a monistic background", (Bianchi, *Le Origini Dello Gnosticismo*, p.XXVII). This definition was, to say the least, not entirely coherent. If a philosophy is properly 'monistic', then any duality can only be apparent. However it must be said that the penultimate footnote of the "Proposal" (p.XXIX, note 1) did in fact point out the inadequacy of the term dualism with regard to the "metaphysical dualism" of Platonism. Unfortunately, it was being contrasted with the "anticosmic dualism of Gnosticism" at the time. Sadly, even this distinction has been ignored subsequently.[4]

Recently, the term 'monism' has begun to appear more frequently, though rarely as more than a passing mention. Thomassen, for instance, uses the term several times in his commentary.[5] How I differ with his explanation of the 'monism' of the tractate will be made clear in section 5.03 of this chapter.

As I mentioned in the introduction, the most detailed studies on 'Gnostic monism' are the two papers of Schoedel, '"Topological" Theology and some Monistic Tendencies in

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4. See, for example, Rudolph, *Gnosis: The Nature and History of Gnosticism*, pp.59-61, and Couliano, *The Tree of Gnosis: Gnostic Mythology from early Christianity to Modern Nihilism*, pp.23-49, especially pp.45-46, note 17.
5. See especially Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, pp.263, 270 and 369.

Gnosticism', and 'Gnostic Monism and the *Gospel of Truth*'. The former considered
Sethian monism and the latter Valentinian monism. These are important studies, and take
a condiserable step beyond the dualistic conception of 'Gnosticism' and especially, for this
study, of Valentinian theology. Nevertheless the term 'monism' remains in itself highly
problematical.

In order to understand the difficulty of the term 'monism', we must turn to a different
field of scholarship, namely, Hinduism, or more accurately, Advaita Vedanta. The scholar
who has brought this difficulty to light is Joseph Milne. He explains that the potential for
misunderstanding partly lies in the word itself. For monism, in modern usage, is a positive
word whereas nonduality is a negative word:

> Any ill-considered leap from duality to nonduality is likely to misconceive
> nonduality in a number of ways and produce what may be called 'naive
> unities' or monisms. That is to say, either unities conceived merely as at the
> opposite pole to duality, or else conflations of dualities. The first of these
> leaps makes a pair of duality and nonduality, and so still belongs to the
> thought structure of duality. It is because the term 'nonduality' is a negative
> term that it cannot easily be polarized with an opposite, as the positive term
> 'monism' can be. The second leap, in which one pole of a duality is
> conflated into the other, conceives plurality merely as the 'dispersion' of
> unity and so attempts to arrive at nonduality by means of an ingathering of
> the multiple to the one.[6]

Thus the term 'monism' encourages the reduction of the multiplicity-in-unity of
nonduality into a false unity. The mistake of turning monism into the opposite pole of the
duality 'dualism:monism', which Milne outlines above is clearly present in the Messina
definition that was just quoted, and as Milne says, it remains a dualistic conception.

Milne expands on the inherent dangers of the positive term 'monism' as being
susceptible to being equated with the reduction of one pole of a duality into the other:

> By 'reduction' I mean here a conflation or subsumation of one pole of a
> duality into the other, and thereby an elimination of the pole that has been
> conflated into the other, which now alone stands for the 'real.' Each such
> conflation produces what may accurately be called a 'monism.' It may be
> called a monism because the status of reality belongs to it alone. It may be
> called a naive monism because the problem of duality has been overcome
> through a false unification, a unification in which the identity of one pole of
> a duality has been relativized and surrendered into the identity of the other,
> which is taken as an absolute or true identity. Dualism has not been
> authentically overcome but simply shortcircuited, discounted, or leapt
> over.[7]

6. Milne, 'Advaita Vedanta and typologies of multiplicity and unity: An interpretation of nondual
    knowledge', p.175.
7. Milne, 'Advaita Vedanta and typologies of multiplicity and unity: An interpretation of nondual
    knowledge', p.176. Milne here demonstrates that six primary monisms can be arrived at. He starts
    with the recognition of three primary dualities that relate to the relation of any two of the three
    fundamental aspects of Reality: God, universe and Self, "they are: (i) Universe/God (It/Thou duality);
    (ii) God/Self (Thou/I duality); and (iii) Self/Universe (I/It duality)" (p.171). From the three primary
    dualities six possible false reductions or conflations, that is to say naive monisms, arise: (1) the
    reduction of the universe into God, or Theistic idealism; (2) the reduction of God into the universe, or
    Pantheism; (3) the reduction of God into the Self, or Radical existentialism; (4) the reduction of the Self
    into God, or Radical essentialism; (5) the reduction of the Self into the universe, or Materialism; and (6)
    the reduction of the universe into the Self, or Solipsism (p.176).

As we have seen in the nonduality of, say, the Father and the Son, or the Son and the Church, it is inaccurate to conflate one into the other. Were that the case there would be no reason to speak of reality but as the Father. The mystery is that we also do speak of the Son and the Church, and of the Trinity. Yet at the same time we affirm their unity, not as a homogenous singularity, but as their ultimately *not* being different, not being two.

This brings us to Thomassen's explanation of the 'monism' of the *Tripartite Tractate*. Despite his recognition that the Father as One in the tractate is beyond number,[8] about which I will have more to say shortly, Thomassen clearly uses 'monism' as a positive term which he applies only to the Father: "Le valentinisme est généralement moniste en sens qu'il considère le Père comme l'unique principe premier".[9] By doing this Thomassen remains within the dualistic structure of opposing monism to dualism within the same theology. This is brought out clearly by his comments on the designation of the Father as the All in *Tripartite Tractate* 54.1.

> Il ne s'agit évidemment pas de panthéisme et il ne faut pas comprendre que le Père est immanent au Plérôme (ce qui est vrai pour le Fils, mais, strictement parlant, non pour le Père *in se*). Il s'agit plutôt d'une façon traditionnelle d'exprimer la puissance absolue de Dieu et le fait que tout dépend de lui.[10]

Thomassen is rightly denying the conflation of the Father into the All, which would result in the naive monism of pantheism. But, because of his dualistic reading of the monism of the Father, this is the only option open to him, and this leads to the mistaken denial that the Father is immanent in the Pleroma. As we have seen everything is within the Father, He encompasses everything while being encompassed by nothing. Thomassen has fallen into the trap of the positive use of the term 'monism'. With the term 'nonduality' we are able to see how truly radical the theology of the tractate is. The statement that the Father is the All is not simply a traditional way of expressing the Father's power and the dependence of everything on Him. It is a clear statement of the true relationship of the Father and everything that is, which is that they are *not two*. From every position but the ultimate they appear distinct but in Reality they are not different. This is not a conflation. To avoid just that mistake, the use of negative language here is essential.

The problem with the term 'monism' is really to do with how it is used today by scholars such as Thomassen, and this is largely due to modern ontology. Valentinian theology and nondualist philosophies such as that of Plotinus were comfortable with designations of the first ontological principle as 'Monad' and 'One', because, in accordance with the Pythagorean mathematics of the time, 'one' was not considered to be an ideal or abstract number nor a quantative number, for these are of the realm of substance and multiplicity.[11] In fact, "The One" as it is applied to that which is beyond

8.   Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, pp.261-262.
9.   Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.270. Trans: "Valentinianism is generally monistic in the sense that it regards the Father as the single first principle". There is, he says, nothing particularly 'Gnostic' about the affirmations of *Tripartite Tractate* 53.21-39 and they are all to be found within 'non-Gnostic' Christian theology.
10.   Thomassen & Painchaud, *Le Traité Tripartite*, p.272. Trans: "This is evidently not pantheism, nor is it understood that the Father is immanent in the Pleroma (which is true of the Son, but, strictly speaking, not of the Father *as such*). Rather it is just a traditional way of expressing the absolute power of God and the fact that all depends on him".
11.   Plotinus, *Ennead* 5.5.4: "The One does not bear to be numbered in with anything else, with a one or a two or any such quantity; it refuses to take number because it is measure and not the measured; it is no peer of other entities to be found among them; for thus, it and they alike would be included in some container and this would be its prior, the prior it cannot have. Not even essential (ideal or abstract) number can belong to The One and certainly not the still later number applying to quantities; for essential number first appears as providing duration to the divine Intellection, while quantitative number is that (still later and lower) which furnishes the Quantity found in conjunction with other things or which provides for Quantity independent of things, if this is to be thought of as number at all".

being is, in Plotinian philosophy,[12] "implicitly a negative expression, meaning 'not multiple'":[13]

> Its definition, in fact, could be only "the indefinable": what is not a thing is not some definite thing. We are in agony for a true expression; we are talking of the untellable; we name, only to indicate for our own use as best we may. And this name, The One, contains really no more than the negation of plurality (τάχα δὲ καὶ τὸ "ἓν" ὄνομα τοῦτο ἄρσιν ἔχει πρὸς τὰ πολλά): under the same pressure the Pythagoreans found their indication in the symbol "Apollo" (*a*= not; *pollôn*= of many) with its repudiation of the multiple. If we are led to think positively of The One, name and thing, there would be more truth in silence: the designation, a mere aid to enquiry, was never intended for more than a preliminary affirmation of absolute simplicity to be followed by the rejection of even that statement: it was the best that offered, but remains inadequate to express the Nature indicated. (*Ennead* 5.5.6)[14]

With the change in ontology that happened in the 17th century this understanding was lost. Today when those who are unaware of the ontological shift that has taken place in our culture use the term 'monism' it is effectively used as a positive term. Thus today the term nonduality is a much more accurate and less ambiguous term for the not-twoness, of the negative terms 'The One' and 'Monad' as they are used within the related worlds of Valentinian and Plotinian texts.

There is one last point to consider in regard to the usage of the term 'nonduality' in this study. The objection could be made that 'nonduality' is a Vedantic, that is to say Hindu, term and that its application within western theology and philosophy is inappropriate. It is true that 'nonduality' (Sanskrit: *advaita*) was originally a Vedantic term. However, over the last century the term has been accepted into the field of comparative philosophy, especially since the publication of David Loy's book, *Nonduality: A Study in Comparative Philosophy*. While Loy's study focuses on Advaita Vedanta, Mahayana Buddhism and Daoism, he makes regular reference to western nondualism especially as represented by such thinkers as Plotinus, Meister Eckhart, Jakob Boehme, Nietzsche and Heidegger.

> "There were not two; beholder was one with beheld; it was not a vision compassed but a unity apprehended." (Plotinus, *Ennead* 6.9.11). The nonduality of seer and seen: there is no philosophical or religious assertion more striking or more counterintuitive, and yet claims that there is such an experience, and that this experience is more veridical than our usual dualistic experience, are not rare in the Western tradition. Similar statements have been made, in equally stirring language, by such important Western mystical figures as Meister Eckhart, Jakob Boehme, and William Blake, to name only a few. Philosophers have generally been more hesitant about committing themselves so decisively, but a claim regarding the nonduality of subject and object is explicit or implicit within such thinkers as Spinoza, Schelling, Hegel, Schopenhauer, Bergson, and Whitehead again

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12. Which as Hancock in, 'Negative Theology in Gnosticism and Neoplatonism', has shown is in agreement with Valentinian theology and other forms of 'Gnostic' negative theology.
13. Hancock, 'Negative Theology in Gnosticism and Neoplatonism', p.181 note 8.
14. MacKenna's translation. Greek text from *Plotinus*, ed. by Armstrong vol. V p.174.

> naming only a few; later I shall argue that similar claims may be found
> among important contemporary figures like Nietzsche, Heidegger, and
> perhaps Wittgenstein.[15]

Loy even begins his study by quoting Plotinus's *Ennead* 6.9.10.[16] Thus I am not the first
to apply the term 'nonduality' to the philosophy and theology of Late Antiquity.

5.03 *Mythos* and *Logos*

Throughout this study, I have drawn attention to a feature of the use of language in
Valentinian theology that is, as far as I am aware, unique among the religious and
philosophical texts of the ancient world.[17] That is the use, in equal measure, of the
religious symbolism of the Judaeo-Christian tradition and the philosophical language of
the Greek tradition. The synthesis is at times so fine that, if one were to attempt it, the
decision as to whether a passage is more Christian or more Platonic could not be made but
according to the reader's particular preunderstanding. The implications of this practice
deserve their own study, and so I must limit myself to the reflections of the chapter's title.

Firstly we must recognise that in the equal use of *mythos* and *logos* Valentinian
theology was not trespassing from one side or the other. Scholars have been all too ready
to accuse the historical Valentinians of 'Christianising' pagan (philosophical) traditions or
'Hellenising' Christian teachings. The intentional fallacy aside, these texts in fact do
something much more radical: they live both. As I have already mentioned, while calling
into question the anticosmic rejection of the world commonly ascribed to 'Gnostics',
Williams[18] has voiced the opinion, from a sociological perspective, that the Valentinians
were moving "in the direction of *more* social involvement and accommodation and *less*
tension with their social environment".[19]

> Not only do we have evidence that many of our alleged "world-rejecters"
> actually sustained a relatively high level of involvement with Greco-Roman
> society and tended toward a relatively lower level of sociopolitical
> deviance, the feature relevant to the present discussion that is best attested is
> an effort to reduce the cultural distance separating one's religious tradition
> from the broader cultural context. Such an effort to reduce cultural distance
> strongly implies an effort to reduce social distance as well.
>
> I have in mind, for example, the well-known ways in which so many of
> the demiurgical myths in question amount to innovative efforts to reconcile
> biblical tradition with elements and structures more prevalent in Greco-
> Roman religious myth, practice, or philosophy. The massive evidence for

15. Loy, *Nonduality*, p.1.
16. Quoted in full p.79 above.
17. Though Edwards, 'Valentinianism: New Discoveries and Platonic Exegesis', does say that, "In
    Platonism of the second century the metaphorical idiom, the *muthos*, was becoming as conventional as
    the literal mode, or *logos*, and the assignment of a text to one or other of these types could be a matter
    of philosophical debate", this is not, however, the same as their use of both modes of expression
    simultaneously and equally. Edwards's paper is important, for in it he shows that a "Platonic exegesis
    of the Valentinian *muthos*" can "reconcile the myth with a more optimistic theory of creation", and
    through this he argues that "the tenets of the Valentinian school were strictly Pauline, though presented
    through a new configuration of Pauline symbols, which makes life a moving image of theology and
    theology the paradigm of life", an argument that this study certainly supports.
18. Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism": An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category*, Chapter Five:
    'Anticosmic World-Rejection? or Sociocultural Accomodation?' pp.96-115.
19. Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism": An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category*, p.97. The
    emphasis is Williams's.

the role of Platonism in the shaping of so many of these myths is well
known. There are serious debates about how one should evaluate the precise
relationship between Platonism in general and Valentinian, "Sethian," or
other such mythological systems. These debates normally turn on such
issues as whether Platonic philosophy itself could be imagined as the
ultimate source of such mythologies, or the extent to which these
mythologies are fundamentally different in method and presupposition from
"real philosophy" of the day. But for the moment we can leave these
debates aside. For my argument here does not hinge on establishing that the
Valentinian Ptolemy or the author of the *Apocryphon of John* were true
philosophers. All that needs to be recognized is that they and several other
important figures and authors among our sources were attempting, often in
very different ways, to reduce the distance between on the one hand
elements of the inherited Jewish and/or Jesus-movement traditions, and on
the other hand key presuppositions from the wider culture, including
Platonic philosophy.[20]

I have argued that this perspective suffers from the modern ontological
preunderstanding, which leads both to objectification and the intentional fallacy, and that
from a hermeneutical perspective the theology of the world of the Valentinian texts, true to
its own ontology, actually works from the understanding that these modes of discourse are
of and concern the same Reality.

There is still the question of 'why use both?'. The answer that the Valentinians were
trying to be more sociopolitically accommodating is not theologically or hermeneutically
satisfying. This is not to deny Williams's argument, only to deny it as a cause. One would
expect Valentinian practice to follow theology, not vice versa.

The question remains: what theological purpose did this use of language serve? As I
have already said, these reflections need a full study of their own and I can only indicate
the direction in which this study, if it could, would continue. With that proviso, the answer
to our question lies, I think, in what each mode of discourse does.

Myth expresses the divine initiative, it is concerned with revelation and theophany. It
attains to the manifestation and embodiment of divinity. The dawning-forth of the Son in
His self-manifestation, in the *Tripartite Tractate*, is a beautiful example.

Logos, as philosophical discourse, on the other hand, is dialectical and is man's attempt
to articulate that theophany, and in so doing return to its origin. This is evident in the very
writing of the *Tripartite Tractate* itself and its emphasis on education. In terms of the
'direction' of the discourse, myth is imparted from the divine to man, and philosophy, the
love of wisdom, is his response and an attainment to that divinity. Thus these two modes
are two parts of the same process, the same process that is charted in the *Tripartite
Tractate*.

It is obvious that philosophical and symbolic language are different, but not so obvious
in what way they are so. What gives each the power to say what the other in some way
cannot about the same subject? The importance of this question lies in the fact that,
apparently, neither one on its own was adequate for the expression of ultimate concern of
the tractate. Thus, for instance, the Pleroma is not simply spoken of in the philosophical
terms of perfection, unity, harmony and stability but also in the mythical terms of the
perpetual day or light, the Bridal Chamber, kisses and perfume.

The key to the different natures of *mythos* and *logos* may lie in the predominant "sense"
of each one, for *mythos* is oriented by seeing, and *logos* is oriented by hearing. Thus the
two embody two different modes of appropriation, that is to say, two different ways of

20.   Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism": An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category*, p.107.

engaging with and apprehending truth. The language of symbol is grounded in the image, whereas the language of philosophy is grounded on the sound; two totally different ways of engaging with the world. The implications of this are quite startling in their enormity. But to give an example straight from Heidegger, it is only through hearing that man is capable of foresight.

> "Seeing is restricted to what is immediately present, while in listening we can recall what was and anticipate what will be, while also being attentive to the present. Hence, listening is more appropriate to our temporal existence".[21]

Hearing is the sense of temporality: we hear music, tempo and rhythm, we do not see them. We could not make tools to make tools, which is one of the defining qualities of mankind, without this mode of being. This is the mode that allows for the narrative by which we explore and make sense of what and where we are. But, one may ask, are not the myths some of the most important narratives by which we reflect upon ourselves? Yes, but the symbols embedded in the myths are themselves static, they cannot embody things dynamically. It is only when they are placed in the mythic narrative that there can be relation. And furthermore what the myths point to are not temporal, even though they must use the temporal structure of narrative. Myths do not purport to recount history. They all happen 'in illo tempore', 'in those days', 'once upon a time', which were never and are always. As Plotinus says,

> myths, if they are to serve their purpose, must necessarily import time-distinctions into their subject and will often present as separate, powers which exist in unity but differ in rank and faculty; they will relate the births of the unbegotten and discriminate where all is one substance; the truth is conveyed in the only manner possible, it is left to our good sense to bring all together again. (*Ennead* 3.5.10)

It is for this reason, that for the presocratic philosophers *mythos* and *logos* were the same and only later became differentiated, as Heidegger points out:

> Myth means the telling word. For the Greeks, to tell is to lay bare and let appear — both the appearance and what has its essence in the appearance, its epiphany. *Mythos* is what has its essence in its telling — what appears in the unconcealment of its appeal. The *mythos* is that appeal of foremost and radical concern to all human beings which lets man think of what appears, what unfolds. *Logos* says the same; *mythos* and *logos* are not, as our current historians of philosophy claim, placed into opposition by philosophy as such; on the contrary, the early Greek thinkers (Parmenides, fragment VIII) are precisely the ones to use *mythos* and *logos* in the same sense. *Mythos* and *logos* become separated and opposed only at the point where neither *mythos* nor *logos* can keep to its pristine essence. In Plato's work this separation has already taken place. Historians and philologists, by virtue of a prejudice modern rationalism adopted from Platonism, imagine that *mythos* was destroyed by *logos*. But nothing religious is ever destroyed by logic; it is destroyed only by the god's withdrawal.[22]

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21. Zimmerman, *Eclipse of the Self: The Development of Heidegger's Concept of Authenticity*, p.16.
22. Heidegger, 'What Calls for Thinking?', pp.375-376.

Thus myth manifests the emanation of, and *logos* proclaims the restoration to, the unchanging and unchangeable reality of the godhead. And, true to their original unity, the closer these two modes approach that reality the less distinguishable they become. And they culminate in the Word that was in the beginning with God and was God. Both *mythos* and *logos* are, then, of *the Logos*: its manifestation and return.

Recalling our rather startling observation that the very start of the movement from the Father to the Son and Pleroma in His superabundance, is both generation and redemption, we can also see this dual phenomenon, this dynamic ontology, throughout the economy and in the interweaving of *mythos* and *logos*. Each stage on the outward journey also provides the route back at the same time. As Heraclitus taught, "The path up and down are one and the same".[23]

This dynamic emanationist nonduality does not perceive existence as a movement away from perfection followed by one back to it, rather it is a procession that is simultaneously a return, the meaningfulness of which lies in its educative nature, that is to say, its ability to nurture *gnosis*.

Emanation draws out, it manifests the fullness and richness of the undifferentiated Father. This includes the economy, the medium of which is *logos* the aeon. Here the *logos*, as viceroy of the Saviour in the *Tripartite Tractate*, is informed by the *Logos* of the Son, which is none other than the *Logos* of the prologue to the Gospel of John and the *Gospel of Truth*. It is upon man's articulation of this mystery, of which the *Tripartite Tractate* itself is a part, that this movement outwards and back, turns. It is man's saying of this mystery that is both its manifestation and its proclamation, *mythos* and *logos*, all to the glory of what truly is.

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23. Fragment B60, ὁδὸς ἄνω κάτω μία καὶ ὡυτή. (Hippolytus, *Refutation* 9.10.4 = 22B60)

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